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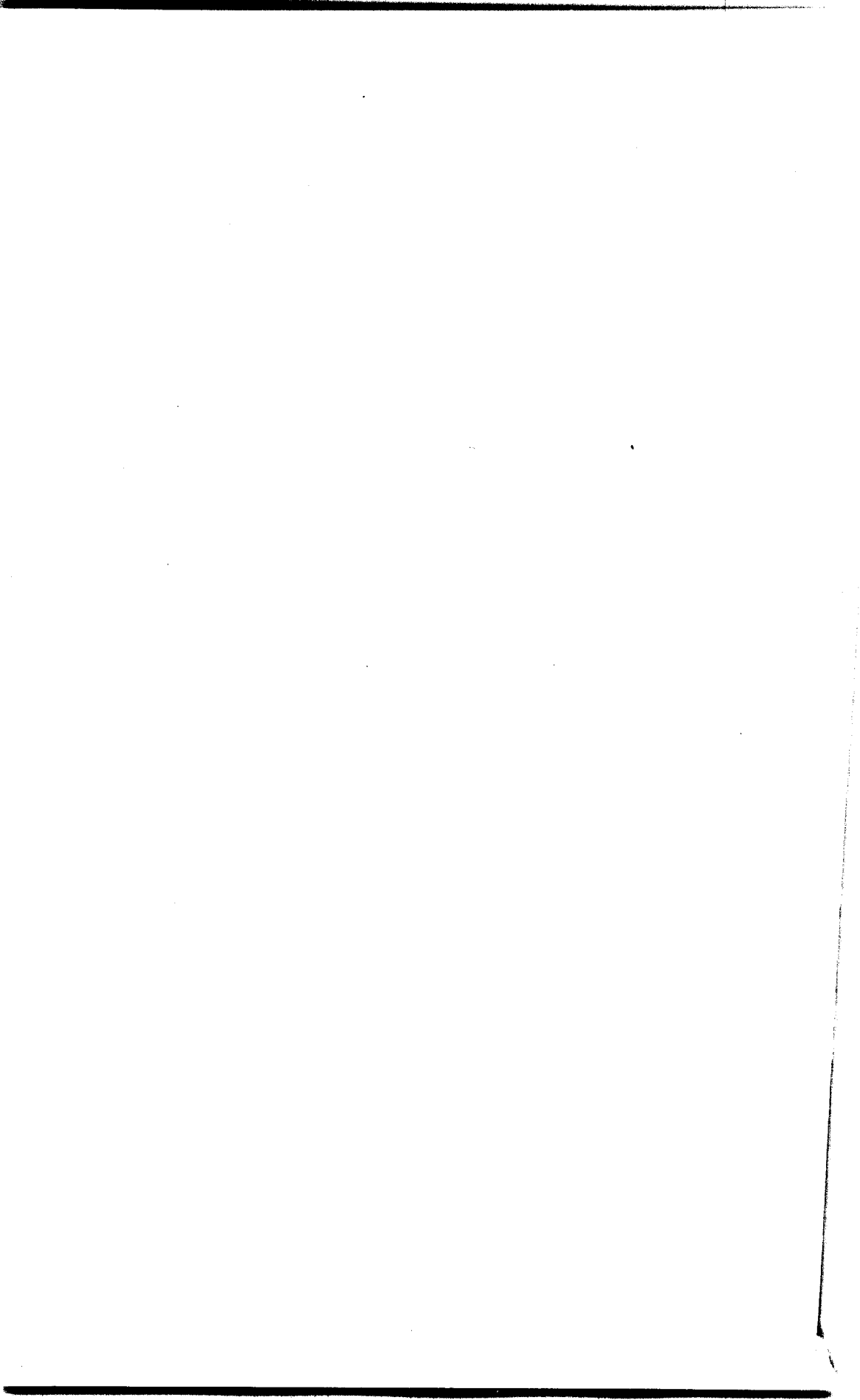
BARTON WARREN STONE

Early American Advocate of Christian Unity

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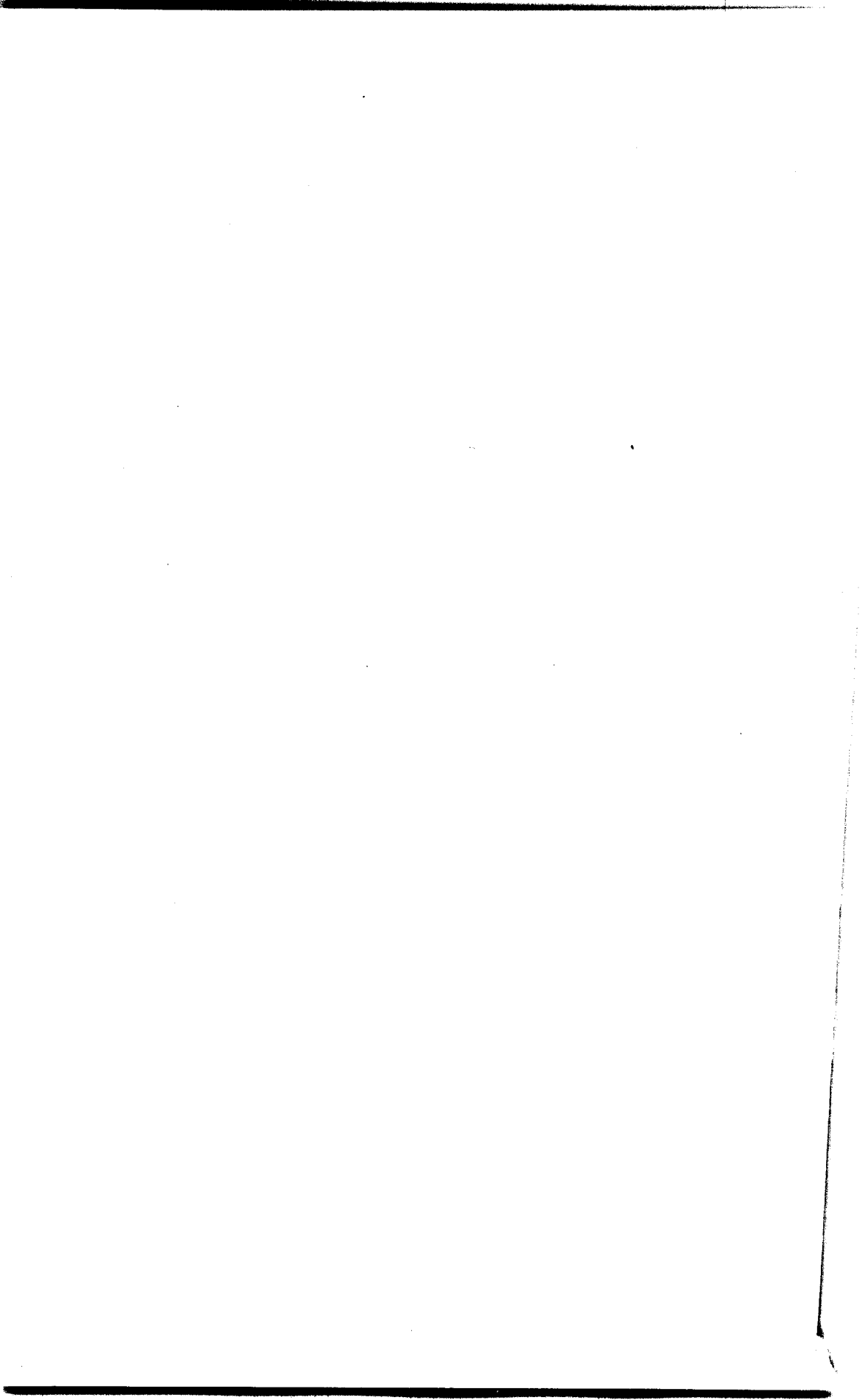
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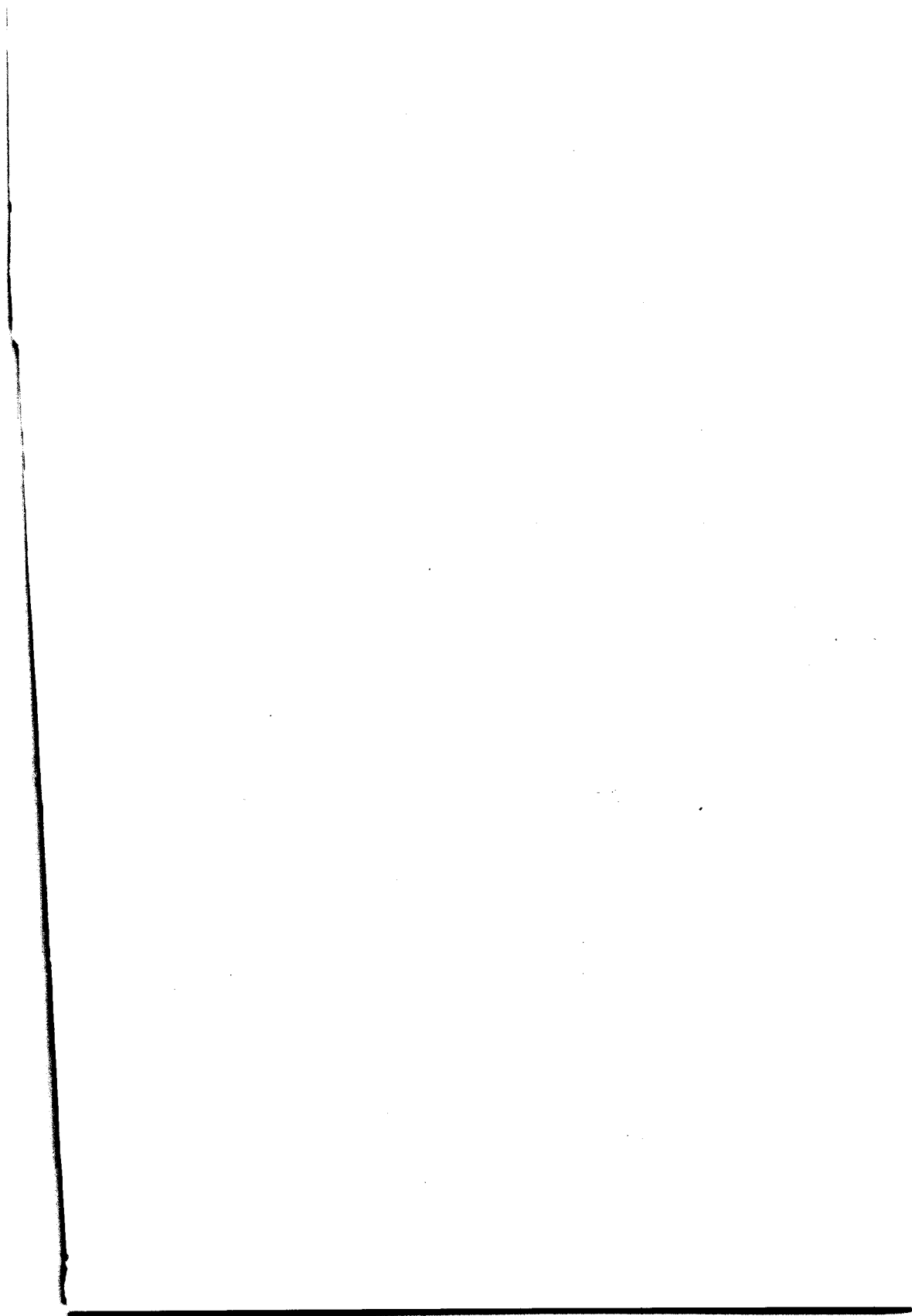
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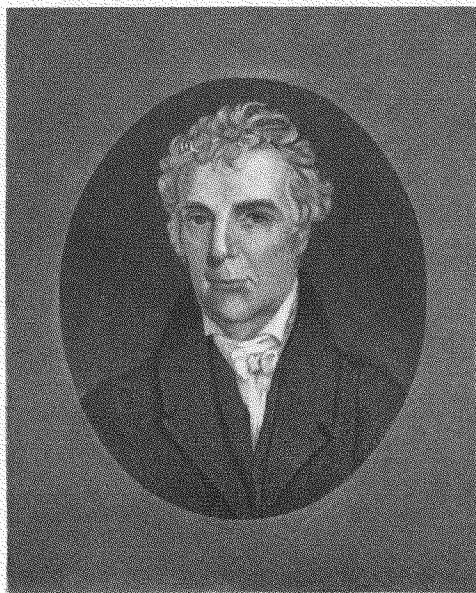


BARTON WARREN STONE:

Early American Advocate of Christian Unity







Once more, farewell.

B. W. Stone

BARTON
WARREN
STONE:

*Early American Advocate
of Christian Unity*

by
William Garrett West

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
1954

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DEDICATION

To My Father

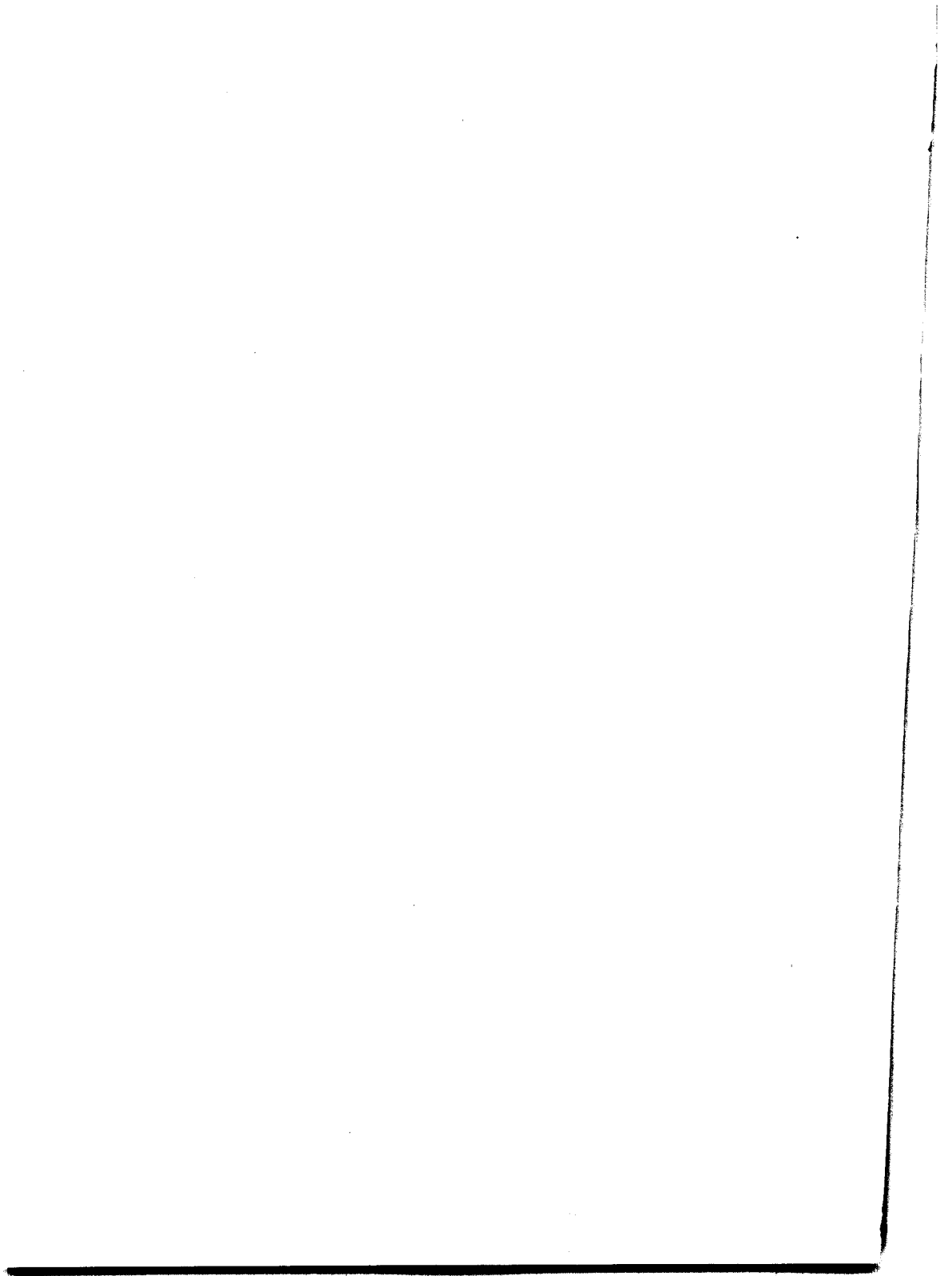
Who has been a pioneer evangelist, minister, and founder of Christian churches, primarily in the mountain areas of the Appalachian States for fifty-four years.

To My Mother

Who held our home together while my father was traveling, and who deserves many "orchids" for her unselfish labor for her family and the church and community she loves.

To My Brothers

George, Secretary of the Tennessee Christian Missionary Society, who has given me constant encouragement and a radiant example of steadfast Christian living. Fred, minister of the Hillyer Memorial Christian Church, Raleigh, N. C.; outstanding athlete, excellent minister, able teacher, lecturer, and brilliant interpreter of modern man's predicament and his salvation in the Christian faith.



PREFACE

BARTON WARREN STONE (1772-1844) was one of the early leaders in that movement which arose in nineteenth century America and today is variously known as "The Disciples of Christ," "the Christian churches," or sometimes "the churches of Christ." It is the largest religious body which is indigenous to American soil and is one of the largest Protestant bodies of the United States of America, numbering a membership of 1,815,627.¹

The Disciples of Christ or Christian churches arose out of the flowing together of several streams of "primitive gospel" movements. In Virginia, one movement, called the "Republican Methodists," rebelled against the authority of Bishop Asbury in 1792. Two of their leaders were James O'Kelly and Rice Haggard. A considerable number of Christian churches originated from this movement especially in Virginia and North Carolina. Some of these Christian churches joined ranks in the early 1830's with the people associated with Barton W. Stone, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Others united with the Congregationalists in 1931. Rice Haggard doubtless influenced the Stone movement in some ways, especially in the significance he attached to the choice of the name "Christian" as the proper designation for church members.

Another group arose in New England under two Baptists, Elias Smith and Abner Jones, who both spent their early days in Vermont. Both men rejected Calvinism, and favored the "faith and government" of the New Testament. Their followers were called the "Christian Connection" and were drawn together with similarly minded groups, not only in New England, but in the West and South.

Still another movement of primary significance originated in Kentucky. Barton Warren Stone, who was born in 1772 in Port Tobacco, Maryland, and died in Missouri in 1844, was its central leader. At the

¹*Yearbook of the American Churches* (1953).

height of a great revival in frontier Cane Ridge, Bourbon County, near the present city of Paris, Kentucky, Stone, in company with some fellow Presbyterian ministers, withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky. Organizing an independent Springfield Presbytery in 1803, they dissolved it in 1804, publishing a "Last Will and Testament." In this historic document, they pleaded for more lay rule in church government, a firmer reliance on the Bible as a guide, and union with the "Body of Christ" at large. This movement grew and in the 1830's united with another group composed of the followers of Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), and his brilliant son, Alexander (1788-1866).

Thomas Campbell came to America from Ireland in 1807 and served in the Presbyterian Church on the western frontier of Pennsylvania. He was broader in his theological outlook than the other Presbyterians and above all wanted closer relations with Christians in other churches. Expelled from the Seceder Presbyterian ministry, he met with a group of friends to form the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania on August 17, 1809. Thomas Campbell wrote an important document called the "Declaration and Address" in which he pictured the awful effects of division among Christians and sounded an impassioned plea for unity.

Alexander Campbell arrived in America from Ireland in 1809 and agreed with his father's position. The Christian Association organized itself into a church on May 4, 1811. Infant baptism was rejected by the church and until about 1830, the Campbells were associated with the Baptists. Alexander Campbell proved to be a brilliant writer, scholar, theologian, debater, educator, and publisher. However, many Baptists regarded this outstanding young religious leader as a heretic. In 1829 he was an articulate member of the Virginia Constitutional Convention and in the same year engaged in a debate with the famous British social reformer and skeptic, Robert Owen.

Among the preachers who added strength to the Campbells was Walter Scott (1796-1861), a Presbyterian who was born in Edinburgh. Arriving in New York in 1818, he later migrated to Pittsburgh. He became a flaming evangelist on the Western Reserve in Ohio and greatly added to the membership of this movement.

Followers of all of these men and movements slowly merged to-

gether by the 1830's and thus the Disciples of Christ or Christian churches were born in the United States of America.

The present volume tells something of the life-story, but more of the thought of one of these leaders, Barton Warren Stone. The thesis of this book is that Stone has not only been neglected by his own religious communion, but by American church historians generally as a significant forerunner of one phase of the ecumenical movement in our country. He sowed the seeds of Christian unity, based not upon doctrinal uniformity, but upon the love and spirit of Jesus Christ, in a day when few others favored unity. More significantly, in a day of bitter religious controversy, he not only favored theoretical unity, but tried with his whole being to practice Christian harmony in his relationships. Christian unity was the dominant passion of his life.

The early chapters of this book trace his attempts to get an education, his agonizing conversion struggles, and his participation in the momentous "revival" in Kentucky which came at the turn of the eighteenth century. Then his rebellion against a rigid type of Calvinism and the counter-attack against his orthodoxy is described. Some of the cultural, personal, and doctrinal differences between Stone and Alexander Campbell are outlined. The views of Stone on Christian unity are described fully, and the final merger of the so-called Stone and Campbellian movements is portrayed.

For the first time, the story of Stone's attempt to unite the Christian Connection of New England with the followers of the Campbells is presented. An interpretation is given of Stone as a particular type of what church historians have called "left-wing Protestants" who arose in Europe in the sixteenth century. In America, the frontier environment modified the characteristics of these left-wing groups, among which were the rapidly growing Methodists and Baptists. In Stone and the "Christians" new tendencies appeared which did not exist in the other groups: the opposition to Protestant denominationalism, and also the more significant attempt to promote Christian unity for the purpose of eliminating competition among the churches and answering the prayer of Jesus that his followers may be one that the world may believe.

Finally, Stone's importance as a forerunner in the American ecumenical movement is summarized. In days of fierce theological strife,

he maintained that the Christian life is the true basis of Christian concord, rather than doctrinal orthodoxy.

To avoid ambiguity, the following abbreviations shall be repeated in referring to the three major periodicals quoted:

CM—The Christian Messenger

CP—The Christian Palladium

MH—The Millennial Harbinger

The abbreviation *loc. cit.* shall be used only when it refers to the same volume and page of a periodical where there is no intervening reference.

Pages and articles in the *Christian Messenger* are often misnumbered, obviously through the errors of Stone's printers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SOURCE MATERIALS regarding Barton W. Stone are not easily accessible. The author is grateful for aid from the following libraries and their librarians: Butler University; The New York Public Library; the Chattanooga Public Library; the American Antiquarian Society, of Worcester, Massachusetts; the Sterling Library, of Yale University; the Yale Divinity School; the Presbyterian Historical Society, U. S. A., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Presbyterian Historical Society, U. S., Montreat, North Carolina; the Library of Congress, of Washington, D. C.; Lynchburg College; and Transylvania College. He has had generous help from the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, whose Librarian Roscoe Pierson, and President R. B. Montgomery have been most cooperative on numerous occasions. He recalls with pleasure their kindnesses and that of the faculty and students when he gave the Annual Spring lectures on Stone at the Chapel of the College of the Bible in May, 1954.

He owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Luther A. Weigle, of Yale, who was his understanding faculty counselor during the writing of a doctrinal dissertation on Stone; to Dr. Kenneth Scott Latourette; to Dr. Ralph H. Gabriel; and to Dr. Richard Niebuhr, all of Yale. He owes much to Dr. Robert L. Calhoun and Dr. Roland Bainton for the privilege of stimulating study in their classrooms.

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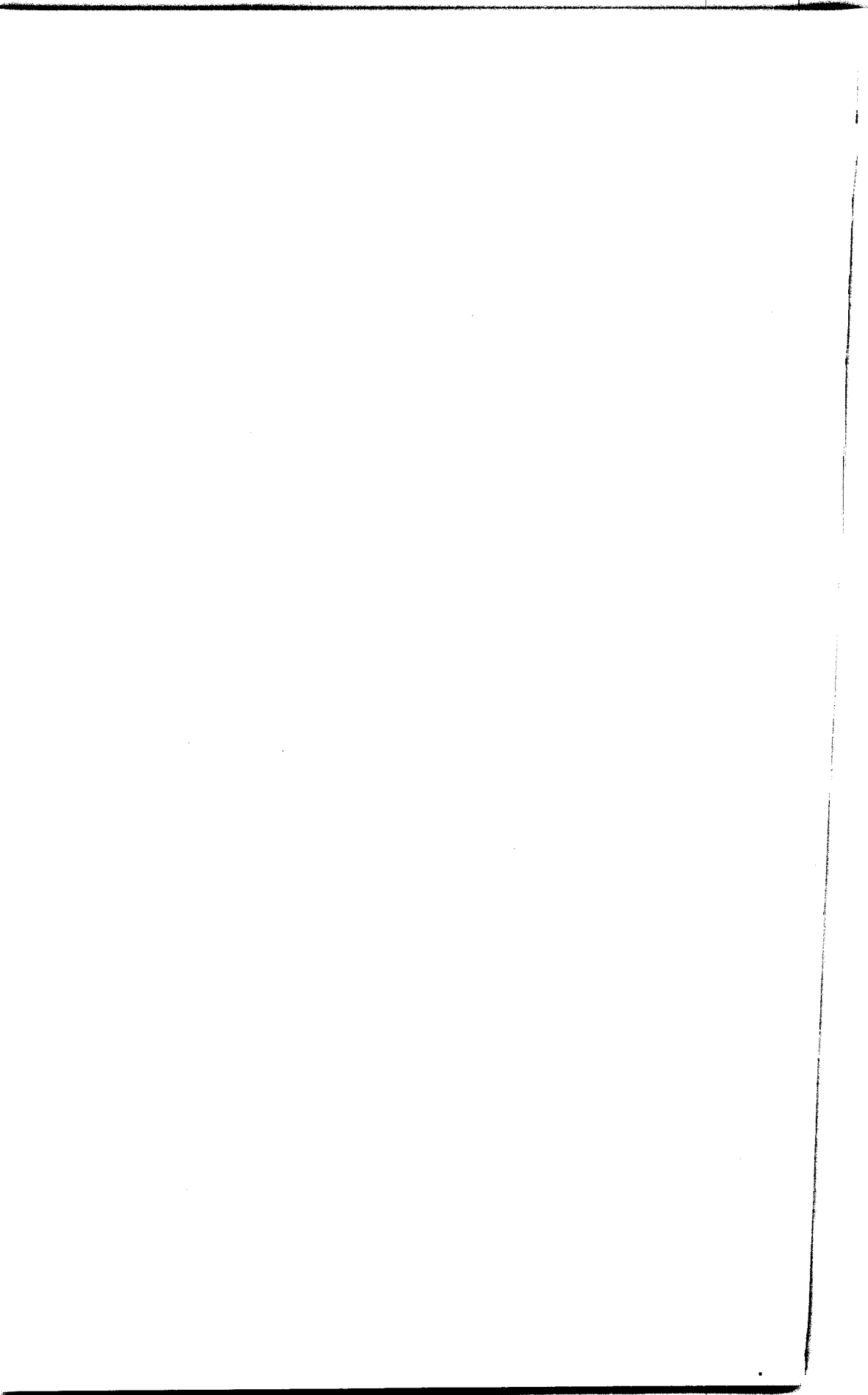
writing. Mrs. Gene H. Coleman had the difficult task of typing the final manuscript and revising the footnotes.

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INTRODUCTION

THE CLIMAX of the Great Revival on the western frontier in the opening years of the nineteenth century was reached in the "protracted meeting" held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in August, 1801. It was estimated that twenty-five thousand people were in attendance. Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist preachers joined in the work, and the Governor of the state was present. Stands were erected in different sections of the wood, so that seven preachers could speak at the same time. "They were of one mind and soul," wrote Barton W. Stone, Presbyterian minister at Cane Ridge; "the salvation of sinners was the one object. We all engaged in singing the same songs, all united in prayer, all preached the same things . . . The numbers converted will be known only in eternity . . . This meeting continued six or seven days and nights, and would have continued longer, but food for the sustenance of such a multitude failed."

Four years earlier, in the course of the examination prior to his ordination by the Presbytery of Transylvania, to the question whether he accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith Stone had answered: "I do, as far as I see it consistent with the Word of God." As pastor of the church at Cane Ridge during the Great Revival, he was profoundly impressed with the Christian fellowship it fostered, and with the fundamental agreement of those who bore different sectarian names. With five other ministers, he withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in 1804, being determined to be known by no other name than Christian, and to acknowledge no creed for the Bible.

Two American Protestant groups count Barton W. Stone among their founders—the Disciples of Christ, now the sixth in number among the Protestant communions of this country, and the Christian churches which became associated in the American Christian Convention and merged in 1931 with the Congregational Churches to form the present

communion of Congregational Christian Churches. Outside of these groups, Stone is little known and his significance in the movement toward Christian unity is not understood or appreciated.

That is partly because his life was not spectacular except for the circumstances attending his withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church. Even his uniting with Alexander Campbell in 1832 was quietly done while Campbell was still regarding it as matter for theological debate. But it is also because of Stone's lack of self-seeking and his utter dedication to the unity that is in Christ.

I must not, in this brief introduction, attempt to summarize the story which is so well told by Dr. West in this book. Let me say simply that this study reveals the significance of Barton W. Stone not only for his own time but for ours, and not only for his immediate segment of followers but for all who are interested in the ecumenical movement. Stone saw clearly that Christian unity is more than agreement in creed or in Biblical interpretation; it is possible only as we possess the spirit of Christ. And he was a "grass roots" practitioner of Christian unity rather than a debater about it. With this study Barton W. Stone takes a place of his own, with men like Samuel S. Schmucker and Philip Schaff, on the honored roll of nineteenth-century American religious leaders who had genuine ecumenical vision and devotion.

LUTHER A. WEIGLE

Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut
May 6, 1954

CHAPTER I

STONE'S EARLY LIFE, CONVERSION, AND FIRST MINISTRY

WHEN BARTON WARREN STONE'S FATHER, John Stone, died in Maryland, the Revolutionary War had already begun. Maryland, with the other Colonies, was in the war, and the market for her great money staple, kite foot tobacco, was closed. In consequence "the Stones," with many other families in southern Maryland, moved to the southwestern part of Pittsylvania County in Virginia, near the Dan River, in a region William Byrd had called "the Land of Eden." Byrd, who in 1728 headed the commission that established the boundary of Virginia and North Carolina, owned one hundred and five thousand acres of this soil in the Dan Valley, which he described as "a broad leven of exceeding rich land, full of large trees, with vines marry'd to them, if I may be allowed to speak so poetically."¹

Despite Byrd's enticing descriptions of the land, few settlers had come there during Stone's boyhood days. It was true frontier territory. Forests of great oaks in the Piedmont section led the people to call it the "backwoods." And Stone was a child of the frontier; he always remained one. The impress of the struggles for life in the backwoods during the Revolutionary War was evident in his later life.

In his ninth year, the British military forces made a desperate bid to conquer the Colonies through an invasion of the South. The patriots in Pittsylvania County joined in freedom's battle. In an adjacent county, near Barton Stone's home, Patrick Henry spoke for the Revolutionary cause. Stone doubtless heard of the orator, for he testifies early that he "drank deeply" of the "Spirit of liberty." Certainly the draughts he drank carried potency, for Stone writes that he "could not hear the

¹ William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line*, ed. W. K. Boyd (Raleigh: The North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), p. 208.

name of British or Tories without feeling a rush of blood through the whole system."² He never lost the emotions born of the backwoods fight for freedom; sixty-three years later he confessed that the name of Tory still called up memories of injuries.

The record suggests that the entire county militia of Pittsylvania served in the battle of Guilford Court House.³ Stone reports that they heard at their home the sounds of the battle thirty miles away. Greene and Cornwallis were the antagonists. Three months later the homes of Peter Perkins, Nicolas Perkins, and William Harrison, all neighbors of the Stones, were used by General Greene to hospitalize his soldiers.

The invasion brought soaring prices. Continental currency was on its last legs. Four barrels of corn sold at 244 pounds, a cow and a calf for 426 pounds, and two sheep for 100 pounds.⁴ With her older boys away in the militia, Stone's widowed mother struggled to make ends meet. Stone later etched the remembered life in the war zone:

parents in tears—tented field—great anxiety—depredations—nothing secure—bands of thieves—many vices—gambling—swearing—debauchery—drunkenness—quarreling—soldiers caressed (promiscuously)—demoralized society.⁵

Stone managed to escape these vices of war. In the midst of demoralization he sought perfection in his daily living. While not an active member of the church, he gave thought to his standards of moral virtue. He would withdraw from his companions to read such books as he could find. There were no books of science, but only a few novels in addition, of course, to the Bible. Three of the novels, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Tom Jones*, and *Roderic Random*, Stone read and condemned as "trash." "These were poor help," he said, "and yet from reading these my ardent thirst for knowledge increased."⁶ He read the Bible so much that he tired of it.

Young Stone rebelled not only against "Tories" but also against a teacher whom he termed "a very tyrant." So sensitive was the lad and

² Elder John Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone* (Cincinnati: J. A. and U. P. James, 1847), p. 3.

³ Maude Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell Co., 1929), p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 2 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

so domineering the teacher, that Stone, when an old man, recalled vividly:

I could learn nothing through fear of him [the teacher]: When I was called on to recite my lessons to him, I was so affected with fear and trembling and so confused in mind that I could say nothing.⁷

Barton Stone soon exhausted the meager educational resources of his community. His tutor, Robert W. Somerhays, declared that he was a finished scholar, and the ignorant backwoods community applauded his negligible scholastic attainment. He turned to North Carolina for a richer educational diet.

Into every remote corner of North Carolina and southern Virginia, the fame of David Caldwell's school at Guilford had spread.⁸ It was thither Stone journeyed. This log college in the Carolina wilderness was called an "Academy, a College, and a Theological School." Ever since the founding of Princeton in 1746, a stream of Presbyterian circuit riders had gone out to carry the Gospel from the Wyoming Valley to Georgia. In 1775, of the eight youthful ministers, who served in the valley of Virginia, all were recent Princeton graduates. "Thus it was that Princeton," says T. J. Wertenbaker,

became the religious and educational center of Scotch-Irish America. The graduate of Nassau Hall invaded the South with the Bible in one hand and the Greek or Latin textbook in the other. Having knit together his congregation, and built a meeting house, he next busied himself with founding an academy, modelled upon William Tennent's famous log college.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ Caldwell constituted the entire faculty. A native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Caldwell graduated from Princeton, the mother of teaching preachers, in 1761. He was ordained in Trenton, New Jersey in 1765. He began his ministry two years later in the Buffalo and the Almance Presbyterian Churches near Greensboro, North Carolina. But one who only preached starved; therefore he opened a school to finance his preaching. Since teachers starved too, farming became a necessity to sustain life. Before a minister could preach the "Bread of Life," his daily bread had to be wrested from the Carolina soil. Further, doctors were almost unknown in North Carolina and the knowledge Caldwell had gleaned in the medical school of the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia also served the countryside. See Burton Alva Konkle, *John Motley Morehead* (Philadelphia, 1922), p. 12 ff.

⁹ T. J. Wertenbaker, *The Old South* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 209.

It was such a college that David Caldwell had established on a small slope near the present city of Greensboro. Caldwell sent out in the forty years of his regime, from his school, fifty ministers and five governors of states. "For many, this famous 'log college' with an annual enrollment of between fifty or sixty students was the most important institution of learning in North Carolina."¹⁰

Governor John Motley Morehead, often called "the Father of Modern North Carolina," was a student under Caldwell. He described him as a man of admirable temper, fond of indulging in playful remarks, which he often pointed with a moral; kind to a fault to every human being, and I might say to every living creature. . . . He seemed to live to do good.¹¹

Having arrived at the Academy, Stone began the study of Latin grammar on February 1, 1790, resolved to secure an education, or "die in the attempt."¹² The school had no library, but a few Greek and Latin classics, Euclid's *Elements of Mathematics*, and Martin's *Natural Philosophy* were available and in use. The course in Moral Philosophy was taught from a syllabus of lectures delivered by Dr. Wither- spoon of Princeton College.¹³

Stone plunged into his studies with the determination to excel. He practiced an almost ascetic type of self-discipline, adopting vegetarianism and giving up normal sleeping hours. Of his rigid regimen, he says:

I stripped myself of every hindrance for the course—denied myself of strong food, living chiefly on milk and vegetables, and allowed myself but six or seven hours in twenty-four for sleep.¹⁴

Almost at once, however, religion disturbed his perfect program of study. The cause of the distraction was the vivid preaching of James McGready, a Presbyterian revivalist.¹⁵ As he sought to concentrate on

¹⁰ Konkle, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹¹ W. B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York: R. Carter and Brothers, 1858-1869), III, 266 f.

¹² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹³ C. C. Ware, *Barton Warren Stone* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1932), p. 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ James McGready (1760-1817) was born in Pennsylvania and lived for a while in Guilford County, North Carolina, before returning for schooling to the log college of John McMillen near Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania. McGready's preaching later aroused such opposition in Orange County, North Carolina, that his

his studies, Stone was astonished to find about thirty "pious students" assembling every morning before classes, for singing and praying in a private room. These religious meetings made him uneasy. "I labored to banish these serious thoughts," Stone wrote,

believing that religion would impede my progress in learning—would thwart the object I had in view, and expose me to the frowns of my relatives and companions. I therefore associated with that part of the students who made light of divine things and joined with them in their jests of the pious. For this my conscience severely upbraided me when alone, and made me so unhappy that I could neither enjoy the company of the pious, nor of the impious.¹⁶

Revival preaching was not unfamiliar to Stone. The Church of England parish in the Pittsylvania community had been inactive during and following the Revolution. Its alleged alliance with "Toryism" had made it suspect to many of the backwoods people, but revivalists appeared on the scene, and Stone had attended many of the meetings.

The zealous Methodist preachers particularly had attracted Stone, who saw them as "grave, holy, meek, plain, and humble," checking "levity" in all around them and electrifying congregations by their preaching. Baptists and Episcopalians alike warmly attacked them. The Baptists, feeling that these "Arminians" denied the doctrine of grace and affirmed salvation by work, publicly declared them to be the "locusts" of the Apocalypse.¹⁷ While his sympathies were with the "misrepresented and persecuted" Methodists, Stone had never been converted, though he retired often for secret prayer. Becoming discouraged, he finally quit praying and "engaged in the youthful sports of the day."¹⁸ Even as a youth, he struggled for a "perfect" way of conversion. No half-way conversion would meet his requirements.

Stone was neither to escape religious conversion nor experience it suddenly or easily. His religious life even for a while after his conversion suggests the tracings on a seismograph, showing, now, deep emo-

pulpit was burned and a threatening message written in blood was sent to him. Subsequently, he became a leader of the wave of revival meetings which historians have named, "The Great Revival of 1800." In Kentucky, this revivalism reached its peak at Cane Ridge, in August, 1801.

¹⁶ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

tional stirrings and now, states of quiescence. His was a "tortured" soul, seeking religious satisfaction, finding it momentarily, only to plunge into some temporary despair. Actually, he feared conversion. Committed to follow the law as a profession, he did not wish to give it up; but religion fascinated him as much as the fear of damnation overwhelmed him. Religion at once drew him and repelled him. Revivals played their part in his conversion, but when that spiritual experience came, Stone was not to be found in a crowd touched by "revival magic," but alone in the woods, Bible in hand, an independent frontiersman, adventuring along new trails of American religious discovery.¹⁹ He did not choose then to go with the despised Methodists and Baptists, but entered the more socially acceptable Presbyterian Church.

Stone knew from this previous experience how unsettling revivals could be, and he resolved to escape the one in Caldwell's log college. One day he packed his things, planning to start the next morning for Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia "for no other reason than that I might get away from the constant sight of religion."²⁰ A severe storm prevented his departure and he thereupon resolved to pursue his own business and let others go their own way. Had he gone to Hampden-Sidney, he would have been chagrined, for at that time a powerful revival was rocking that college near Farmville, Virginia!²¹

Stone remained at Caldwell's College and there it was that James McGready, a visiting evangelist, captivated him. To Stone, his appearance was not compelling except for a "remarkable gravity and small piercing eyes." His gestures were the "perfect reverse of elegance," but his coarse tremulous voice seemed to Stone "unearthly." Stone, sitting on the log bench, forgot everything except the speaker, who in turn forgot everything but the "salvation of souls." Stone never before had seen such zeal and earnestness. The imagination of the preacher inflamed the imagination of the young man as he described the pleasant topography of heaven and the fearful "lakes of hell."²²

McGready was noted for his revival fervor and "fiery brimstone" preaching. For example, he once said that a quill plucked from the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²¹ Gerald W. Johnson, *American Heroes and Hero Worship* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 131.

²² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

wing of a cherub and "dipped in a ray of glory emanating from the divine throne"²³ could not describe the goodly land of heaven. He himself, however, felt equal to the task of picturing the long torment of sinners in hell!

To one who argued that such expressions as "a lake of fire burning with brimstone"—"a lake of fire"—"Hell fire"—"the place of torment"—"the bottomless pit"—were figurative only, McGready replied that these afforded only a faint view of the reality. The strongest figure, he said, was mild compared to the actual state of hell.

We shall suppose that all the pains and torments that ever were endured, by all the human bodies which ever existed upon the earth, were inflicted on one person; add to this ten thousand times the horror endured by Spira, yet all this would not bear the same comparison to the torments of the damned in hell, that the scratch of a pin will do to a sword run through a man's vitals.²⁴

Something more dreadful remained for McGready to describe. The torment of the sinner "will be a growing torment." The misery of the sinner will increase as he receives the "unmilled wrath of a sin-avenging God."

While the one hand of enraged Omnipotence supports the sinner in being and enlarges his capacity for suffering, with the other, he tortures him with all the miseries and pains which infinite wisdom can invent, or Almighty Power inflict. Oh, how dreadful must be the torments of hell!²⁵

McGready's descriptive account of "heaven, earth and hell" awakened "feelings indescribable" in Stone. Concluding, McGready addressed the "sinner to flee the wrath, to come without delay." Stone was enchained. "Such was my excitement that had I been standing," wrote Stone, "I should have probably sunk to the floor under the impression."²⁶

Stone was anything but a rock. With night coming on, he went out

²³ James Smith (ed.), *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready* (Nashville: Lowry and Smith, 1833), II, 297. (The first volume was published in Louisville by W. W. Worsley in 1831. Hereafter, this source will be referred to as *McGready's Works*.)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 241.

²⁶ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

into an open field to weigh the subject of religion. The time of decision had arrived. In legal fashion Stone described his inner debate:

Shall I embrace religion or not? If I embrace religion, I must incur the displeasure of my dear relatives, lose the favor and company of my companions—become the object of their scorn and ridicule—relinquish all my plans and schemes for worldly honor, wealth and preferment, and bid a final adieu to all the pleasures in which I had lived, and hoped to live on earth. Are you willing to make this sacrifice to religion? No, no, was the answer of my heart. Then the certain alternative is you must be damned. Are you willing to be damned—to be banished from God—from heaven—from all good—and suffer the pains of eternal fire? After due deliberation, I resolved from that hour to seek religion at the sacrifice of every earthly good, and immediately prostrated myself before God in supplication for mercy.²⁷

According to the religious pattern of Stone's day and vicinity, he was led to expect a long painful struggle before he would be in a position to "get religion." In this he was naturally not disappointed, since the psychology of conversion in the individual usually follows the pattern of his religious group. The doctrine Stone then believed was the one publicly taught: that mankind is so totally depraved that it could not take any initiative until the spirit wrought a change of heart in the individual in "God's own sovereign time." God's time and Stone's did not coincide immediately.

For one year I was tossed on the waves of uncertainty—laboring, praying, and striving to obtain saving faith—sometimes desponding, and almost despairing of ever getting it.²⁸

McGready's doctrines of depravity and conversion intensified Stone's struggle. McGready believed that by the fall of Adam, man lost all knowledge of God. He lost the love of the perfections inherent in God's nature.²⁹ Moreover, in Adam's fall, man lost the moral image of God. So disastrous was Adam's experience that the image of God in man was replaced by the image of the devil. Man was recast in the devil's image. Man in such a state was unregenerate and lived under the awful judgment of God.³⁰ His every moment of activity was under

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁹ *McGready's Works*, II, 63.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

condemnation because it was not directed toward the glory, or love of God.

How was man to escape from his predicament? McGready's answer was that he must experience a new birth.³¹ The Judge of all men will attach supreme importance to the spiritual birth. McGready solemnly declared:

In that awful day, when the universe, assembled, must appear before the quick and dead, the question brethren, will not be, were you a Presbyterian—A Seceder—a Covenanter—a Baptist—or a Methodist; but, did you experience a new birth? Did you accept of Christ and his salvation as set forth in the gospel?³²

The new birth, according to McGready, is the "implantation of a living principle of grace in the soul, which before was spiritually dead."³³ In regeneration, or the new birth, a change comes to the whole soul. The image of the sinner's idol, Satan, is defaced and the likeness of God is drawn anew upon the soul.³⁴ The misguided will be re-directed toward God and holiness.³⁵

Barton Stone wanted this kind of conversion experience. But how was he to receive it? McGready answered only the power of God could effect it. Those who are dead in sin are as powerless to renovate the soul as are "those in the graves to raise themselves to life." One attains new spiritual life only by the irresistible power and operation of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ No effort of the creature can avail. To spin "a faith out of one's own bowels" is impossible; it is the gift of God.

Stone was not a trained theologian and argued in backwoods fashion: You say that without faith it is impossible for me to please God. But God does not send faith to me so that I can act, and yet you say I must act. How, in this situation, can I either act or have faith? McGready answered that the sinner must do what God required of him. He must use the means given him. A man

has natural power to go to a ball and dance and frolic with the wicked—he could, by exerting the same power—stay at home, pray, and read the

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

word of God. . . . The sinner has the same natural power to forsake wicked company—and his outbreking sins—to pray and seek religion—as he has to plough the ground and plant his corn.³⁷

Some sinners objected: How can God command me to believe when I have no more power to exercise faith, than to create a world? Will he damn me if I do not believe under such conditions? Does God command impossibilities, and damn me for not doing that which I have no power to do?

McGready answered that God demanded nothing unreasonable because he offered his power to the sinner to perform all his commands.³⁸ But the sinner will not use the means to obey God's command to pray, to repent, and to believe in Christ. He wills to attend balls and frolics—he *will* neither pray nor read the Bible, neither keep the Sabbath nor attend the preaching of the word; therefore "his damnation is just."³⁹

This answer did not satisfy Stone. He did not dance, frolic, or enter taverns. He did attend services, pray, and read the Bible, and yet he had never experienced the second birth. He had used the means of conversion and yet God had withheld his favor. If God granted the new birth why did he refrain from acting even when a man forsook wicked company and tried desperately to do right? McGready did not answer this question adequately for Stone.

Stone's second contact with James McGready sent him to lower depths of confusion. In February, 1791, with many fellow-students he attended a meeting at Sandy River in Virginia. J. B. Smith, the president of Hampden-Sidney, so depicted the "broken and contrite heart" that Stone felt his own described. He sensed a "gleam of joy" as he ate the emblems of the Lord's Supper, or Communion, for the first time.⁴⁰ But in the evening, James McGready, speaking on the theme "Weighed in the Balances" plunged Stone almost to the nadir of hopelessness. "He went through all the legal works of the sinner," said Stone,

all the hiding places of the hypocrite—all the resting places of the deceived—he drew the character of the regenerated in the deepest colors, and thun-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴⁰ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 9 f.

dered divine anathemas against every other. Before he closed his discourse I had lost all hope—all feeling, and had sunk into an indescribable apathy.⁴¹

The discourse finished, McGready sought to arouse Stone from his torpor, by the "terrors of God and the horrors of hell." Stone was unresponsive and declared that McGready "left me in this gloomy state without one encouraging word."⁴²

Stone's emotions were turned upside down. His physical strength began to fail. He wandered and languished in uncertainty. Finally his relatives in Virginia, hearing of his condition, sent for him. His mother, alarmed over his state, changed from the Episcopal Church to the Methodist, apparently in the hope that she might help her son.⁴³ Unquestionably her efforts to help him intensified his own struggle.

Upon returning to the Academy, Stone attended a meeting in Almage, the more liberal of David Caldwell's two churches. Here he heard William Hodge, who had been trained by Caldwell. Hodge had been preaching only one year, but succeeded with Stone where McGready had failed. He was the reverse of McGready in technique and theology. His text Stone never forgot: "God is love." "With much animation and with many tears," Stone reported, "he spoke of the love of God to sinners, and of what that love had done for sinners. My heart warmed with love for that lovely character described, and momentary hope and joy would rise in my troubled breast."⁴⁴ The doctrine of God's love as preached by Hodge appeared both new and convincing to Stone.

When Hodge had ceased speaking, Stone did not remain with the excited congregation. He retired to the woods alone with his Bible. Reading and praying with feelings oscillating between hope and fear, he seemed to hear the text of Hodges' discourse ringing through the trees of the forest: "God is love." Stone had found his way. "I yielded," he asserted

and sunk [sic] at his feet a willing subject. I loved him—I adored him—I praised him aloud in the silent night, in the echoing grove around. I confessed to the Lord my sin and folly in disbelieving his word so long and

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

in following so long the devices of men. I now saw that a poor sinner was as much authorized to believe in Jesus at first, as at last—that *now* was the accepted time, and day of salvation.⁴⁵

The importance of this moment in Stone's history has not received the recognition which it deserves. Stone's formal departure from Calvinism came when he withdrew from the Synod of Kentucky in 1804. But, here, at the very moment he formally accepted Calvinism, he had begun to break with it by rejecting its conventional pattern of agonizing struggle for immediate commitment to the founder of Christianity. Stone always felt that men are not so depraved that they cannot take the initiative in conversion once they recognize that God has already taken the initiative in the revelation of Christ made known in the Bible. This position later forced Stone to reject such creeds as interfered with the conversion experience. Stone found his norm not simply in the inner light, but primarily in the Bible. The book that had wearied him in the Virginia forest, he now took into the woods alone, because its light had made plain a path which evangelists and crowds did not illumine.

Thus, it is apparent, Stone early combined some genuine Protestant biblicism with a first-hand experience of religious awakening and the stress some "left-wing" groups placed on perfectionism. All of these influences were to criss-cross throughout Stone's life in his struggle to find freedom from strict religious authority, and in his dominant desire for the unity of all of the followers of Christ. Some of Stone's contemporaries took one or more of these insights and hardened them into rigid patterns; Stone let the emphases play important roles in his thought without becoming rigid and arbitrary.

Stone had experienced a new orientation to God; hereafter, until he finished school, he said, "I lived devoted to God." The study of the dead languages and sciences he found not irksome, but pleasant, "from the consideration that I was engaged in them for the glory to God, to whom I had unreservedly devoted my all."⁴⁶

Two difficulties now arose which were to plague the young convert for a long time. Stone's money from his father's estate ran low. Already on an almost ascetic regimen, Stone found it even more difficult

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

to procure "decent clothes, or books, or things indispensably necessary." Dr. Caldwell urged him to complete his studies, promising to postpone the collection of the tuition until after graduation. Because of broken promises, country-wide inflation, and perhaps his own incapacity, Stone was destined always to have financial problems. Indeed, his struggle on the frontier led him to take on characteristics of the faith of "the disinherited."

Theological problems were even more troublesome. Young Stone desired to enter the ministry, but was troubled because no soul-shaking call had come to him. Caldwell assured him that no miraculous call was needed. He gave Stone a text and requested him to write a discourse on it, for presentation at the next meeting of the Orange Presbytery.⁴⁷ Stone said that the "only book on theology" he had ever read was the Bible. When he was therefore assigned the subject of the "trinity" for his dissertation, he felt lost. Samuel Holmes and he were studying under William Hodge.⁴⁸ The theologian Herman Witsius⁴⁹ was recommended to them; his book only confused Stone and his colleague. The crux of the problem for Stone was mirrored in Witsius' claim that it was "idolatry to worship more Gods than one, and yet equal worship must be given to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."⁵⁰ Confusion, gloom, and fear now invaded Stone's mind, so recently set at rest in his stirring conversion. Only the reassuring treatise of Isaac Watts on the Trinity gave him peace of mind and kept him on the road to the ministry.

Six months normally lapsed between sessions of the Orange Presbytery. Candidates were examined at one session and, if successful, were licensed at the next. Henry Pattillo (1726-1801), a liberal who accepted Watts' views on the Trinity, was at this time in charge. Wishing to keep peace in the Presbytery, he tactfully worded his queries on the Trinity. He had managed so well that few trials for heresy had arisen in his Presbytery. Stone passed the examination.

Unfortunately, financial as well as theological pressures, plunged

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Holmes, whom Stone called a "prodigy of a genius," afterwards became president of the University of North Carolina.

⁴⁹ Witsius was a professor of divinity in Holland (1636-1708). He wrote the "Divine Economy," which Stone read. See Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

him into deep depression. He wavered from the ministry momentarily and hoped that he would discover another calling on a trip to Georgia.

Stone started out on horseback alone, with fifteen borrowed dollars in his pockets. After a difficult trip across the "Piedmont" areas of the Carolinas, and the forests of Northeast Georgia, he arrived at his brother's home in Oglethorpe County, Georgia.⁵¹

At Washington, Georgia, known as Heard's Fort during the Revolution, Stone became a teacher of languages in Succoth Academy. Hope Hull⁵² (1763-1818), the father of Georgia Methodism, was the founder of the Academy. Hull was something of a liberal, having sympathized with James O'Kelly's attempt to democratize the government of the church, though he did not break with the organization. Here, too, Stone developed a great friendship for John Springer, a Presbyterian preacher whose liberality contrasted startlingly with the narrow sectarianism of Georgia in the 1790's.

Stone labored to improve his teaching, and remarked that he won some approbation in the backwoods community. He gave some time to "perfecting" his knowledge of French with the help of one of the refugees in Washington who had fled the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. He sought perfection in his spiritual life, as well. Sensitive to flattery, he guarded himself against its baneful effects:

The marked attention paid me by the most respectable part of the community was nearly my ruin. Invitations to tea parties and social circles were frequent. I attended them for a while, until I found that this course would cause me to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Though I still maintained the profession of religion, and did not disgrace it by improper conduct, yet my devotion was cold and communion with God much interrupted. Seeing my danger, I denied myself of these fascinating pleasures, and determined to live more devoted to God.⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵² Hull came from the eastern shore of Maryland and joined the Methodists in their first Episcopal conference in America in June, 1785. He travelled circuits in South Carolina and Virginia before going to Washington, Georgia in 1788. He accompanied Francis Asbury (1745-1806) to the first Kentucky Conference, near Lexington, when the Bishop was guarded through the wilderness "by sixteen men with thirteen guns." In 1792 he went to Hartford, Connecticut, where he converted the eccentric Lorenzo Dow. Hull was a founder of the University of Georgia.

⁵³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

In the spring of 1796, Stone, with more than enough money to defray his debts, reluctantly bade farewell to his friends in Washington and turned again alone to North Carolina, three hundred miles away. A license to preach awaited him at the Orange Presbytery in Hawfields Church. Henry Pattillo⁵⁴ gave the charge in person to the three licentiates, Barton Stone, Robert Foster, and Robert Tate, tendering each of them a Bible, but no Westminster Confession of Faith.

Stone and Foster were commissioned to go on a missionary tour in the lower part of North Carolina.⁵⁵ The designated locality was probably in the southeastern part of the state, where three-fifths of the people had been Episcopalians. Since the Revolutionary War, the ministers had left their parishes, and religion was in decline. The enthusiasm of these young licentiates failed to penetrate the hard crust of indifference covering the people. Foster soon conceded that he "was not qualified for such solemn work." Stone, regarding himself as lower in moral perfection than Foster, was even more discouraged. He soon resolved to go to Florida, where he would be "a perfect stranger." His timidity and hypersensitivity were attacked effectively one May morning in 1796 in a church, after he had made only one day's journey toward Florida. A pious old lady, suspecting his intentions, told

me plainly that she feared I was acting the part of Jonah—solemnly warned me of the danger, and advised me, if I disliked the lower parts of the State, to go over the mountains, to the West. In the evening of that day, to my surprise, I saw Robert Foster in the congregation. . . . He immediately agreed to accompany me.⁵⁶

The trip west, though arduous, strengthened the confidence of the young ministers. Stone was persuaded to ascend the pulpit in Grimes' meeting house on Reed Creek in Virginia, and while "singing and praying" his mind was "happily relieved." After that experience, he never mentioned any timidity in his preaching. He ministered among congregations in Wythe and Montgomery counties which were "desti-

⁵⁴ Pattillo was a man of singular tolerance and one of the earliest men to advocate that Americans shake off European religious influences and think in their own patterns of thought. When Stone later was accused of having insincerely broken his ordination vows in withdrawing from the Presbyterians, he appealed to Pattillo's views to sustain his own. Cf. *post*, chapt. v, p. 87.

⁵⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

tute of preaching," until July 1, 1796.⁵⁷ He found the people "attentive, kind and liberal," but the west lured him on.

Stone crossed over into the Cumberland region of Tennessee. He and some former companions preached throughout this region. Following the Holston River, he passed through Knoxville, on the wilderness way to Nashville. He described Nashville as then being "a poor little village hardly worth notice." Peace had been made only recently with the Cherokee Indians, and traveling was still considered dangerous. Stone traveled with two companions, one a backwoods Indian fighter of great courage, and another whom he described as being "the biggest coward I ever saw." Once they made a dramatic escape from a roaring band of Indians. Stone later was deserted by his companions when his horse lost a shoe. Forced to walk on by himself in the Tennessee wilderness, Stone felt that he was not alone. A kind Providence, it seemed to him, stood behind the shadows of the barriers, keeping watch over his own.

Near Nashville, William McGee and John Anderson, former schoolmates of Stone in North Carolina, persuaded him to go the 117 miles to Danville, Kentucky, and thence forty miles on to Lexington. Near Lexington, at Concord and Cane Ridge, Stone began his Kentucky ministry, succeeding Robert F. Finley, who had been deposed October 6, 1796, on a charge of "habitual inebriety" and insubordination.⁵⁸

Barton W. Stone had failed as an itinerant missionary-preacher in lower North Carolina following his licensure in 1796. Now in the Cane Ridge and Concord Presbyterian Churches, he experienced his first significant ministerial successes. Within a few months, fifty accessions came to the church of Concord, and thirty to Cane Ridge. Between the young preacher and his congregations a reciprocal affection developed, and Stone soon agreed to become their permanent pastor.

Before he settled in his parishes some unsettled business in Georgia called Stone there. Learning of his proposed trip, the Transylvania Presbytery appointed him to obtain money in Charleston, South Carolina, to establish a college in Kentucky.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Robert Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), p. 127 f.

Stone quickly settled his business in Georgia and then made his way through the dangerous "dismal swamps" between Augusta and Charleston. In the latter city, Stone for the first time saw the two extremes in society. He saw "splendid palaces" and "a rich profusion of luxuries." Against this background of amiability and impressive wealth, he saw the pain and misery of dark-skinned people.⁵⁹ This experience marked the awakening of his conscience on this social evil. In Virginia he found his mother alive and well, but he was depressed to learn that many relatives and friends had died.

One year after he had set out for Georgia, Stone returned to Kentucky. The Cane Ridge and Concord churches gave him a call through the Presbytery of Transylvania. Stone accepted the call.

Once again the doctrinal ghosts of his pre-licensure days confronted him. He was plagued by the concepts of the Trinity, of election, of reprobation, and of predestination as taught in the Westminster Confession. Stone had learned, from his superiors, ways of divesting those doctrines of their hard, repulsive features, and admitting "them as true, yet unfathomable mysteries." In public discourse, he had conscientiously confined himself to the "practical part of religion." After re-examination, he was sure he could not hold these doctrines even "under cover."⁶⁰

On the day of his ordination, Stone had resolved to tell the Presbytery "honestly" the state of his mind. He wished his ordination to be deferred. Dr. James Blythe and Robert Marshall, whom he had first met in Virginia, were informed of his difficulties, and sought unsuccessfully to meet his objections. An alternative remained.

They asked me how far I was willing to receive the confession? I told them, as far as I saw it consistent with the word of God. They concluded that was sufficient. I went into Presbytery, and when the question was proposed, "Do you receive and adopt the Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Bible?" I answered aloud, so that the whole congregation might hear, "I do, as far as I see it consistent with the word of God." No objection being made, I was ordained.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Stone later wrote very little on the subject of slavery, being content usually to print articles from others against slavery. But whenever he made a brief editorial comment on the subject his indignation was apparent.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Stone's answer later was to raise many objections and questions. Both Blythe and Marshall knew of Stone's mental reservation on the Confession, but the records of the Presbytery do not record Stone's evasive answer. This was to cause difficulty later.⁶² Stone himself must have known that the doctrines were no longer live options with him.

Stone's mind was, from the beginning, kept in torment by the bitter controversies raging within the religious community and by the widespread apathy outside. The different sects exhibited "much zeal and bad feeling." To Stone, no more certain sign of the low state of religion existed than these continuous, widespread, and riotous debates among the followers of Christ.⁶³

⁶² Cf. *post*, chapt. v, p. 85.

⁶³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND OF THE GREAT REVIVAL IN KENTUCKY

BARTON W. STONE was destined to stamp his personality on the turbulent religious scene of frontier country in Kentucky. For more than a score of years, settlers from North Carolina and especially Virginia had poured across the Blue Ridge into Kentucky and Tennessee. The former had entered the Union in 1792; the latter in 1796. By 1800, according to some estimates, Kentucky had a population of almost 221,000, and Tennessee had over 105,000.¹ Settlers came to these states also from Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and the New England States. The Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Roman Catholics were not numerous in Kentucky. Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were strong.

Baptists emigrated to Kentucky in such large numbers that one historian describes the state as the cemetery of Virginia Baptist preachers.² By 1800 several associations of Baptists had been formed to unify their work west of the Blue Ridge. Many Methodist families emigrated to Kentucky from Virginia and North Carolina. Bishop Asbury made his first trip to Kentucky in 1790 to make plans for evangelization of this western country of "Canes and Turkeys."

The Presbyterians had the strongest church. The Scotch-Irish,³ chief racial stock of the church, had been numerous in the western districts of

¹ Charles Kerr, *History of Kentucky* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1922), I, 289.

² Robert Baylor Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (Richmond: Pitt and Dickinson, 1894), p. 100.

³ Thus, such families as the McDowells, the Todds, the Browns, the Scotts, the Marshalls, the McAfees, the McCalls, the Maldons, the Campbells, the Tilfords, and the Trotters, largely molded life in early Kentucky.

Pennsylvania and in the backwoods of Virginia.⁴ Having exhausted the soil under the wasteful Scotch-Irish farming system, they eagerly penetrated the wilderness in search of cheap virgin land. This vigorous people entered the Kentucky wilderness to subdue and master. The Presbyterians were characterized by a strict adherence to Calvinism, other positions being regarded by them as heretical: Arminian, Deistic, Pelagistic, or atheistic. Stone himself stated that such doctrines as total depravity, unconditional election, and reprobation, provided the fuel for the tempestuous religious debates of the churches.⁵

When the mood and temper of society in Kentucky is analyzed, the cause of Stone's further depression over irreligion becomes apparent. Religious apathy was partly caused by the unsettled nature of a settling people. Some statistics of 1800 estimate that all the denominations could count only about 10,000 members out of a population of approximately 221,000.⁶ This situation was due in part to the rapid and chaotic migration of large groups of people to a new wilderness country.⁷

Some leisure is necessary for the cultivation of religion and the average Kentuckian was preoccupied with the immediate necessities of life, such as clearing fields and building homes. He used any leisure he may have had in debating controversial political issues, or indulging in rough frontier sports, or speculating in the rich earth.

"The most absorbing topic in Kentucky was land, its ownership, sale

⁴ Until 1810 Kentucky was settled by people who came largely from the state of Virginia, where it has been stated, "the revolutionary implications of the colonial rebellion had been most completely developed." Cf. Niels Sonne, *Liberal Kentucky, 1780-1828* (New York: The Columbia Press, 1939). Many Virginians brought their revolutionary ideals of liberty and democracy with them, though established social and economic arrangements in the Old Dominion had denied to them opportunities for betterment. Liberty was likewise extended to the religious area. Consequently, the union of church and state was opposed in Kentucky. See *Constitution of Kentucky, 1792*, Art. 1, Sec. 24.

⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶ Z. F. Smith, "The Great Revival of 1800," *Kentucky State Historical Society Register*, January, 1909.

⁷ In 1783, it was estimated that there had been 12,000 or 13,000 people in Kentucky. Rapidly the numbers increased, according to these figures, which, while probably not accurate, are useful in indicating the outline of the true picture; in 1784 there were 20,000 to 30,000; in 1790, 73,677; and in 1800, the estimated population was 220,955. See *Kentucky State Historical Society Register*, January, 1909.

and settlement."⁸ The soil was productive and the sense of territorial vastness encouraged people to think that progress was inevitable in the new land. All hoped for rapid material advancement. The only limit to commercial development seemed to be the blue sky over the "Kentuc's" home. Almost all Kentuckians agreed with the preacher who, exhorting outside the state and finding himself at a loss to describe the joys of the hereafter, concluded his sermon, "In short, my brethren, to say it all in a word, heaven is a Kentuck of a place."⁹

When David Rice arrived in Kentucky before the turn of the nineteenth century, he lamented:

After I had been here some weeks, and had preached at several places, I found scarcely one man and but few women who supported a credible profession of religion. Some were grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion. Some were given to quarreling and fighting, some to profane swearing, some to intemperance and perhaps most of them [were] totally negligent of the forms of religion in their own houses.¹⁰

The settlers living in this new environment were secularists. "Kentuckians lived intensely," writes Bernard Mayo, "playing hard, working hard, loving activity, and excitement, whether it came from lawsuits, real estate deals, or the card table."¹¹ Gaming, gambling, and drinking apparently were pastimes of the legal profession and a considerable segment of society in the state. When newspapers carried criticism of the lawyers for their immoderate drinking, Editor Bradford of the *Lexington Gazette* retorted that if the occasional passing of the glass made lawyers sots, then there "are not one hundred citizens of the same age in the state of Kentucky who will not be equally liable to the odious charge."¹²

Activity and constant employment, Henry Clay said, "was the great secret of human happiness."¹³ Most Kentuckians of whatever class of society held to this goal of secular living. A French writer visiting this

⁸ Bernard Mayo, *Henry Clay* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 187.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁰ Robert Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky* (Lexington: Thomas T. Skillman, 1824), p. 68.

¹¹ Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹² See the *Kentucky Gazette*, Jan. 24-June 27, 1795; July 5-25, 1795.

¹³ Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

"Garden of the Western World" described the reigning spirit that made Kentuckians "greedily seize hold of every plan that tends to enrich the country by agriculture and commerce."¹⁴ Between the backwoods areas of Kentucky and the metropolis, constant bickering livened the day's news. Individuals in both the blue-grass and the towns would have approved the statement of one citizen who expressed his dislike for his son's interest in sketches and miniatures, by exclaiming that he had sent Matthew to college to make a gentleman of him and not "a damned sign painter."¹⁵

The existence of infidelity on a large scale cannot be proved.¹⁶ But the presence in early Kentucky of liberalism, and a general irreligiousness is clear. Lists of books offered for sale by book stores and for circulation by Transylvania College and the Transylvania Seminary indicate considerable interest in science, deism, and liberalism.¹⁷ For example, the Transylvania Library, founded in 1795, catalogued mostly orthodox works in the year of its founding. By 1804, less conservative works were registered, such as histories of France, and works by Condorcet, Voltaire, Mirabeau, Rousseau, Locke, Paine, Volney, Wollaston, Bolingbroke, and Hume. Thomas Paine was the most widely read author in early Kentucky. The great interest in his works, it is apparent, was primarily political rather than religious. His *Age of Reason* was popular and answers to this work were widely circulated. No evidence exists to prove that religion entered in the discussions of the three democratic societies which sprang up in Lexington, Georgetown, and Paris, to aid Citizen Genêt, who arrived in America in 1793, seeking support for the French Republic. Volney's writings, too, circulated rather widely following his visit to Kentucky in 1796, on which occasion he bore letters of recommendation from Thomas Jefferson to John Breckinridge, Harry Arris, and Gov. Isaac Shelly.¹⁸ And finally, there is some evidence that Unitarianism exerted strong influence on early Kentuckian intellectuals.¹⁹

Kentuckians responded with high emotional intensity to rousing

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁶ See Sonne, *op. cit.*, Preface and chapter i.

¹⁷ See the *Kentucky Gazette*, January 24-June 27, 1795; July 5-25, 1795.

¹⁸ See Sonne, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

speeches, sectional issues, and politics. Lawyers such as Henry Clay had an almost hypnotic power over juries.²⁰

Kentucky had a way of flaming with excitement whenever the prospect of war seemed imminent. When Spain showed signs of reluctance to yield the vast Louisiana wilderness which Jefferson purchased from Napoleon, the state initiated recruiting. Business ceased; the "Spirit of '76" flamed up in the woods of Western America. After the martial flurry subsided, the jubilant Kentuckians celebrated at public dinners and roaring tavern parties,

which usually ended in the town square with eighteen rifle salutes—seventeen for the states of the union, and one whooping big volley for America's Extension of Empire!²¹

Some Kentuckians were to respond to revivalism with just such ardor. In all of the churches, real religious interest had waned and doctrinal controversies divided the energies of the denominations. But toward the end of the eighteenth century they began to unite against a common enemy, indifference, and in a mutual task, revivalism. Revivalism was to give rise to new forms of American left-wing Protestantism. This method of expanding religion was admirably suited to the social needs of the West. The secularism we have already described was not met by the older churches which refused to change. It was attacked by new leaders who sensed the needs stemming from the isolation of unlettered frontier folk, who disliked the more educated individuals in the settled communities, who imitated "people back East." In the conditions on the frontier and the revival methods used by Methodists, Baptists, and the Christians or Reformers especially, we find an explanation for many of the characteristics of American denominationalism. Ethics, polity and even doctrines had their roots in the relationship of the religious life to the cultural and political conditions prevailing "in any group of Christians."²²

Stone was to play a major part in what Cleveland²³ calls "the Great

²⁰ Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²¹ Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²² See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1929), p. 16. (Hereafter, this source will be referred to as *Social Sources*.)

²³ Catherine C. Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1916.

Revival." The final necessary test of his faith came one evening, when, while praying and reading the Bible, his mind experienced unusual comfort and peace. "Never," wrote Stone, had he experienced such an "ardent love and tenderness for all mankind, and such a longing desire for their salvation."²⁴ For days and nights he prayed almost continually for the "ruined world." He expressed his feelings to a friend: "So great is my love for sinners, that, had I power, I would save them all." The horror-stricken person confounded Stone by asking, "So you love them more than God does? Why, then does he not save them? Surely he has almighty power."²⁵ Stone was confused and rushed to the "silent woods" to pray for insight to solve this seeming contradiction. He found it difficult to harmonize the unlimited love of God for men and his almighty power to save, with the obvious fact that many were unsaved. Stone wrote:

Had I a friend or child whom I greatly loved, and saw him at the point of drowning, and was utterly unable to help himself, and if I were perfectly able to save him, would I not do it? Would I not contradict my love to him, my very nature, if I did not save him? Should I not do wrong in withholding my power? and will not God save all whom he loves?²⁶

Stone wrestled with the dilemma and finally resolved it.²⁷ He was firmly convinced that the Scriptures did not teach that all men were to be saved. His logic pushed him to the temporary conclusion that God did not love all men. Hence he reasoned "the spirit in me, which loved all the world so vehemently could not be the Spirit of God, but the spirit of delusion." He must believe in God, or expect no good from the hand of God. But believe he could not; as soon could "he make a world." "I shudder while I write it," he stated, "blasphemy rose in my heart against such a God and my tongue was tempted to utter it."²⁸ His Bible, which had guided him as he heard William Hodge's words ring in the forest, still was his refuge. He finally became convinced

²⁴ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ If the response of people in his community to religion had been more pronounced, Stone doubtless would have become reconciled to popular Calvinism but action in response to this type of Calvinism made little impression on the people in their new environment. Something new was needed. Stone's answer was not primarily doctrinal, but lay in a method of approach, namely, revivalism.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

through it that God did love the whole world, but that he did not save all because of their unbelief. Unbelief persisted not through God's failure to exert his almighty power to make them believe, but through *man's neglect of God's testimony* "given in the word through His Son." Was this demand made on man reasonable? "Yes," replied Stone, because the testimony given was sufficient to produce faith in the sinner and the invitations and encouragement of the gospel were sufficient for salvation if man but believed.²⁹

Thus, it is clear that Stone sided with Arminianism on the frontier rather than with "predestination Calvinism."

Stone saw no good reason why his own experience of conversion could not also be the experience of other persons. Yet, religious apathy seemed to be widespread.³⁰ To Stone, even the form of religion had disintegrated. Having heard of remarkable religious stirrings in Tennessee and southern Kentucky under the labors of James McGready and others, Stone set out in the spring of 1801 to attend the camp-meeting, in Logan County, Kentucky. Here, "the Great Revival" began. James McGready, who left North Carolina when his life was threatened because of his evangelistic preaching, had taken charge of three small congregations named Red River, Muddy River, and Gasper River.

Peter Cartwright, famous circuit-riding Methodist preacher, stated that when his father moved to Logan County it was known as "Rogues' Harbor."³¹ Murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeiters from all parts of the Union made up the population. Sunday, he said, was a special day—for hunting, fishing, horse racing, card playing, balls, dances, and other kinds of amusements.

McGready here preached on faith, repentance, and the necessity for each individual to accept Christ. In May, 1797, he wrote:

the Lord graciously visited Gasper River Congregation— The ears of all that congregation seemed to be open to receive the word preached, and almost every sermon was accompanied with power of God, to the awakening of sinners.³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³¹ See Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of . . .* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), p. 24.

³² *New York Missionary Magazine* (1802), p. 75.

The "universal deadness and stupidity" that prevailed in the congregation was changed during the summer and fall. Alarmed, however, by the winter slump that had set in, the people made the following covenant:

We bind ourselves to observe the third Saturday of each month for one year as a day of fasting and prayer for the conversion of sinners in Logan County and throughout the world.

The revival in the entire Cumberland region came climactically at the turn of the century. In October, 1799, John Rankin, John McGee, and McGready administered the sacrament at the Ridge, a "vacant congregation" in the Cumberlands of Tennessee. A revival was started that continued on into 1800. McGready wrote that the "eternal, gracious Jehovah" poured out overflowing floods of salvation. In places like Gasper River and Muddy River great crowds of people came by wagons bringing their provisions with them. They continued in revival services for days. James McGready, whose preaching had moved Stone mightily, was impressed by the zeal of young converts in securing conversions in these revivals and stated the "conduct of the children converted more persons than all the preaching."³³

But what kind of preaching did McGready do which impressed Stone? It has already been noted that McGready threatened people with horrifying descriptions of hell. An examination of his sermons reveals that he also vigorously attacked the dominant secular characteristics in frontier society and condemned irreligion in all classes. The courts of the rich and the palaces of the great were no temples of religion. And he found in the middle classes an excessive thirst for riches, worldly cares, trades, and speculations, vice and wickedness.³⁴ Even in the little cabins and cottages of the poor, McGready discovered "shameful ignorance and horrid inattention to God and religion."³⁵

McGready first denounced the secularists of frontier society who were preoccupied with making money. He described them thus:

All of their conversation is of corn and tobacco, of land and stock. The price of merchandise and negroes are inexhaustible themes of conversation.

³³ *New York Missionary Magazine* (1802), p. 199.

³⁴ *McGready's Works*, I, 164.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

But for them the name of Jesus has no charms; and it is rarely mentioned unless to be profaned.³⁶

The stormy McGready assailed the "flesh-pleasing idols" of the frontiersmen: money, property, fine clothing, and beautiful ornaments were idols because they were more "highly esteemed than God." A husband or wife can be an idol if one chooses to "go to hell" with such a one rather than to take up the Cross in self-denial.³⁷ Millions fail to be converted because of their fondness for "the Bottle," or strong drink.

McGready termed the bottle the "drunkard's Christ."³⁸ He launched out against the "every man for himself" spirit which he found to be widespread. He condemned hard bargains and cheating. The evangelist bombarded "Sabbath breaking, cursing, balls, parties, horse-racing, gambling."³⁹ He besieged those who "were filled with anger, malice, revenge, and a bitter unforgiving temper."⁴⁰

His opposition, further, to the use of alcoholic liquors was decisive.⁴¹ And he engaged in vigorous preaching against the use of alcohol which, in mountainous frontier communities, aroused much opposition to him.

Polemics extended everywhere. McGready attacked hypocritical Christians just as vigorously as he did the irreligious. He caustically described the hypocritical person who lived prayerless, drank too much whiskey, and cheated his neighbor in a bargain, but who defended his Westminster Confession of Faith to the last letter. His most penetrating criticism was reserved for those who did not understand the nature and destructiveness of pride. "Many professing Christians," he said,

have no other ideas of humility, than those of a *plain old fashioned dress*, and *awkward manners*, and *cheap homely diet*; and pride, the opposite of humility, with them, consists in *vain, gaudy attire and the superfluous ornaments* of giddy youth. When they speak of the nature of pride, all you hear about the matter is rings, ribbands, ruffles, and trinkets. But these are only

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ James McGready, "An Address on the Dangerous and Destructive Consequences Attending the Use of Spirituous Liquors," bound in the above *Works* of McGready, but not indexed, p. 4.

some of the little top-twigs of the tree; the root lies deep, in the very bottom of the heart.⁴²

McGready called the doctors, majors, colonels, generals, judges, and members of Congress who were deists, "half-read fops, who never made the Bible their study." Their unanswerable arguments were "profane witticisms, sneers, jests at sacred things, and extravagant loud laughter." Such vigorous preaching converted many persons.

Barton W. Stone, too, was amazed at the results of McGready's sermons. The revival in 1801 on the edge of the prairie of Logan County, Kentucky, presented an awesome spectacle to him. He had never witnessed anything like it before. It "baffled description," but he tried to describe it:

Many, very many, fell down, as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparently breathless and motionless state—sometimes for a few moments reviving, and exhibiting symptoms of life by a deep groan, or piercing shriek, or by a prayer for mercy most fervently uttered. After lying thus for hours, they obtained deliverance . . . they would rise shouting deliverance, and then would address the surrounding multitude in language truly eloquent and impressive.⁴³

Two or three of Stone's friends were struck down. He sat patiently by one of them to observe critically everything that happened from beginning to end. Stone noticed the momentary revivings from death, the contrite confessions of sin, the fervent prayers. After observing many such cases, he concluded that it was the "work of God."⁴⁴ Stone's test was a short-term pragmatic one. He did not care for the excesses, but he felt that the fruit of the revival was from the tree of goodness. "Much did I see then, and much have I since seen, that I considered to be fanaticism," he wrote,

but this should not condemn the work. The Devil has always tried to ape the works of God to bring them into disrepute. But that cannot be a Satanic work which brings men to humble confession and forsaking of sin . . . fervent praise and thanksgiving.⁴⁵

Barton W. Stone found himself completely in agreement with McGready in condemnation of the proud frontiersman with his rough

⁴² *Ibid.*, II, 22.

⁴³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 34 f.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

amusements, his money-grabbing, his indifference to religion, and his sectarian quarreling. He was convinced of the necessity of the experience of the new birth. He had doubts about the extravagant external phenomena accompanying the revivals; he was, however, shaken by the pulsing life of the movement which stirred many out of their shell-like indifference and their rock-like lethargy. Above all, McGready impressed on Stone the necessity for making first-hand religious awakening a reality for large numbers of people in the church, as well as for the secularists outside.

CHAPTER III

THE LASTING INFLUENCE OF THE REVIVAL

FOLLOWING HIS VISIT to Logan County, Stone hurried back to his churches to report the revival news. A large congregation had gathered in the log-cabin church at Cane Ridge on Sunday morning. Stone described what he had seen and heard.¹ He then took his text from the Great Commission and urged the people to consider: the universality of the gospel, faith as a condition for salvation and the possibility of immediate belief. The congregation responded as Stone had hoped, being "affected with awful solemnity, and many returned home weeping."² In the evening Stone carried the tidings to his congregation at Concord. Two little girls were "struck down," making the same emotional responses as had been made in McGready's meetings. Returning to Cane Ridge on Monday, Stone was greeted with an embrace from a friend, Nathaniel Rogers, who praised the Lord aloud for his conversion. People gathered at the gate of the home and a revival started before Stone had entered the house. In less than "twenty minutes" scores of people had fallen to the ground. "Paleness, trembling, and anxiety appeared in all," said Stone, and

some attempted to fly from the scene panic-stricken, but they either fell or returned immediately to the crowd, as unable to get away.³

An "intelligent" Deist in the community who had viewed Stone's previous work as sincere, now accused him of deceiving the people. Stone viewed him "with pity and mildly spoke a few words to him; immediately he fell as a dead man, and rose no more till he confessed the Saviour."⁴ This spontaneous meeting continued late at night in the open air.

¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Many "found peace." Stone wrote that its effects, "were like fire in dry stubble driven by a strong wind."⁵ In June a "protracted" meeting began at Concord, with "multitudes" of all denominations attending. People from all over the country-side seemed to be moving toward Concord.⁶ Richard McNemar, writing the history of the Kentucky Revival in 1807, estimated there were four thousand people present. The meetings lasted from Saturday until the succeeding Wednesday, day and night, without intermission. One visitor described the scene:

The appearance itself was awful and solemn. It was performed in a thick grove of beach-in timber. Candles were furnished by the congregation. The night was still and calm. Add to that exhortation, prayers, singing, the cries of the distressed on account of sin; the rejoicing of those that were delivered from sin's bondage, and brought to enjoy the liberty that is in Christ Jesus; all going on at the same time.⁷

One gentleman who opposed the meeting later said, "The Gods are among the people."⁸ McNemar reported that four Presbyterian ministers who opposed the meeting were convinced on the fourth day that it was the work of God. Stone stated that party spirit had "shrunk away" and that all united in the work.⁹ The effects lasted after the fires at the Concord meeting ceased to be fed. In the house and in the field, day and night, persons would fall down under conviction and sing and shout with joy.

Up until now, Stone, in his twenty-ninth year, had had no time for courtship and marriage. He had, on May 4, 1799, bought, for five hundred dollars, one hundred acres of land located five miles east of the Cane Ridge Meeting House. On this tract of land he built a log cabin.¹⁰ Leaving the revival excitement in July, 1801, he journeyed two hundred miles from Cane Ridge to marry Eliza Campbell, who lived in Greenville, Kentucky. Stone says that she was "pious and much engaged in religion." He and his bride hurried back from their brief honeymoon to be in readiness for a "great meeting" to begin at Cane Ridge in August.

The momentum of the frontier camp meeting catapulted, here, to its

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *New York Missionary Magazine* (1802), p. 126 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁰ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

Cane Ridge Meeting.

highest pitch. From all parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, multitudes of people converged on Stone's little church. The meeting began, according to Stone, on Thursday or Friday, "before the third Lord's Day in August, 1801."¹¹ Thus, the inclusive dates of the event would be August 14-19.¹²

The meeting was called by the Presbyterian ministers, eighteen of whom attended. But Methodists and Baptists all joined together in harmony. As Stone reviewed the meeting later, the unity of purpose among those of different denominations seems to have impressed him most vividly and thoughtfully. "The roads were literally crowded," Stone wrote,

with wagons, carriages, horsemen, and footmen moving to the solemn camp. The sight was affecting. It was judged by military men on the ground, that there were between twenty and thirty thousand collected. Four or five preachers were frequently speaking at the same time in different parts of the encampment, without confusion. The Methodist and Baptist preachers aided in the work, and all appeared cordially united in it—of one mind and one soul, and the salvation of sinners seemed to be the great object of all. We all engaged in singing the same songs of praise—all united in prayer—all preached the same things—free salvation urged upon all by faith and repentance.¹³

James B. Finley, a famous Methodist circuit rider, estimated the attendance at twenty-five thousand, and stated the noise was like "the roar of Niagara." "The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm," he wrote.

I counted seven ministers, all preaching at one time, some on stumps, others in wagons, and one, the Rev. William Burke (Methodist) was standing on a tree which had, in falling, lodged against another. Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting vociferously.¹⁴

¹¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹² Cleveland followed Stone's chronology without question. See Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 76. Thomas Cleland, a leading Presbyterian preacher, writing forty-seven years after the Cane Ridge Meeting, declared that it happened about the middle of June, 1801. See C. C. Ware, Stone's biographer, who presents evidence which would indicate that the revival dates were August 7-12. The confusion was doubtless caused by whether or not persons dated the beginning from the time of the first preparatory meetings or the first conversions.

¹³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ James B. Finley, *Sketches of Western Methodism* (Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern, 1855), p. 78.

Peter Cartwright called the revival at Cane Ridge the greatest since the day of Pentecost. He reported at times that "more than one thousand persons broke into loud shouting all at once and the shouting could be heard for miles."¹⁵

Another observer declared that all "classes of society flocked to these meetings . . . the hunter, the black-leg, the robber, the prostitute . . . as well as the devout worshipper."¹⁶

Another noticed that the

Governor of the state, a lawyer and a physician were among the number, and that the two latter came to the ground under the influence of inveterate prejudice; the doctor being an avowed deist, and the lawyer in the plenitude of contempt, the scorner's chair.¹⁷

No artists were present to leave pictures of the camp-meeting at Cane Ridge. Apparently it was an open-air meeting in the woods. William Burke declared that his was the only tent on the ground, though John Lyle speaks of a Captain Venable's tent.¹⁸ One observer tells us that a stage was erected in the woods, one hundred yards from the meeting-house where a Presbyterian preacher preached. A Methodist spoke from another stand one hundred yards "east of the house, while in another direction, about one hundred and fifty yards distant, was an assembly of black people."¹⁹

No clear idea of the activity of these tumultuous days can be gleaned from the accounts, but the following description indicates something of the setting: the people

are commonly collected in small circles of 10 or 12, close adjoining another circle, and all engaged in singing Watts and Harts hymns; and then a minister steps upon a stump or a log and begins an exhortation or sermon, when, as many as can hear, collect around him. One Sabbath night I saw above 100 candles burning at once and I saw, I suppose, 100 persons at once on the ground, crying for mercy, of all ages from 8 to 60 years. When a person is struck down he is carried by others out of the congregation,

¹⁵ Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Robert Stuart, "Reminiscences," *Western Presbyterian Herald*, April 13, 1837.

¹⁷ Angier March, *Increase of Piety, or the Revival of Religion in the United States of America* (Newburyport: A. March, 1802).

¹⁸ Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Exercises.

when some minister converses with, and prays for him; afterwards a few gather around and sing a hymn suitable to his case.²⁰

One of the most remarkable things about the revival was the bodily exercises which accompanied it. Men, women, and children were seized with an astonishing variety of exercises both in meetings and in home and field. No one has given a clearer or more complete description of the exercises than has Stone. Catherine Cleveland compiled descriptions of four of the exercises: falling, jerking, barking, and dancing. Stone described these and three others, the running, the laughing, and the singing exercises.

Falling.
The most common exercise and the first to attract attention was the falling exercise. The one affected "would generally fall with a piercing scream, fall like a log on the floor, earth, or mud, and appear as dead," wrote Stone.²¹

The Methodists had long been used to seeing people sink to the floor and lose consciousness while men preached. Gasper River first reported the falling exercise, which reached its peak at Cane Ridge, where thousands fell. McNemar related that few escaped falling in a meeting held at Calvin Creek in May, 1801. Those who tried to run away were struck in the act of escaping. So many "fell" on the third night, that they were

collected together and laid out in order, on two squares of the meeting house; which like so many dead corpses, covered a considerable part of the floor.²²

Often people who went to ridicule the work, themselves caught the emotional contagion.²³ Recognizing the contagious nature of the exercises, many preachers warned their congregations to stay away. The falling exercises were an inevitable part of every meeting. Soon the success of meetings was measured by the number struck down.

The most dramatic of the exercises was the "jerks." Stone said the

²⁰ Letter of Rev. John Evans Finley in *New York Missionary Magazine* (1802).

²¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²² Richard McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary Outpouring of the Spirit of God in the Western States of America* (New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1846), p. 23 f., hereafter referred to as *The Kentucky Revival*.

²³ Colonel Patterson, Letter to Rev. Dr. John King, *New York Missionary Magazine* (1802).

jerks sometimes started in one member of the body and sometimes in the whole system.

When the head alone was affected, it would be jerked backward and forward, or from side to side, so quickly that the features of the face could not be distinguished. When the whole system was affected, I have seen the person stand in one place and jerk backward and forward in quick succession, his head nearly touching the floor.²⁴

Stone reported that all classes of people, saints as well as sinners, were struck by it. The "jerkers" could not explain their behavior, but it produced happiness in them. Stone mentioned having seen wicked persons thus affected "cursing the jerks, while they were thrown to the earth with violence."²⁵ As strange to Stone and McNemar as the exercise itself was the fact that none was injured while thus seized.²⁶

McNemar said that the jerks usually began in the head, which would fly backward and forward and from side to side with a quick jolt that the person would naturally labor to suppress, but in vain. The more anyone labored to stay himself and be sober, the more he staggered and the more rapidly his twitches increased.²⁷

These spectacular exercises were contagious and the mere mention of them sometimes turned an entire congregation into puppet-like "jerkers."²⁸ A dignified Presbyterian clergyman once went to reprove the

²⁴ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Peter Cartwright, however, in his autobiography tells of a crowd of drunkards that came to break up a religious service. The leader cursed the jerks and all religion, but soon fell victim to them himself. He tried to run away, but was seized so that he could not. A particularly violent jerk broke his neck and he died, a martyr to the "jerks"!

²⁷ McNemar, *op. cit.*, p. 61 f.

²⁸ Lorenzo Dow, for all of his eccentricity, was a shrewd observer who realized that exhorters like himself produced these strange "gyrations." "I have seen all denominations of religion exercised with the jerks," he said, "gentlemen and lady, black and white, young and old. I have passed a meeting house where I observed the undergrowth had been cut for a camp-meeting, and from fifty to a hundred saplings were left breast-high, for the people who jerked to hold on by. I observed where they held on they had kicked up the earth as a horse stamping flies. I believe it (the jerks) does not affect those naturalists who wished to try to get to philosophize upon it and rarely those who are most pious, but the lukewarm lazy professor (of religion) is subject to it. The wicked are more afraid of it than of smallpox or yellow fever and are subject to it; but the persecutors

Jerks

"jerkers" in a neighboring congregation. While denouncing the "jerks," his own immunity collapsed and he was seized with them.²⁹ Peter Cartwright related seeing as many as five hundred jerking at one time. He reported seeing bonnets, caps, and combs flying off the head, and "so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a wagoner's whip."³⁰

Akin to the jerking exercise was the barking performance. Stone said it was "nothing but the jerks. A person affected with the jerks, especially in his head, would often make a grunt, or bark, if you please, from the suddenness of the jerks." Stone placed the origin of the "barking" in Eastern Tennessee, where once an old Presbyterian preacher went into the woods for private devotions when he was seized with the "jerks." He caught hold of a sapling to prevent falling and "as his head jerked back, he uttered a grunt, or kind of noise similar to a bark, his face being turned upwards. Some wag discovered him in this position and reported that he found him barking up a tree."³¹ Stone did not like the term "barking," a fact which gave the impression that he was even a little sympathetic to the exercise.

An eye-witness in lower Kentucky testified that

It was common to hear people barking like a flock of spaniels on their way to meeting. . . . There they would start up suddenly in a fit of barking, rush out, roam around and in a short time come barking and foaming back. Down on all fours they sometimes went, growling, snapping their teeth, and barking just like dogs.³²

Stone's description of the dancing exercise indicated that he was sympathetic toward it. Usually the professor of religion began with the "jerks" and glided into a dance, whereupon the jerks ceased. "Such dancing," wrote Stone,

was indeed heavenly to the spectators; there was nothing in it like levity, nor calculated to excite levity in the beholders. The smile of heaven shone

are more subject to it than any and they have sometimes cursed and swore and damned it while jerking." Grover C. Loud, *Evangelized America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1928), p. 105 f.

²⁹ Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

³⁰ Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³² David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America* (Boston, 1813), II, 256.

on the countenance of the subject, and assimilated [sic] to angels appeared the whole person. Sometimes the dancing was quick and sometimes slow. Thus they continued to move forward and backward in the same track or alley till nature seemed exhausted, and they would fall prostrate on the floor or earth, unless caught by those standing by. While thus exercised, I have heard their solemn praises and prayers ascending to God.³³

Stone apparently felt that dancing was less objectionable than some of the other exercises. He also apparently accepted McNemar's belief that dancing was associated with the appearance of the inward light. His sympathies toward religious dancing partly account for the fact that he was later called by many, a New Light, and by a few, a Shaker. The New Lights taught that the will of God was made manifest, to each individual who honestly sought after it, by an inward light which shone in the heart.

Stone asserted that the laughing exercise was frequent and confined solely to religious people. It was a "loud hearty laughter but one *sui generis*; it excited laughter in none else."³⁴ The subject appeared "rapturously solemn" and encouraged solemnity in the bystander, both saint and sinner. "It is truly indescribable," concluded Stone, and regrettably, he made no further attempt to describe revival laughing exercises.

Stone interpreted the running exercise in two ways. Persons who attempted to run from the meeting in fear of the exercises were sometimes seized with bodily agitation. The other form originated in the service itself when the individual was suddenly constrained to start running and hurdling every obstacle in the way, until strength was exhausted.³⁵

Apparently Stone is the only writer who has left a description of the singing exercise. The subject was in a very happy state of mind and sang melodiously, not from the mouth or nose, but entirely in the breast. . . . Such music silenced everything, and attracted the attention of all. It was most heavenly.³⁶

Stone declared that one never grew tired of hearing it and pronounced it "more unaccountable than anything else I ever saw." Together, Stone and Dr. J. P. Campbell, one of his violent opponents later, attended "to a pious lady thus exercised" in a meeting and concluded it "to be some-

³³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

thing surpassing" anything they had known in nature.³⁷ This exercise apparently was indulged in by individuals and was unrelated to the singing of the groups.

There are strangely few references to normal group singing during the meetings of the Great Revival. It is certain, however, that singing played a large part in fanning the religious wildfire of the occasion. Lorenzo Dow, the eccentric itinerant, said that he was opposed to all singing between the period of his conversion and his visit to the Kentucky camp-meetings. When he was in Ireland, he declared that he was almost "Quakerized" in regard to singing, but

after I saw the effects of singing in the power of faith at camp meetings, etc., in the awakening and conversion of sinners, I was convinced of this medium, and that singing properly was a divine employment.³⁸

Davenport states, after reading eye-witness accounts, that

The volume of song burst all bonds of guidance and control, and broke out again and again from the throats of the people while over all, at intervals, there rang out the shout of ecstasy, the sob and the groan. Men and women shouted aloud during the sermon, and shook hands all around at the close, in what was termed the singing ecstasy.³⁹

George Pullen Jackson, investigating Kentucky revivals to discover what songs were sung, discovered few clues to the titles used. Many of them have been attributed to John Alexander Granade, a western poet. Jackson's thesis is that a new brand of religious folk song, called the "revival spiritual" came out of the upheaval of the Kentucky "revival of 1800 on."⁴⁰ This type is in contrast to two earlier American types: 1) hymns of praise and exhortation and 2) ballads of biblical and current religious experience.⁴¹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁸ George Pullen Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1944), p. 92.

³⁹ F. M. Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), p. 75 f.

⁴⁰ Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁴¹ At first the crowds sang from memory, or learned easy repetitive new songs, for they had no books. After 1805 "little songsters" or booklets began to appear (without tunes) at the campmeeting. No denomination would confess to having "fathered the definitely disreputable ditties." They were attributed to individual waifs, or to the "other denominations." Jackson feels, however, that they came

Stone stated that after the days and nights of excitement at Cane Ridge, where he was a leader engaged in preaching, singing, visiting, and praying, his lungs "failed" and he felt himself "fast descending to the tomb."⁴² His illness was viewed with alarm, but Stone wanted to attend one more "good" camp-meeting. Against the orders of his physician, he went to Paris, Kentucky. There for the first time, he heard a Presbyterian preacher laboring hard to "Calvinize" the people and dividing the revivalists into two groups—those who worshipped at the camp, and others who went to the meeting-house. Stone went to the church, and after hearing a minister hostile to revivals, speak in "iceberg style," could restrain himself no longer. Before the next scheduled speaker could begin, Stone adopted the strategy of prayer as a counter-offensive. "I proceeded to pray," he said,

feeling a tender concern for the salvation of my fellow-creatures, and expecting shortly to appear before my Judge. The people became very much affected and the house was filled with the cries of distress. Some of the preachers jumped out of a window back of the pulpit, and left us.⁴³

Stone forgot his weakness, and pushed through the crowd, talking to those in distress. The contagion of Cane Ridge lived again in him, as he pointed the way to salvation. Stone was interrupted only by his physician, who finding him "wet with sweat" reprimanded him severely, taking him to his own house. After putting on dry clothes, Stone said he went to sleep and rose the next morning "relieved from the disease which had baffled medicine and threatened my life. The night's sweat was my cure, by the Grace of God." Stone's prospective grave thus became a cradle in which his work grew stronger.

How graphically Barton W. Stone described the various bodily agitations of the revival!⁴⁴ While not accepting "the excesses" of the movement, he did not explicitly condemn any particular activity. In his descriptions and comments, he seemed more favorable to the falling, the dancing, and the singing exercises. Stone did not attempt to explain the

from the memories and immediate experiences of the singing crowds from "various off-shoot Baptists, New Side Presbyterians, and Kellyite Methodist—New Lights!" See Jackson, *op. cit.*

⁴² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Stone did not look on the exercises lightly for he was impressed by the complete dedication of the whole being to God during them.

origin of the exercises, but seemed to leave them in the realm of the mysterious. He said,

That there were many eccentricities and much fanaticism in this excitement, was acknowledged by its warmest advocates; indeed it would have been a wonder, if such things had not appeared, in the circumstances of that time. Yet the good effects were seen and acknowledged in every neighborhood, and among the different sects, it silenced contention, and promoted unity for awhile. . . .⁴⁵

His brief account of the "Wonderful Things" in "the great excitement in the beginning of this century," was to embarrass his followers later. When Dr. Davidson published the *History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky* in 1847, he asserted that Stone was the "ringleader" in the revival disorders. Elder John Rogers, who published Stone's autobiography with "Additions and Reflections," asserted that none of Stone's associates saw him actively participate in the exercises. Indeed there is no evidence to prove that Stone was a participant. The fact remains, however, that he described the exercises with a sympathetic pen. Rogers, in fact, felt forced to say:

I do not think that the views of B. W. Stone, on the subject of the exercises, were altogether correct, yet they were such as the system in which he was educated suggested, and such pretty much too, as his quondam brethren in the Presbyterian Church entertained.⁴⁶

When John L. Waller attacked Stone in the *Western Baptist Review* as a leader of wild fanaticism, Rogers sought to show that the "extravagances all are the legitimate offspring of orthodoxy."⁴⁷ He asserted that they appeared early in Kentucky among the Presbyterians and that the Baptists shared in them. Rogers reviewed extravagant physical outbursts in the eighteenth century

under the labors of such men as Wesley, Whitefield, Erskine, and even the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, president of Princeton College.⁴⁸

He referred to similar phenomena among the Regular Baptists on the James River in Virginia in 1785 and concluded,

⁴⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Review of Dr. Davidson's *History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky* in Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 1 in the Appendix.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

that nothing peculiar to Mr. Stone's reformation, therefore, gave rise to these excesses— That, as we have already shown, false views of the means of enjoying a sense of pardon, may be regarded as the legitimate source of these extravagances— That orthodoxy, therefore, is the father of them all.⁴⁹

Unquestionably, Stone described some of the physical exercises sympathetically; yet, he opposed the belief that revivals were dependent upon the special intervention of the sovereign will of God, "who at certain seasons pours out of his spirit on the people, as the Angel at certain times troubled the waters in the pool of Bethesda."⁵⁰ After a few years, according to this theory, people would forget and a similar revival would again take place.

Such revivals are periodical—once in a few years; but of an evanescent nature; like a flash of lightning. Indeed, the people are taught by the public teachers, not to expect their continuance—by experience and observation they have found them to be of short duration.⁵¹

Stone believed that God was not more willing to give his spirit or favor at one moment in time than at any other. He said that God loved the whole world, and that he sent his Son to save men; that erring men did not need to wait for the Spirit to descend upon them, but rather needed to have an act of faith. "When we began to preach these things," said Stone,

the people appeared as just awakened from the sleep of the ages—they seemed to see for the first time that they were responsible beings.⁵²

Stone encouraged the pattern of conversion which broke the Calvinistic scheme developed by Presbyterians in Kentucky, a scheme which asserted that man must wait until God was ready to strike with the sword of the Spirit. Stone cried out that God had already struck the hour of salvation and continued to strike. The revival was his proof that salvation could invade men's lives without years of waiting.

Remembering the long agony of his own conversion, Stone seemed to oppose the waiting period before conversion practiced by both Cal-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Barton Warren Stone, *The Christian Messenger*, VII (1833), 211. Note: Fourteen volumes were published irregularly, 1826-45, in Georgetown, Kentucky, and in Jacksonville, Illinois. Hereafter *The Christian Messenger* will be referred to under the symbol *CM*.

⁵¹ *CM*, VII (1833), 211.

⁵² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

vinists and Arminians. He stressed the immediacy of salvation; if man believed, God's response was immediate.

The rapid spread of the revival after 1800 makes it difficult to trace. After the drama of Cane Ridge, it moved rapidly in Tennessee to the South and crossed the Ohio River to the North. Rending cries of revival devotees were heard in North Carolina, Western Virginia, and Pennsylvania. By 1803 the revival had reached as far north as the Western Reserve and as far south as Georgia. In this year, however, signs of declining interest appeared, although the excitement did not abate until 1805. After this date sporadic revivals occurred, but denominations entered into competition with resulting divisions. The lights of thousands of camp-fire meetings, however, continued to burn amidst many American denominations. Generating coals were borrowed from the Great Revival in Kentucky to kindle these lesser fires.⁵³

The results of the Great Revival in the West are not so clear and extensive as some have thought. While the gains in converts were substantial, it is doubtful that they cut a very wide swath into the total unchurched population.⁵⁴ The revival often raised the moral tone of many communities, though many intelligent people were repelled by the excesses of the revival. The Great Revival fostered a new form of religious assembly, the camp-meeting, which played a new role in the religious development of America. Missionary activity was developed to some extent by the revival and Shakerism was introduced into the West by reports of the Great Revival which were read in their "mother church" at New Lebanon, in Columbia County, New York. Their missionaries traveled 1300 miles to Kentucky in 1805 and had some initial

⁵³ Catherine Cleveland, in *The Great Revival in the West*, supported the thesis that modern psychology and medicine have abundant explanations for the bodily actions and nervous disorders of the revivals. She mentions the emotionalism of the crowds, the hypnotic type of preaching, the loneliness of frontier life, and the working of the subconscious mind as causes of the strange bodily exercises. J. F. C. Hecker, in his study, *The Epidemics of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: 1837), describes religious emotional exercises in many countries of Europe. Many of the exercises had characterized previous revivals in Ireland, Scotland, and the Piedmont regions in America. More extreme events have taken place in religious history and the phenomena have appeared separately in other places, but for intensity, sweep, and dramatic character, the Great Revival stands alone.

⁵⁴ It is not denied that the Great Revival was the inception of a movement which later evangelized Kentucky. But the process of evangelization by Protestant forces, while having its beginning in 1800, occupied over a quarter of a century.

success within the ranks of Stone's colleagues. Matthew Houston, Richard McNemar, and John Dunlavy, companion preachers of Stone, left him to follow these disciples of Ann Lee. For awhile Stone himself wavered, but balked at their doctrine of the resurrection and their repudiation of marriage.⁵⁵ Stone then labored night and day to overcome the inroads made by the Shakers.⁵⁶

The Great Revival had a significant influence on Stone and it helped to cause schisms in the Presbyterian Church.⁵⁷ When the Presbyterians who opposed revivals became alarmed and attempted to constrain the "revivalists" who were neglecting "creeds," the revival leaders, having experienced the thrill of revival preaching, resisted curtailment of their liberty. The success enjoyed by the revivalists seemed phenomenal to them. Large crowds stirred to a high emotional pitch, and numerous converts, gave Stone and some of his colleagues the necessary impetus to seek freedom from the authority of Presbyteries and Synods.

Ministers of all denominations had been associated in the revival, and Stone clearly saw that this happy association would be undercut by requiring any of his colleagues to conform to certain doctrinal requirements. More and more Stone was to become interested in Christian unity. Doctrines played little part in his thinking. He envisioned the goal of a unified church, based not on doctrinal uniformity, but in large part on that kind of free spontaneous fellowship which leaders from various denominations had enjoyed in those harmonious revival days on Cane Ridge.

In his own conversion, Stone had learned the value of first-hand religious experience. He came deeply to believe that it was possible to receive direct illumination from the Spirit of God. In taking the Bible as his source of authority, Stone and his group prepared the way for an emphasis on the restoration of primitive Christianity. These two characteristics, direct illumination from the spirit and the stress on biblicism, had been typical of some left-wing Protestantism in Europe.

⁵⁵ John Dunlavy, *The Manifesto or a Declaration of the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Christ* (New York: Reprinted by Edward O. Jenkins, 1847), p. 456 ff.

⁵⁶ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵⁷ Both the New Lights of Stone and the Cumberland Presbyterians began to widen the breach between themselves and the Presbyterian Church at the time of the Great Revival. Cf. next chapter.

The revival in the West made its own imprint on the type of left-wing Protestantism exhibited by Stone, and brought a third characteristic into play: namely, that if the present denomination refused to see the "light," men must obey God even to the point of separation from the church. This problem Stone now faced.

He stood at the hour of a fateful decision. He had never been at home in Presbyterian theology, but he liked the people in his Presbyterian churches. His congregations were devoted to him and he had, in his time of service, been devoted to them. Now they came to the parting of the ways. Stone wanted other people to have the opportunity to be converted in the same way he himself had experienced conversion; with a Bible in hand, a prayer in the heart, and the Confession of Faith buried in the dust of neglect. He had shared the democratic liberty of the frontier and wanted the shackles of religious authority released. The freedom of the revival and its practical results stimulated Stone and his colleagues to desire in religion the kind of freedom they had witnessed in political and economic frontier life.

Stone, in his hour of decision, took the hard road of renunciation. For six years, congregations and pastor had lived together in harmony. He dramatically called together his congregations and informed them that "he could no longer conscientiously preach to support the Presbyterian Church," and that

my labors should henceforth be directed to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom, irrespective of party; that I absolved them from all obligations in a pecuniary point of view, and then in their presence tore up their salary obligation to me, in order to free their minds from all fear of being called upon hereafter for aid.⁵⁸

Stone wrote that he preferred the truth to even the friendship of his associates in the Presbyterian ministry.

Thus to the cause of truth I sacrificed the friendship of two large congregations and an abundant salary for the support of myself and family.⁵⁹

"Honesty and a good conscience," he preferred to ease and error. The Great Revival resulted in Stone's divorce not only from his congre-

⁵⁸ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

gations, but also from his slaves. "I had emancipated my slaves from a sense of right," wrote Stone,

choosing poverty with a good conscience. . . . This revival cut the bonds of many poor slaves, and this argument speaks volumes in favor of the work. For of what avail is a religion of decency and order without righteousness? ⁶⁰

Stone, unused to hard work, turned his attention cheerfully but "awkwardly" to labor on his farm. He continued to preach almost every night and often in the daytime. Being without money to hire laborers, often, on his return home, he found the weeds ahead of his corn. While others slept, he labored at night, to redeem lost time. When he did sleep, his body was tired, but his mind was calm because he had broken the bonds of theological slavery for himself, and the bonds of physical slavery for those who had called him master. ⁶¹

The Great Revival was intoxicating wine to the ignorant masses; a stumbling block to the orderly Presbyterians; foolishness to the upper strata of Kentuckians; hysteria to contemporary and present-day rationalists; but to Stone, it may be likened to the release of another kind of atomic energy, disintegrating the bonds of creedal orthodoxy, and holding the promise that a new Christian order might unite the churches on the Bible for the glory of the coming Kingdom. When the roaring "fires" of the Great Revival cooled, very few of his immediate colleagues could build solidly upon the dying embers, but Stone took from the ashes a small residue of refined metal: freedom from religious bondage and creedal tradition, and an evangelistic passion that soon was to enable his movement to spread throughout Kentucky and northward into Ohio.

Already the revival and the conversion experiences of Stone had iden-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44. The available records seem to indicate that Catherine Cleveland is right in that no "emancipating movement developed, but the number of manumissions increased" under the influence of the revival. In 1805, a number of Baptist ministers and churches were expelled from the Elkhorn, North District, and Bracken Associations because they favored emancipation. They were called "Friends to Humanity" and Emancipators. In 1807, they organized under the name of the "Baptized Licking-Locust Association, Friends to Humanity." Manumissions, induced by this group and the "revival" probably account for the 150 percent increase in manumissions between 1800 and 1810, noted by James R. Birney over the previous decade. See Cleveland, *op. cit.*, p. 157 f.

⁶¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

tified him with many of the central emphases of developing left-wing American Protestantism; but the greatest influence of the revival on Stone did not fully appear until after his struggle with the Presbyterians ended. The revival had opened to him the doors of a new idea through which he did not, apparently, pass until later: if men of many denominations can be united in a revival, there is no reason why they should not be united all of the time. Stone's idea of Christian unity unquestionably had its genesis in the revival experiences where many denominationalists worked together. For many, the revival would become the means of bringing the "coming kingdom" into the present;⁶² for Stone, the great revolution would be the unity of the followers of Christ.

⁶² H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Company, 1937), p. 148 f.

CHAPTER IV

CONFLICT WITH THE PRESBYTERIANS

BEFORE STONE and his followers were to lead in the rise of one phase of the American movement for church unity, their final break with Calvinism came. The revivalists and the anti-revivalists battled over doctrines and church polity. These doctrinal conflicts do not tell the whole story, for the conflict may be seen also against a background of social forces operating on the frontier. The conflict between the revivalists and the anti-revivalists took place, it has been suggested, because of conditions on the frontier and the failure of the Presbyterian Church to adapt itself to the needs and interests of the West.

An American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, gained widespread fame for emphasizing the significant role of the frontier in developing American concepts of social and political freedom.¹ He stressed the importance of free land, available until about 1890, which stimulated conquest.² The love of liberty was developed in the wilderness where the individual reacted against direct control. Democracy was encouraged in a society where men could buy their own land and till it with little interference. During much of the eighteenth and the whole of the nineteenth century, the Western frontier produced a typical culture of its own which profoundly affected life in the United States. Western institutions also came into conflict with the older established society of the commercial East. This strife between the East and West brought forth eastern legislation to counteract the movement of the population westward.³

¹ See Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921).

² Dixon Ryan Fox, *Sources of Culture in the Middle West* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1934), p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

As the West produced its own type of economic, political, and social life so it "created its own typical religious experience and expression,"⁴ which resulted in the formation of new denominations, marked with characteristics of the West. The causes which engendered political and economic conflict "promoted religious controversy and schism."⁵ In the East, social conditions fostered first the Federalist and, later, the Republican temper and theory of government. In the West, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian views of political organization developed. Contrasting theories, religious experience and organization were also fostered by the same social conditions in the East and West which tended to develop those political theories and practices. Religion in the more settled East tended to emphasize intellectual content, polity corresponding to a "class organized society," the ethics of a stable citizenry and ritualism. Religion in the West, on the other hand, tended to emotionalism, rebellion against authority, reaction against culture, and the restoration of restraints on gambling, drinking, and violation of the Sabbath.

The westerners, as indicated, liked emotional fervor in political, social and religious life. People who lived on the frontier responded best to religion which was freed from abstract terminology. Abstract thought appeals to men who are used to thinking in abstract terms, but the frontiersman found satisfaction in preaching rooted in deep emotional feeling rather than in preaching centered in the language of abstract creeds.

Men on the frontier who now enjoyed political and economic liberty which they had not experienced on the Eastern seaboard desired similar freedom in religion. Such freedom found its expression not only in approval of lay preaching, but also in the voluntary character of religious organizations. Churches tended to free themselves from ecclesiastical officials who exercised control over them.

Religious doctrines tended to criss-cross on the frontier, but in Kentucky and Tennessee, Arminianism finally became more at home than did predestinarian Calvinism. What happened in these two states was typical of what some think happened in the political sphere. The westerners, it is maintained, were not creative in their original institutional "building." For better or worse they built according to the old plans

⁴ See Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, pp. 136-143.

⁵ *Ibid.*

with which they were acquainted. But in time, they tinkered with government; that is the area where the frontier influence first entered.⁶

The same pattern was followed in religion, as far as Kentucky was concerned. The majority of the early settlers clung closely to their established Calvinism, but soon the conditions on the frontier nurtured a reaction against Calvinism on the part of the Arminian Methodists and the Arminian Presbyterians. When the Baptists and the Methodists entered a little later in Kentucky, however, the Arminian Baptists became Calvinists, probably because of denominational rivalry⁷ with the Methodists.

The conflict of the revival party and the anti-revival group in Kentucky in 1800 must be seen in view of previous struggles between the New Side and the Old Side Parties of the Presbyterian Church. The first open break appeared during the Great Awakening.⁸ The revival party, or "New Sides," was led by the Tennents, who grew up under the influence of frontier conditions. The battle involved two generations of the Scotch-Irish: The leaders of the revival party were Scotch-Irish frontier preachers; the leaders of the anti-revival party were immigrants who had been nurtured in Europe.⁹ The latter, or "Old Side" party charged the revivalists with making censorious judgments, overthrowing the authority of Synod, disturbing and dividing congregations, considering the call to the ministry on the basis of personal feeling, and preaching the terrors of the law in a manner which had no precedent in the Word of God. The revival group denounced the "Old Sides" party as being composed of unconverted ministers and "blind leaders of the blind." The schism which resulted in 1741, lasted until 1758, by which time the Old Side leaders had passed on. It was in this year that a plan of union was reached. The stricter view of Presbyterianism won out over the looser in matters of church polity. The "New Side" view prevailed over the older view in doctrines on ordination and conversion.¹⁰

⁶ Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁷ Leonard Bacon, *History of American Christianity* ("American Church History," Vol. XIII [New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893]), p. 222.

⁸ A strong revival movement of the 1740's in the American Colonies.

⁹ Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 156.

¹⁰ Robert Ellis Thompson, *The Presbyterians* ("American Church History," Vol. VI [New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893]), p. 44.

The union was nearly dissolved in 1761 in the dispute of the two Presbyteries of Newcastle and the Old Side Presbytery of Donegal. The chief difficulty arose over the examinations of candidates for the ministry. The Plan of Union had forbidden Presbyteries to license or ordain anyone until he had given satisfaction in matters of learning, skill in divinity, cases of conscience and "experimental acquaintance with religion." Members of the Old Side maintained that this meant only meeting the requirement of the Westminster Directory, namely, that the Presbytery "shall inquire touching the grace of God in the candidate, and if he be of such holiness of life as is requisite in a minister of the gospel."¹¹ The New Side contended that it meant nothing less than the presentation of his religious experiences according to the pattern of the Great Awakening. The Old Side replied that no man has a right to inquire into the religious life of another and that the true test of grace in a man is not the testimony of self, but of others who have observed his manner of life. When it seemed as though a fresh schism would result, it was agreed that each Presbytery should take whichever course it preferred and that if the minority could not conscientiously follow, they should organize as a separate Presbytery. Thompson observed that this was a most "un-Presbyterian solution," since it abandoned the principle of unity in procedure in a vital matter. Though the majority acted with more "charity than prudence," Thompson is quick to state that the majority acted with more rigor than "charitable consideration"¹² in drawing sharply precise disciplinary order.

Yet, it has been pointed out that the Presbyterian Church became for a time a frontier church insofar as its rigid structure permitted.¹³ Puritan individualism infiltrated into the church. The demand for a regenerate church membership sprang up and the Congregationalist rule of confining baptism to the children of communicants who gave evidence of conversion displaced the Presbyterian usage of "baptizing the children of the baptized." Ministers received less deference and the whole sacramental theory changed from the institutional conception to the theory of the voluntaristic sects which tended to accept the Zwinglian

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹³ See Niebuhr, *Social Sources*.

theory of simple commemoration. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Presbyterian Church, more than any other, became the church of the frontier; it was probably more dominant than it has been at any other period of American history,¹⁴ flourishing as it did not only in the older states, but in the regions beyond the Appalachian ranges.

The Church was unable to maintain this position. It even lost a large number of the great influx of Presbyterians.¹⁵ Failure was at two points. In the first place, Calvinistic doctrines, presented in popular preaching based on the Westminster Confession, repelled people. The great doctrines of Calvinism required a judicious presentation which many did not give to them. Consequently, a popular rebellion arose against what seemed to be an over-emphasis on man's dependence upon God.

A second obstacle in the way of the Presbyterian Church was its rigid stand on the matter of ministerial education. The Presbyterian churches helped all churches in setting up a high ideal for the ministry, but did itself a disservice by insisting on high educational standards in frontier communities where even the simplest education was difficult to secure.¹⁶ The church made the mistake of judging the needs of the frontier "by the standard of Philadelphia." Thus arose the popular saying that the church sought to make men "gentlemen before it made them ministers." The frontier, needing a faith more adaptable to its needs and spirit, rebelled against the established order, dividing Presbyterianism into eastern and western branches.¹⁷ Many of the "natural adherents" of the church responded to the more adaptable ministrations of the Methodists and Baptists. The influence of the frontier faith upon the Presbyterian Church is also seen in the defection of the Stone group, the schism of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the establishment of Shaker communities in Kentucky and Ohio.

The Cumberland schism, while following that of the Springfield Presbytery,¹⁸ reveals with particular clarity the nature of the conflict between the frontier faith and the older established parent church. In addition to doctrinal issues, primary difficulties arose over questions

¹⁴ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22, p. 69.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁷ Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 157.

¹⁸ Cf. *post*, chap. v, p. 92 ff.

Calvinism

Education

of congregational polity, emotional rebirth, and the ordination of an uneducated clergy. Frontier preachers tended to organize their churches on the "sectarian" principle, which was opposed by the established clergy. Ministers from the Cumberland area vigorously championed the camp-meeting revivals that were usually opposed by the older church, especially after the initial wave appeared. In 1802 the Cumberland Presbytery took the step of licensing as preachers a number of zealous revivalists, who neither had the required amount of academic training nor were able to give unqualified assent to such doctrines as "predestination and perseverance" in the Westminster Confession.¹⁹ A minority in the Cumberland Presbytery, in protest against this step, appealed to the Synod of Kentucky, which appointed a commission. It suspended the licentiates and a majority of the Presbytery, weakening its case by twice refusing to appeal in due form to the General Assembly. By 1809, the friends of the Presbytery accepted the Synod's judgment in the case and a year later, the Cumberland Presbytery became a separate denomination which grew rapidly. The Synod of Cumberland was formed in 1813; the following year it adopted a revision of the Westminster Confession and thus became the left wing of American Presbyterianism.

¹⁹ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

CHAPTER V

“NEW LIGHT” DISSENTERS

ANOTHER FRONTIER GROUP appeared almost simultaneously with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This second group separated from the Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Richard McNemar and Barton W. Stone in 1803.¹ When McNemar left the group, Stone became the recognized leader of the new movement, called Stoneites or New Lights. They formed a new religious body called the Christian Church. It has been pointed out that they represented a more emotional frontier faith than even the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.² They revolted against creeds, especially the Westminster Confession, and sought to establish a simple Christianity on a biblical basis. Some of the Presbyterian clergy suspected that the revivalists were introducing heresy under cover of the revival.³

1803

While the Great Revival was at its peak, several of the revival preachers began to promulgate beliefs which were different from the body of doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Outstanding among these revivalists were Richard McNemar, John Thompson, John Dunlavy, Robert Marshall, and Barton Stone. The three former ministers were members of the Washington Presbytery; the two latter belonged to the West Lexington Presbytery.

The rapid expansion of the Presbyterian Church in the West had

¹ Though he later left the original group of schismatics, the name of Richard McNemar is included because he shared the initiative with Stone in the departure from the Presbyterians.

² See Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 160.

³ David Rice approved the revival in an address before the Synod of Kentucky in 1803. But in a *Second Epistle to the Citizens of Kentucky* (Lexington, Kentucky: D. and C. Bradford, 1808), he opposed the revival movement. In the latter address, he compared the movement not to the dawn, but to the night covering the new commonwealth of Kentucky with heresy.

led to the increase of presbyteries. The Transylvania Presbytery in the year of its formation, 1786, included all of Kentucky and parts of Tennessee and Ohio. In this presbytery, Stone was ordained at Cane Ridge, October 4, 1798. In 1799, the territory was divided into three presbyteries. Stone, a resident of Bourbon County was in the West Lexington Presbytery, named thus to differentiate it from that of Lexington, Virginia. It included the area in Kentucky between the Licking and Kentucky rivers. The northeastern parts of Kentucky and southwestern Ohio comprised the Washington Presbytery, named after Washington, Kentucky. The Transylvania Presbytery was reduced to the territory south and west of the Kentucky River, including the Cumberland settlements in Tennessee. In 1802, the year the Synod of Kentucky was formed as the ruling body over the three above presbyteries, the Transylvania Presbytery was again subdivided to form a new jurisdiction, named the Cumberland Presbytery.

At the moment when the revivalists thought that their movement would sweep everything before it, it met its initial concerted opposition. Some anti-revivalists in the Presbyterian Church opposed Richard McNemar, who led the congregation at Cabin Creek, Kentucky. Formal charges were presented against McNemar before the Washington Presbytery, which met in Springfield, Ohio, November 11, 1801. He was accused of holding "dangerous and pernicious" ideas, deviating from the doctrines "contained in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church," embracing Arminian principles,⁴ and violating the discipline of the church. A committee of elders gave McNemar an opportunity to re-affirm his allegiance to the doctrines in the Confession of Faith. McNemar revealed in his reply the strong opposition of the anti-creedalists in the West to systematic interpretations of religion. His vigorous biblicism is seen in his statement that he would be bound by no system but the Bible; and that he believed that systems were detrimental to the life and power of religion.⁵

The committee offered to substantiate the following charges against McNemar, as being "inconsistent with the word of God, and the constitution of the Presbyterian Church":

⁴ John P. MacLean, *A Sketch of the Life and Labors of Richard McNemar* (Franklin, Ohio: Printed for the Author by the Franklin Chronicle, 1905), p. 8 f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9 f.

1. He reprobated the idea of sinners attempting to pray, or being exhorted thereto, before they were believers in Christ.
2. He has condemned those who urge that convictions are necessary, or that prayer is proper in the sinner.
3. He has expressly declared at several times, that Christ has purchased salvation for all the human race without distinction.
4. He has expressly declared that a sinner has power to believe in Christ at any time; and
5. That a sinner has as much power to act faith, as to act unbelief; and reprobated every idea in contradiction thereto, held by persons of a contrary opinion.
6. He has expressly said, that faith consisted in the creature's persuading himself assuredly that Christ died for him in particular; that doubting and examining into evidences of faith, were inconsistent with, and contrary to the nature of faith; and in order to establish these sentiments, he explained away these words by saying it was Christ Jesus, the object of faith there meant, and not faith itself; and also, these words, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him" by saying that the drawing there meant, was Christ offered in the Gospel; and that the Father knew no other drawing or higher power than holding up his Son in the Gospel.⁶

No action was taken by the Presbytery because no person appeared to substantiate the charges. McNemar, worried lest such charges retard the progress of the revival, replied anyway,⁷ revealing the Arminianism which his accusers disliked.

The opposition to McNemar continued and resulted in unwritten charges brought against him at the meeting of the Presbytery held at Cincinnati, October, 1802.⁸ The Presbytery proceeded to a "close examination" of the revivalist on the doctrine of human depravity, particular election, "the atonement and the application of it to the sinner, the necessity of the Divine agency in this application, and the nature of faith." McNemar professed the highest loyalty to the Scriptures, but discovered that the Presbytery charged him not only with holding to Arminianism, but also other doctrines "subversive" to the Scriptures. Respecting the above doctrines the Presbytery reached the opinion that

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See Barton W. Stone, et. al., *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky to Which is Added, a Compendious View of the Gospel, and a Few Remarks on the Confession of Faith, by the Presbytery of Springfield* (Lexington, Kentucky: 1804), hereafter referred to as *An Apology*.

⁸ MacLean, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Mr. McNemar holds these doctrines in a sense specifically and essentially different from that sense in which Calvinists generally believe them, and that his ideas on these subjects are strictly Arminian, though clothed in such expressions and handed out in such a manner, as to keep the body of the people in the dark, and lead them insensibly into Arminian principles, which are dangerous to the souls of men and hostile to the interests of all true religion.⁹

Surprisingly enough, the Presbytery, while circulating a resolution among the churches against McNemar, permitted him to preach at six churches.¹⁰

This confusion was resolved in the climactic battle between the revivalists and the anti-revivalists at Lexington, Kentucky, where the new Synod, hardly a year old, met on September 7, 1803. The Synod upheld its committee which censured the Washington Presbytery for its failure to re-examine McNemar when a previous examination had disclosed alleged Arminian tenets in the revivalists.¹¹ The Synod also reproved the Washington Presbytery for irregularity in making appointments for McNemar when his religious opinions already "stood condemned on their minutes."¹² One failed to vote on these motions, seventeen voted in the affirmative, and six in the negative. The six nays were recorded by men of the "revival" school: Robert Marshall, James Welsh, Barton W. Stone, William Robinson, David Purviance, and Malcolm Worley.¹³ Votes on related questions were not so overwhelming, but indicated to the defenders of McNemar the set of the ecclesiastical weathervane. The minutes reveal that the revival members were absenting themselves from the meetings. They had doubtless given up hope of winning out against the anti-revivalists and were already planning their next strategic move.

While a motion was under discussion that the Synod formally try McNemar and Thompson, some of the revival ministers made a dramatic appearance. Marshall, Stone, McNemar, Thompson, and Dunlavy explained why they had been absent earlier, and presented a paper through Marshall which protested against the proceedings of the Synod,

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ *Records of the Synod of Kentucky*, September 6-13, 1803 (MSS in the archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, N. C.), p. 20.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and announced their withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the Synod.¹⁴

The paper, Stone later said, had been written in a private garden where the rebellious revivalists had gathered for prayer and discussion. It expressed a deeply-rooted biblicism and a desire for freedom in interpreting the Confession; it was not a statement of secession. The Synod had not expected such surprising action and "profound silence" greeted the reading of the protest.¹⁵

The paper read by Mr. Marshall on behalf of the dissenting group follows:

To the Moderator of the Synod of Kentucky

Reverend Sir: We, the underwritten members of Washington and W. Lexington Presbyteries, do hereby enter our protest against the proceedings of Synod, in approbating that minute of the Washington Presbytery which condemned the sentiments of Mr. McNemar as dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion and the proceedings therewith connected; and for reasons which we now offer, we declare ourselves no longer members of your reverend body, or under your jurisdiction, or that of your Presbyteries.

1. We conscientiously believe that the above minute, which you sanctioned, gives a distorted and false representation of Mr. McNemar's sentiments, and that the measure was calculated to prevent the influence of truths of the most interesting nature.

2. We claim the privilege of interpreting the Scripture by itself, according to sec. 9, Chap. 1, of the Confession of Faith; and believe that the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private *spirits*, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures. But from the disposition which Synod manifests, it appears to us that we cannot enjoy this privilege, but must be bound up to such explanation of the word of God, as precludes all further inquiring after truth.

3. We remain inviolably attached to the doctrines of grace, which, through God, have been mighty in every revival of true religion since the reformation. These doctrines, however, we believe are in a measure hardened by some expressions in the Confession of Faith, which are used as the means of strengthening sinners in their unbelief, and subjecting many of the pious to a spirit of bondage. When we attempt to obviate these difficulties, we are charged with departing from our standards,—viewed as

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

disturbers of the peace of the church, and threatened to be called to account. The proceedings of Presbytery have furnished the world with ample encouragement, in this mode of opposition; and the sanction which those proceedings have now received from your reverend body, cuts off every hope of relief from that quarter from which we have at least faintly expected it.

We, therefore, feel ourselves shut up to the necessity of relieving you from the disagreeable task of receiving petitions from the public, and ourselves from being prosecuted before a judge [Confession of Faith] whose authority to decide, we cannot in conscience acknowledge.

Rev. Sir:—Our affection for you, as brethren in the Lord, is, and we hope shall be ever the same; nor do we desire to separate from your communion, or to exclude you from ours. We ever wish to bear, and forbear, in matters of human order, or opinion, and write our joint supplications with yours for increasing effusions of that divine Spirit, which is the bond of peace. With this disposition of mind, we bid you adieu until, through the providence of God it seems good to your rev. body to adopt a more liberal plan, respecting human Creeds and Confessions. Done in Lexington, Kentucky, September 10, 1803.

Robert Marshall
John Dunlavy
R. McNemar
Barton W. Stone
John Thompson¹⁶

The startled Synod chose a Stated Clerk to succeed the rebellious Marshall, and directed a letter to the petitioners against the revivalists assuring them that "synod do strictly adhere to the doctrines of our Confession of Faith."¹⁷ It quickly voted to petition the General Assembly for permission to print a thousand copies of the Confession of Faith from the authorized edition published by Robert Aitkin in 1797.

The Synod attempted to reconcile the dissenting revivalists. Messrs. David Rice, Matthew Houston, and James Welsh made up the committee appointed to converse "seriously and affectionately" to bring the dissenters back to the "Standards and Doctrines of our Church." Joseph P. Howe was later added to the committee.

The overtures of the Synod were unsuccessful. The revivalists had tasted their frontier freedom and did not care to submit to the discipline of the Presbyterian organization. Overwhelming success in securing

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24 ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

converts doubtless confirmed them in their belief that God had blessed both their preaching and their independence.

The result of the first conference was an offer by the "revival" men "to answer any questions proposed to them by Synod, which may be stated in writing." The revivalists further offered to return under the care and jurisdiction of the Synod

provided they would constitute us into one Presbytery; and if they had any charges to bring against us, with respect to doctrines, or otherwise, let them come forward in an orderly manner according to the book of discipline—criminate us as a Presbytery, and bring our sentiments to the word of God, as a standard and we (are) willing to stand trial.¹⁸

The Synod rejected this proposal twelve to seven and requested that the dissenters submit their written objections to the Confession of Faith before the Synod adjourned the following morning.¹⁹ The dissenters received this communication late Monday evening, September 12. The Synod which had been meeting at nine, assembled the next morning at seven o'clock. Some of the dissenting members left town that night and consequently could not meet to consider the request before the Synod assembled at such an early hour. Consequently, when the Synod received no reply from the seceding members, it voted to suspend Marshall, Dunlavy, McNemar, Stone, and Thompson. The following reasons were given for such action: 1) the dissenters had separated themselves from the jurisdiction of the Synod; 2) they seceded from the Confession of Faith; 3) they refused to return to the doctrines and standards of the church; 4) they constituted themselves into a separate Presbytery.²⁰

The record of the suspension reads:

Therefore resolved; that Synod do and hereby do solemnly suspend Messrs. Marshall, Dunlavy, McNemar, Stone and Thompson from the exercise of all the functions of the Gospel ministry, until sorrow and repentance for the above schism be manifested leaving it however with the several Presbyteries to which the above members may have belonged, to restore them as soon as they give satisfactory evidence of repentance, and their congregations are hereby declared vacant.²¹

¹⁸ *An Apology*, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Records of the Synod of Kentucky*, MSS, p. 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

The Synod then directed that a "circular letter" be sent to the churches relative to the unhappy division and to state the principles upon which Marshall, Stone, Dunlavy, McNemar, and Thompson "have separated" from the Synod. Commissioners were also appointed to go before the congregations served by the above men to state the action of the Synod, to declare the pastorates vacant, and to exhort the people to peace and unity. Shannon and Lyle were sent to Bethel and Blue Spring, where Robert Marshall ministered; Howe and Rannels to Cane Ridge and Concord, the pastorates of Stone; Blythe to Eagle Creek, served by Dunlavy; Robinson to Springfield, where Thompson was the pastor, and also to Turtle Creek, where McNemar ministered.

The reply of the suspended members was received just prior to adjournment of the Synod. No comment appears in the minutes of the Synod other than that the letter was read and "ordered to be filed among the papers of the Synod."

A copy of the reply of the dissenters was later printed and reads as follows:

Reverend and dear Sir: We received your resolution from a member of your committee, requesting us to give you a statement of our objections to some parts of the Confession of Faith. We have taken the matter into consideration, and resolved to comply. But it is out of our power to state them to you, as soon as you require; but will, without fail, give you a statement at your next annual session. A party is not our aim; and this we hope to evince to you, and to the world, at your next session. In the meantime, we design to proceed no farther than circumstances may require. Brethren, you are in our hearts, to live and die with you in love. We hope your intentions, in doing what you have done, were good; but we still believe as stated in our protest. In the meantime, let us unite our prayers to our common Lord and Father, that he would in his kind providence heal our divisions, and unite us more closely in the bonds of love. We remain, dear brethren, as ever united to you in heart and affection.

Robert Marshall
John Dunlavy
Richard McNemar
Barton W. Stone
John Thompson ²²

Before the above letter was received by the Synod, the five dissenting ministers had already been expelled. Despite the conciliatory tone of

²² *An Apology*, p. 40 f.

the letter, the words of the dissenters, "we still believe as stated in our protest," indicated to the Synod the stubborn nature of the revivalists and the improbability that they could be wooed back into a happy relationship.

An immediate result of their expulsion was the formation of an independent Springfield Presbytery, sometime after September, 1803. In January, 1804, the Springfield Presbytery published *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*. The first part of the document, written by Robert Marshall, was an attempt to justify the separation; the second part, authored by Stone, critically attacked doctrines in the Confession of Faith; and the third part, by John Thompson, was a defense of the Bible over against the authority of creeds. Reproduced on the cover page of the pamphlet were the apparently pacific lines of Isaac Watts:

I hate the dust that fierce disputers raise
 And lose the mind in a wild maze of thought.
 What empty triflings and what subtle ways
 To fence and guard by rule and rote
 Our God will never charge us that
 We know them not.

The pamphlet was more than "an apology"; it was a militant broadside against the Synod of Kentucky and the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church. The dissenters exulted in their new freedom from creeds. They felt that the concluding lines of the above poem from Watts were written for persons like themselves and so included them on the title page:

Touch heav'nly Word, O touch these curious souls,
 Since I have heard but one soft hint from thee,
 From all the vain opinions of the schools
 That pageantry of knowing fools
 I feel my powers releas'd and stand divinely free.

These lines from Watts give the clue to the defense of the dissenters, a defense which falls into four rather well-defined appeals. The dissenters cited: (1) Presbyterian Church law, (2) a contract theory of ordination, (3) the Bible as the constitution of the church, and (4) liberalism in North Carolina.

I. THE APPEAL TO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LAW

The dissenting clergy agreed with the Synod of Kentucky that the presbyteries are the guardians of the church, having not only the right, but a duty to "decide upon all matters respecting the church which come legally before them."²³ They justified their break on several grounds. They recognized the authority of the presbyteries to be "guardians" of the churches, but claimed that in their case, it had not been handled according to Presbyterian Church law, which did not give the power of suspension to the Synod. To the dissenters, the question was not whether the Presbytery had authority to consider a case, but whether the case "ever came legally before them, the Presbytery."²⁴ They maintained that there could be no legal process without a charge and witnesses to support it. They cited the Scripture, I Timothy 5:19, 20, to show that an elder could not be charged except before two or three witnesses. They quoted from the *Book of Discipline* regarding charges against ministers:

Process against a gospel minister shall not be entered upon, unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or when common fame so loudly proclaims the scandal, that the presbytery find it necessary to prosecute, and search into the matter for the honor of religion.²⁵

The independents pointed out that no person had undertaken to "make out and support the charge." The anti-revivalists appeared only by petition, and not in person. Since they did not prove the charges they should have been censured as slanderers of the "gospel ministry." In a trial by common fame, they argued that a "specific charge must be exhibited and the presbytery become the prosecutors."²⁶ In the present case, the Presbytery ought to have instituted charges and then sought, from the public, testimony to support the charges. The accused in this event ought to have been given a written copy of the charges and the names of the witnesses with sufficient time to defend themselves. None of this was done. Therefore, the suspended ministers maintained that the petition presented against them was disorderly.²⁷

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Book of Discipline*, chap. ii, sec. 3.

²⁶ *An Apology*, p. 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Furthermore, the dissenting ministers not only protested against the method of the proceedings against them, but also directly challenged the authority of the Synod to suspend them. They based the challenge upon two points: 1) The power of suspension is not legally vested in a synod.²⁸ The defined powers of a synod do not include a word concerning suspension. Their highest authority lies in advising the presbytery in such a case. The Synod has authority from neither the form of government nor the Word of God to impose suspension on ministers. 2) The Synod has no authority to suspend those who have already withdrawn from its jurisdiction.²⁹ The dissenters cited the experience of Luther in the Reformation to justify their conduct. They obviously felt that they were new Luthers protesting against ecclesiastical authority.³⁰ If their authority to preach were cut off by synodical suspension, then every minister since Luther's time must also have his authority to preach cut from under him.

To suspend us for constituting a separate presbytery, is not this to cut off at a blow every minister since the Reformation? Luther and his followers constituted a presbytery separate from the church of Rome; Calvin separated from Luther, and with his followers constituted a separate presbytery; and so have the various sects of Christians ever since. Have these therefore, no right to preach according to the word of God? If not, the synod in their act of suspension, have virtually suspended themselves, and every minister of the reformation since Luther.³¹

In sum, the dissenting ministers objected to the manner in which the case had been handled and challenged the authority of the Synod upon two grounds, namely: 1) that the power of suspension did not lie with the Synod, and 2) that the Synod could not suspend those who had already withdrawn from their jurisdiction.

2. THE APPEAL TO A CONTRACT THEORY OF ORDINATION

The argument for the right to withdraw from the Synod of Kentucky was based on an appeal to the voluntary character of ordination itself. The dissenters recognized that the *Book of Discipline* authorized suspension for contumacy, or a refusal to attend Presbytery, "after being

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³¹ *Ibid.*

three times duly cited, to answer for atrocious crimes." The dissenters assumed that a minister thus cited might not only refuse to appear, but might withdraw from the jurisdiction of the Presbytery. Such a step would be called declinature. The dissenters denied that this charge was applicable in their case since no "atrocious crime" was duly laid to their charge.³² Moreover, the thing of which they were accused "was never determined by the protestant church to be an atrocious crime." They could not be charged with declinature since there was "nothing to decline" except "vain jangling and strife of words" on those subjects concerning which "the wisest and best of men" have differed.³³

The dissenters asserted that any judicial authority held by any society over an individual is in consequence of "a voluntary compact, tacitly or explicitly made, by which he is connected with that society and under its laws."³⁴ They felt that an individual gave his authority to the group, but might withdraw from the compact. The authority of the governors was derived from the consent of the governed. But the consent of the governed might at any given moment be withdrawn, thus dissolving the relationship.

When such compact is dissolved, which may be done at any time by the voluntary act of the individual, the authority ceases of course. Our voluntary act, in putting ourselves under the care of the Presbytery, put it in their power to license, ordain, watch over, censure, suspend or depose, so long as we stood in that connection; but when we voluntarily withdrew, being under no judicial censure, it may be properly said we withdrew from them all that power over us which we had given them.³⁵

When the church is convinced that a man is called of God to preach, it must encourage him in the work. Such encouragement may be given by the presbytery, as representatives of the church, or it may be offered in a "Church capacity" as is done by the Independent and Baptist Churches. Neither the church nor the official body of the church can call or authorize a man to preach. The call comes from God.³⁶ The church can only inquire into the validity of that call. If it approves, the church confers licensure. When the candidate has proved that his

³² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

ministry is from heaven and not from men, the church may ordain him.

In all this the church confers no power, human or divine; but only the privilege of exercising the power and authority in that particular society, which they believe he has received from God. This privilege the church may recall; the candidate may forfeit, or voluntarily resign.³⁷

But nothing can annul the original call of God. This call has a permanent character which cannot be effaced by the disapproval of the church, or even the minister's own forfeiture.

If we have been called of God to minister in holy things, and have done nothing to forfeit that authority; and if any man, or set of men should rise up and command us to be silent, and forbid the people to hear us; the consequences may be serious to them in the end.³⁸

Briefly, the dissenters held that their ordination was based on what may be termed a contract theory of church government. The authority of the governed ministers in a compact might be withdrawn, thus dissolving the relationship. They held that the original call to preach came from God and could not be annulled by the church or any doctrine of apostolic succession.

3. THE APPEAL TO THE BIBLE AS THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

The dissenters emphasized the point that in withdrawing from the Synod of Kentucky, they were not withdrawing from "the Presbyterian Church at large, but from that part only, which considers the Confession of Faith infallible, that is, as the standard of the Church."³⁹

For the Synod to assume that a separation from their body is a departure from the church is an implicit declaration that "they are the only true church on earth." Since Presbyterians are so liberal in their principles as to admit Christians of other denominations to their communion, it is surprising that they would exclude "those of their own." In so doing, the Presbyterian Church itself has become schismatic.⁴⁰ A schismatic is not only one who separates from the communion of a church, taking away disciples with him, but also one, who loving a pre-

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

eminent position, receives not the brethren, forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church as did Diotrephes.⁴¹ Merely forming a separate association is not schism, provided the association "be not intended to dissolve the union and communion of the church."⁴²

The dissenters maintained it was not they, but their accusers who actually precipitated the disunion. One of the accusers, Mr. Kemper, they held, actually began the schism, when he was appointed by Presbytery to assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper. Though attending, he openly refused to administer, or partake of the elements of the communion, and persuaded others to refrain likewise from the communion. Thus, he renounced the authority of the Presbytery, and voluntarily separated himself from the communion of the Presbyterian Church. He not only started the schism, but promoted it by traversing the countryside "to get petitioners against us" and, finally, as "an independent separated from us." If there is division in the church body, Mr. Kemper is the author of it.⁴³ "We neither separate from their communion nor exclude them from ours."⁴⁴ Therefore, it is impossible for the Synod to publish to the world that we are "the schismatics, the partizans, the dividers."⁴⁵

The revivalists continually emphasized the point that the Presbyterians evidently felt that the creed of a party was "preferred to the Bible." The revivalists claimed to follow Bible doctrine, which was too simple for those who had been accustomed "to solve riddles and reconcile contradictions."⁴⁶ Such people attempted to establish doctrines which no denomination of Christians on earth held, such as the supposition that it was proper for a sinner to pray without faith. This was not one of the catholic principles of Christianity. Hence the revivalists held that any who divided the church over such a notion "must be schismatical." The threat of expulsion appearing in the Presbytery of Cincinnati in 1802 was activated by "a party not a Catholic spirit." The expulsion was threatened not because they deviated from the plain principles of Christianity, but because the suspected person (McNemar)

⁴¹ The Third Epistle of John.

⁴² *An Apology*, p. 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

"would not be bound to fight under a party standard, and wound his fellow Christians around him with the arrows of disputation."⁴⁷

The other churches knew that during the "wonderful" revival, they were "in the habit of a general communion" with all religious people. Their actions ever since had been to confirm, not to contradict, the principles of union and fellowship. But now it appeared that the Synod have again raised their standard [Confession of Faith], which for three happy years had been gathering dust. The lines will probably be now cleared; the enemies of orthodoxy, however pious, be driven out of the pure church, drowsy bigots recalled to arms, and another bold push made to Calvinize the world. May heaven prevent the furious onset, and revive in the breasts of Christians, a spirit of forbearance and love! And may we, while we go under the *name* of *schismatics*, be ever kept from the *thing*.⁴⁸

A fundamental point of cleavage between the revivalists and the anti-revivalists lay in the types of church government each espoused. Although the revivalists did not fulfill their promises to publish their "Observations on Church Government" soon after they formed their independent Springfield Presbytery, Richard McNemar published such a document three years later.⁴⁹ Apparently McNemar had been entrusted with a general document drawn up by the six protesters,⁵⁰ which he was to expand for publication. McNemar said that, to avoid "unnecessary reflections" (after he became a Shaker), he "neither designedly added nor diminished, nor altered a single sentence."⁵¹ The document was designed to reveal to the world "the beautiful simplicity of Christian Church Government, stript of human inventions and lordly traditions."⁵²

McNemar, in the Preface to the *Observations on Church Government*, stressed the fact that although he had become a Shaker, there was still much in the document of which he approved.⁵³ He noted that

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Richard McNemar, *Observations on Church Government by the Presbytery of Springfield* (reprinted in the *Kentucky Revival*), p. 135, hereafter referred to as *Observations on Church Government*.

⁵⁰ The six signers of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*; Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 51 ff.

⁵¹ McNemar, *Observations on Church Government*, p. 136.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Observations had been written in "the meridian light of the Kentucky revival" by men who considered the true primitive power of Church Government "to have been lost from all the denominations."⁵⁴ They felt they themselves had it not since "they were off the foundation of the apostles and prophets of which Christ himself is the chief cornerstone." This, McNemar explained, accounts for the "dark and inconsistent" uncertainty in the *Observations* as to whether the "Divine Spirit has abode in the human heart or in the letter of the Scriptures."⁵⁵

The *Observations on Church Government* asserts that truth has its foundation in the nature of God and is copied in his word for the preservation of the soul. The Saviour who calls "himself the truth" is the same in the Word of God as he was in human flesh.⁵⁶ Today he is crucified afresh and buried "among the rubbish of human tradition." Nevertheless the blessed truth has been preserved and "a great stone (the Confession of Faith) has been rolled off him." The Word of God could not be bound and Christ is risen indeed. As men experience the new spiritual creation through the Eternal Word, so they ought to be governed by the same Word.

The great difficulty the revivalists suggested is that men judge God's work imperfect, and seek to supply what in their ignorance they feel is deficient. Thus they wander from "the plain simple rule of God's word," and take the "reins of government into their own hands." By so changing, adding, amending, and diminishing, the Church has become everything it should not be.

Yet, it is not their purpose to impose any form of government upon the church.

This is not left for us, nor any set of men in the world to do. The author of the Scriptures has not left us to supply anything, either in doctrine, discipline, or government. The precepts and examples of Christ and his Apostles are sufficient, and left on record for this very purpose. The government of the church, like the gospel itself, is exceedingly plain and simple. If we advert to the New Testament, we shall plainly see, what is the nature of the Christian Church—who are its members—the mode of constitution—its union—communion—government and discipline.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141 f.

The original church established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost was a growing body with unity one of its "essential characteristics."⁵⁸ The dissenters declared that the "only bond of union transmitted to us, and indeed, the only bond that can unite Christians, is found in the Holy Scriptures, the true Confession of Faith."⁵⁹

The cohesive force holding diverse peoples together in this fellowship is the "Spirit."⁶⁰ Quoting Christ's prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, the dissenters held that Christ meant for his followers to be cemented together not by "some external law or form of words, but by the name of God." The Spirit of Christ both forms and preserves the union.

Therefore, they that have not this Spirit, are lawless and disobedient. . . . Thus it appears that the Christian's *law* is in his heart, a copy of which is drawn out in the New Testament.⁶¹

Thus, it is clear that while the "bond of union" for Christians is found in the Holy Scriptures, it is only a copy of that which is written in the heart.

In New Testament days, all met together in one accord. They visited from house to house in gladness. They did not call themselves by the names of men. They went out to evangelize the world. Wherever the Word was gladly received, people were baptized, received the Holy Spirit, and were set in churches to be joined by others.

Let Christians look back to the history of primitive Christianity, as recorded in the New Testament. Let them take a view of the plain and native simplicity which shines out there; the beautiful equality that reigned [sic] among the apostolic churches; and let them pant to breathe that native air.⁶²

Barton W. Stone concurred with the other revivalists when he selected the New Testament as his true standard of faith and the basis of church government. He later added that however just the suspension might be as applied to others, it was not just with regard to him, since he had not received the Confession of Faith except insofar as he

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146 f.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148 f.

⁶² *Ibid.*

saw it "agreeable to the Word of God."⁶³ As late as 1841, in thinking of his own case, he quoted Mosheim's words regarding the Pope's suspension of Luther as a "blow in the air." Throughout the remainder of his life, he claimed to be an ordained preacher by act of the Transylvania Presbytery, since he had not been "formally excluded" from it.⁶⁴

Stone was attacked by Thomas Cleland and by John Moreland for his failure to abide by his ordination vows in accepting the doctrines of the Confession of Faith.

Now when you were licensed in one of those Presbyteries (the Orange) and ordained in the other, in both instances you answered the following question publicly in the affirmative: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures?"⁶⁵

Stone claimed that his doctrinal positions since his ordination were essentially the same as before. When he was ordained, he agreed to accept the Confession of Faith only "as far" as he felt it to be in agreement with the Bible. For him the Bible was the norm.

Another circumstance is to be noted in connection with Stone's "exception" in response to the question on the Confession of Faith. The Adopting Act, by which Presbyterian ministers in America were required to affirm their loyalty to the Westminster Confession, contained the following provision which had been in effect for seventy-five years:

and in case any minister of this synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall, at the time of his making said declaration, declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government.⁶⁶

Finis Ewing, Samuel King, and Alexander King, in October 1802, were licensed by the Presbytery of Transylvania, in spite of the fact that they had taken exception to the "idea of fatality, which they believed was taught in that book under the high and mysterious doctrine

⁶³ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ John R. Moreland, *To the Members of Mount Pleasant Church* (1821), p. 9.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 331 f.

of election and reprobation."⁶⁷ Similar reservations had been made in North Carolina in the Orange Presbytery, to which many of the "revivalist" ministers belonged. But Stone's exception was a verbal one and was never recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery. This was to plague him later and to force him to secure testimony from persons present at the proceedings.⁶⁸

The protesting clergy, in sum, were led to reject creeds and to take the Bible alone as their standard of church government and Christian belief.

4. THE APPEAL TO LIBERALISM IN NORTH CAROLINA

The revivalists felt that their position was tenable since Henry Pattillo, a Presbyterian who examined candidates in theology, held moderate views on Calvinism. Pattillo was a member of a liberal group in North Carolina and a writer whose general published views seemed to support those of Stone and his associates. Barton Stone noted that Pattillo followed Watts' views on the Trinity.

On the subject of Trinity, he was very short, and his interrogatories involved no peculiarities of the system. Our answers were honest and satisfactory. The reasons why he was so short and indefinite on this subject were, doubtless to prevent debate on the subject in Presbytery, and to maintain peace among its members.⁶⁹

Henry Pattillo was one of the first of American religious writers, after the Revolution, to advocate that Americans divorce themselves from European religious thinking. He pleaded for Americans to match their political independence from Europe with religious independence. Pattillo was deeply conscious of the freedom recently won by Americans, and he often used the word "American" in his small book of sermons. In *The Plain Planter's Family Assistant*,⁷⁰ he reminded his countrymen

⁶⁷ See Thomas Campbell, *Studies in Cumberland Presbyterian History* (Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1944), p. 64 f.

⁶⁸ See Barton W. Stone, *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio on General Important Doctrines of Religion* (Second Edition; Lexington, Kentucky: I. T. Covins and Co., 1821), p. 32 ff; hereafter referred to as *An Address*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13 f.

⁷⁰ This is a rare item of Americana which was published in 1787, Granville, North Carolina.

how fortunate they were to live in a land of freedom and low taxation.

Pattillo acknowledged his indebtedness to John Bunyan in his book of *Sermons*,⁷¹ but begged the reader's indulgence if he had dropped deference to "European writers." He claimed that he wrote only for "*Americans*."

Americans are too deep sufferers, from the destructive decrees, and sanguinary counsels, of the right honourables and *right reverends* beyond the *Atlantic*, to retain that respect for their stars and their *mitres*, which these must show, who are under the influence of their sovereignty. The author believes it no easy task, to write with complaisance, against a set of men, who labor so assiduously to lead the Christian world back again to heathenism, and lower still, to level them with the brute.⁷²

Pattillo defined his own religious position as that of "a moderate but settled Calvinist,"⁷³ who would like to see Calvinistic doctrines "more generally known and better understood in the Christian world," but he took positions on some doctrines which certainly pointed Stone and others toward latitudinarianism as regarded the Westminster Confession of Faith. Too, he breathed a general spirit of tolerance and good will toward other Christians which in his lifetime was rare. While deploring the prejudice of the Methodists against Calvinism, he spoke well of their piety and zeal.⁷⁴ He dedicated his third sermon on "election" to the "Rev'd. Mr. Francis Asbury, Superintendent, and to the Elders and Lay Preachers of the Methodist Society, in America."⁷⁵ He believed that if the piety and activity of the Methodists were added to the orthodox soundness of the Presbyterians it would "be an anticipation of that glory, which God so often promised to put upon his church, before the end of time."⁷⁶

Christ has enacted the law that Christians love one another. Christians who practice this temper are building up his kingdom.⁷⁷ Those who "bite and devour" one another weaken his kingdom. From his own experience, Pattillo knew that

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁷⁵ Henry Pattillo, *Sermons* (Wilmington, N. C.: James Adams, 1788), p. 100.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Christians of different denominations will always love in proportion as they cultivate acquaintance; converse freely, on the great doctrines and duties in which they agree; worship God together and avoid controversies. There are bigots in all churches. All new converts to a profession must be allowed a season of bigotry. Of how many spiritual meals does this contracted temper of soul deprive the Christian world? I fear we have such in our own church, who miss having their souls quickened, by the preaching of an honest Baptist, or a warm Methodist, because they have different views, of some Christian doctrines, from the system embraced among us. Give such hearers what they call a sound sermon, and all is well; though it leave them as stupid as the seat they sit on. Were my own experience of any weight, with persons of this narrow disposition, I could assure them, that I have often sat with pleasure and profit, under the preaching of both these denominations; and if they dropt a word on their peculiarities, I left that to such as could receive it, and fed on the rest.⁷⁸

Pattillo maintained that it is the business of some to contend for the faith; but to "study peace and holiness" is the business of all.⁷⁹ The reason for this is that when the mind makes an honest struggle to obtain information and fails, the error in judgment is not a vice since the will is not concerned.⁸⁰ An evil word or action or criticism proceeding from the heart has more evil in it than do mistaken judgments. Persons may be led to mistakes by "a criminal inattention" to both sides of a question, yet this is usually pardonable, since it is generally the result of the "prejudice of education." Religious disputations usually "extinguish brotherly kindness and charity."⁸¹ Thus, we see, that Pattillo's main stress was on practical action rather than on doctrinal soundness. The main stress of the revivalists such as Barton W. Stone lay just here: on the point of ethical concrete action rather than on theological sword-play.

Pattillo translated his philosophy of Christian love into action when he held that Wesley and the Methodists were "very corrupt in doctrine," yet indulged in fellowship with them, held Holy Communion with them, and gave them the use of his pulpit.⁸² For a number of years, Pattillo had longed to be associated with the Methodists, and when they

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

requested use of the Presbyterian Church for their quarterly meeting, he was glad "that they themselves removed the gulf of separation."⁸³ Pattillo made it clear that he was willing to bridge the chasm, not because the Methodists were sound in their doctrine, but because they were "godly in their lives."⁸⁴

Henry Pattillo also took theological views, on such questions as the new birth and the atonement, which were similar to those some of the revivalists accepted later. He said that a new first-hand regeneration is necessary before a man can be a willing obedient subject of Christ's Kingdom in this world. And the unregenerate person is even less qualified to possess or enjoy the Kingdom of God in the future world. As man is enabled by his first birth to hear or see external objects, so the second birth was equally necessary "to see and understand the things of the Kingdom of God."⁸⁵ His argument was that if the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are only spiritually discerned, neither can the creature in heaven apprehend the same objects because his incapacity remains with him unless he is subjected to the new birth. The beauties of color are lost to the blind.⁸⁶ So there is a moral incapacity in the unregenerate which adversely affects all their powers for the enjoyment of the "things of the upper kingdom."⁸⁷ Accordingly, there must be a change in the one, or in the other, before the creature can experience future happiness.

Pattillo had little to say about the relation of Christ and God. He believed in the paternity of the Father and the filiation of the Son, "as respecting only the human nature of our blessed Lord."⁸⁸ Before the soul of Christ was brought into "existence" and "united" to the divinity of the second person of the God-head, "he was neither a Son or begotten." Not until then could the Father say "I have begotten Thee." Pattillo said that he had long explained this "great gospel mystery" as follows: the first person of the God-head, previous to the Covenant of redemption, brought into existence the Soul of Christ by an act of Al-

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71 f.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72 f.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119 (footnote).

mighty power. God was not a Father until then. By a similar act of power, he prepared for Christ a body in the womb of the virgin.⁸⁹

Thus, as a Son, he is inferior to the Father, but as God, equal with him. As a Son, he learned obedience; as God, all obedience is due to him. As a Son, he knew not what the last day will be; as God, he knows all things. As a Son, he says, My Father is greater than I; as God, he says, I and my Father are one. And thus we are relieved from the perplexity into which the doctrine of Christ's eternal Son-ship involves us.⁹⁰

Pattillo thus unwittingly laid the foundation for some of the revivalists' questioning of orthodox doctrines. He believed strongly himself in the doctrine of the new birth. His interpretation of the person of Christ was not orthodox, but his greatest influence on men like Stone was in the proclamation of a tolerance which was rare in his own time. His treatment of the Methodists and his condemnation of narrow denominational exclusiveness were noteworthy and undoubtedly contributed much to Stone's interdenominational spirit.

When the revivalists were asked why they did not appeal to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, they replied that it seemed unnecessary because the business must naturally come before it, through the minutes of the Synod. They pointed out that David did not go immediately to his father-in-law to learn his disposition till the "flying arrows determined his doom. If we learn from the minutes of the assembly that they are for peace, we are near at hand, and ready to obey the signal; but if otherwise our empty seats must so remain."⁹¹

The independent Springfield Presbytery survived only nine months. Organized in September, the Presbytery published the *Apology* in January. In March its members began to change their views on the atonement and in June, 1804, it was dissolved. During the time of its existence, the members retained the presbyterial form of government. "We went forward," said Stone, "preaching and constituting churches." They seemed to have had about fifteen churches in Ohio and Kentucky, with many more unorganized groups holding to their ideas.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *An Apology*, p. 190.

Stone reported that the presses were employed against them, and "teemed forth pamphlets . . . full of misrepresentation and invective, and the pulpits everywhere echoed their contents."⁹² Not many of the pamphlets have survived to the present day. One of the most interesting of these is entitled *An Apology for Calvinism*, written by Robert Hamilton Bishop. It is a reply to Part II of the *Apology*, written by Stone. Bishop calls Stone's work nothing else but a "medley of confusion and absurdity."⁹³ Bishop defends creeds as being necessary instruments to judge how far the church as a collective body holds to the purity of the doctrines of the gospel. He points out that the Springfield Presbytery

lifted up their voice in a loud and bitter cry against creeds and confessions—and at the same time they published unto the world a book, which they call a *View of the Gospel*. They bring one in mind of an old monk who published a book proving that no book ought to be published or read. He was also foolish enough to imagine that this was to be the last book of the kind which ever would be published—that all other books would immediately be given to the moles and the bats. . . . May the Lord pity the poor people who follow such uncertain, such wandering guides.⁹⁴

Whether or not Bishop's criticism struck a vulnerable spot is not clear, but the group soon became convinced that their new name "savored of a party spirit."⁹⁵ Stone said, "With the man-made creeds, we threw it overboard, and took the name *Christian*—the name given to the disciples by divine appointment first at Antioch."

The biographer of Stone, Charles C. Ware, attributes the dissolution of the Springfield Presbytery to Stone.⁹⁶ Another explanation of the origin of *The Last Will and Testament* now seems more plausible. A copy of a pamphlet written by Robert Marshall and John Thompson, two of the signers of the *Last Will and Testament*, has been discovered in the New York Public Library, entitled *A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian, or as it is Commonly Called, The Newlight Church*. This pamphlet, issued by

⁹² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁹³ Robert Hamilton Bishop, *An Apology for Calvinism* (Lexington, Kentucky: Daniel Bradford, 1804), p. 35.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁹⁶ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Marshall and Thompson in 1811, preceded their return to the Presbyterian Church by one year. A sub-title therefore reads:

Containing Their Testimony Against Several Doctrines Held in That Church, and Its Disorganized State; Together With Some Reasons Why Those Two Brethren Purpose to Seek For a More Pure and Orderly Connexion.

Marshall and Thompson attribute the authorship of the *Last Will and Testament* not to Stone, but to Richard McNemar.

But Richard McNemar, that eccentric genius, took it into his head that our existence in a formal body as a Presbytery, was contrary to scripture—that our bond of union was a carnal bond—and that this delegated body stood full in the way of Christ, and the progress of the revival. With these enchanting views, and others as visionary and vain, he prepared a piece at home, and brought it to the last meeting of our Presbytery held at Caneridge, Bourbon County, Kentucky, June 1804, entitled, "The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery." None of us had the least thought of such a thing when we came to that meeting; and when it was proposed, we had many objections against dissolving our Presbytery. But after being together several days, those enthusiastic fancies so far gained the ascendancy over our judgment, that we consented to subscribe to the obnoxious instrument.⁹⁷

The evidence seems to favor McNemar as the author rather than Stone.⁹⁸

Marshall and Thompson were opposed to the *Last Will and Testament* on the ground that it dissolved formal connection between the ministers and "good order in the churches." It gave to private churches

⁹⁷ Robert Marshall and John Thompson, *A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian, or as it is Commonly Called, the Newlight Church* (Cincinnati: J. Carpenter and Company, 1811).

⁹⁸ Despite Stone's modesty, he would have claimed the authorship after this pamphlet was issued, had McNemar not been the author. He never rejected the principles enunciated in the *Last Will and Testament* and would have taken pride in its authorship. Furthermore, the authors Marshall and Thompson were engaged primarily in an attack on the New Light Church which McNemar had already left and would have readily attributed the "obnoxious" *Last Will and Testament* to Stone's authorship had there been justification to do so. David Purviance, the only other signer of the *Last Will and Testament*, who remained faithful to Stone until the end, wrote a pamphlet in answer to Marshall and Thompson. Purviance did not question that McNemar was the initiator of the *Last Will and Testament*. There is not the slightest evidence that Stone wrote, or suggested the writing of *Last Will and Testament*.

the proper business of the ministry, namely the right to examine and judge the qualifications of young men for the ministry. The document said that it was possible for anyone to start preaching "whenever he pleased."⁹⁹ No one could be tried or judged as a heretic, if he professed faith in the scriptures, "however heterodox he might be in sentiments."¹⁰⁰

The *Last Will and Testament* opened with quotations from Scripture relative to the necessity for the death of the testator before a testament could be in force. The document announced that the Presbytery, meeting at Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, though in perfect health, realized that all delegated bodies were appointed once to die. Therefore, they not only made their last will, but in the will itself decreed their own death that the Presbytery might "sink into union with the Body of Christ at large."¹⁰¹ They then listed eleven items, declaring that titles, such as "reverend" be forgotten, as well as "Presbyterian" law-making. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is now to rule Christians in the place of presbyteries.¹⁰² Candidates for the Gospel ministry are to study, not books of divinity, but the Holy Scriptures.¹⁰³ They are to obtain their licenses from God to preach the simple gospel. "No mixture of philosophy," traditions of men, or "rudiments of the world" are to dilute the proclamation.¹⁰⁴ The Bible is "the only sure guide to heaven" and is to have no competition.¹⁰⁵ "It is better to enter into life having one book (the Bible), than, having many, to be cast into hell."¹⁰⁶

The church of Christ is "to resume her native right of internal government" by testing candidates on their profession of experimental religion.¹⁰⁷ Each church is to exercise its own autonomy, choosing her own minister without a written call or subscription, and supporting him with a freewill offering.¹⁰⁸ The church is never to "delegate her

⁹⁹ Marshall and Thompson, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

right of government to any man or set of men whatever." The preachers and people are "to pray more and dispute less."¹⁰⁹ Those who had wished to make the Springfield Presbytery their king, are now to look to the Rock of Ages.

Near the end of the document, which the signers fondly hoped would become famous in church history, there are two ironical notes.

Item. We *will*, that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member, who may be *suspected* of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately; in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty.

Item. Finally we *will* that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.¹¹⁰

The *Last Will and Testament* was signed on June 28, 1804, by Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard McNemar, B. W. Stone, John Thompson, and David Purviance. Thompson and Purviance had now joined the original group of dissenters.¹¹¹

To the *Last Will and Testament*, the members appended *The Witnesses' Address* to explain the reasons for dissolving the body. They explained that they could not effectively oppose divisions and a "party spirit" among Christians while they had a "human creed" and form of government. While they thundered against parties, they could not suppress the idea that they themselves were a party.¹¹² They prepared a document *Observations on Church Government* in which they hoped to reveal to the world the simplicity of church government.¹¹³ They found neither precept, nor example in the New Testament for such confederacies as "modern Church Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, General Assemblies, etc." They concluded that they themselves were not on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets while they were constituted in a separate Presbytery. Hence

from a principle of love to Christians of every name, the precious cause of Jesus and dying sinners who are kept from the Lord by the existence of

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

sects and parties in church, they have cheerfully consented to retire from the din and fury of conflicting parties—sink out of the view of fleshly minds, and die the death. They believe their death will be great gain to the world. . . . They will aid the brethren, by their course, when required; assist in ordaining elders, or pastors—seek the divine blessing—unite with all Christians—commune together and strengthen each others' hands in the work of the Lord.¹¹⁴

The dissenters acknowledge that in some things, they may err as they march through the wilderness, but they are confident that God will correct their "wanderings," and preserve his church. They end by calling upon all Christians, "brethren of every name," to join in the glorious work of revival in the western country which they hope will terminate "in the universal spread of the gospel, and the unity of the church."¹¹⁵

This millennial note soon soured. The witnesses did not hold together long enough to publish the work on *Church Government*. Several years later it was published by Richard McNemar, into whose keeping the document had been entrusted. Dunlavy and McNemar joined the Shakers in 1804, and in 1812 Marshall and Thompson made their chastened way back to the Presbyterians. Only Stone and Purviance remained true to the new vision. While Marshall and Thompson later claimed that Richard McNemar was responsible for voicing the new ideas of the group,¹¹⁶ Barton W. Stone was the theological spokesman of the dissenters even when the *Apology* was published.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54 f.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Marshall and Thompson, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER VI

A FRONTIER FAITH VERSUS ORTHODOXY

OF THE MEN who separated from the Presbyterian Church after the publication of the *Last Will and Testament*, only Stone vigorously opposed popular Calvinism, and preached the "primitive gospel" pattern of love, the doctrine of the new birth, and the unity of the church. Stone always claimed to have emphasized church union his life long. Though there is no reason to doubt that the dominant spirit of his life was oriented away from controversy and toward Christian unity, still it is probable that the years soon after his break with the Presbyterians were devoted mainly to establishing churches of the Stoneite persuasion and defending them against the attacks of their religious neighbors.

Written materials between 1803 and the establishment of Stone's *Christian Messenger* in 1826 are scarce. Those available suggest that between 1803 and 1815 Stone was busy earning a living,¹ preaching, and trying to overcome violent opposition to his movement. When he withdrew from the Presbyterians in 1803, Stone's struggle with Calvinism was not over. He inwardly broke with its popular forms at the time of his conversion and formally when he renounced the jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky in 1803. But his struggle with Calvinism continued. The orthodox churches in Kentucky were alarmed over the plan of the Unitarians to invade Kentucky. A bitter struggle continued for over a quarter of a century, centering in the attempt of the liberals to gain control of Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. The orthodox finally won the battle by about 1830, but the struggle was fierce. The Presbyterians, alarmed over the invasion from New England, suspected that the Stone movement was likewise an entering wedge for heretical doctrines. His enemies called Stone a

¹After he left the prosperous Concord and Cane Ridge churches, Stone was forced to farm and teach school to eke out a bare living.

Deist, a Socinian, a rationalist, an infidel, an atheist, and a Unitarian. Stone met the challenge in several large pamphlets, but could never be induced to join in the public oral debates which were common in the nineteenth century religious scene.²

Stone was violently opposed to Calvinism and never appreciated the contribution it had made to his own life. The type of Calvinism against which he revolted early in his ministry was that represented by the fiery revivalistic preaching of James McGready. His own viewpoint fell into the simple left-wing sectarian biblical pattern rather than into the more institutionalized church type of tradition.³ At times he carried this emphasis to the extreme, but he was dominated mainly by an interest in Christian unity founded on the practice of love in the Sermon on the Mount rather than on doctrinal interpretations. Though his own doctrinal beliefs lay somewhere between Unitarianism and orthodox popular Calvinism, he came to believe that wide latitude must be permitted the Christian believer in order to lay the basis for Christian unity. Stone became involved in a simple type of speculation which carried him away from orthodoxy, but neither into Naturalism nor complete Unitarianism. His opponents recognized that he indulged in a non-biblical speculative theology, but Stone never saw this. He never relinquished his speculative excursions into some of the profoundest problems of theology, but he lost interest in them by about 1820, when a practical interest in Christian unity almost completely captured him.

In the long period between 1803 and the 1820's, Stone's movement was violently attacked by the church from which he severed himself. Stone's principal opponents were Thomas Cleland⁴ and John Poage

² Though the nineteenth century was one of tremendous expansion in American Protestantism, a study of the contemporary religious controversies would reveal not only great vitality, but tragic dissipation of that energy.

³ Ernest Troeltsch uses the sect type and church type divisions to describe the main lines of Christianity, and this distinction has been used by many social historians, perhaps unfortunately, since ecumenicity is the emphasis of today. A fuller exposition of the sect and left-wing movement will be found, *post*, chapt. xii. See Ernest Troeltsch, *Social Teaching of the Christian Church*, translated by Olive Wyon with an introductory note by Charles Gore, 2 Vols. (New York: Macmillan Co.)

⁴ Thomas Cleland wrote two large pamphlets against Barton W. Stone: *The Socini-Arian Detected: A Series of Letters to Barton W. Stone* (Lexington, Kentucky: Thomas T. Skillman, 1815), and *Letters to Barton W. Stone, Containing a Vindication* (Lexington, Kentucky: Thomas T. Skillman, 1822).

Campbell,⁵ who regarded him not only as a rebel against Calvinism, but as a dangerous individual whose influence might plunge many into deism and atheism. Thomas Cleland believed that Stone was on the logical road to deism because he held Arian and Socinian views.⁶ Some Presbyterians regarded Stone as being more dangerous than the "rationalists" of Germany and Boston because the same cause in the West was sustained by "religious enthusiasm" and "vehement rhapsody."⁷ They were used to Unitarianism which was supported by learning and philosophy, but were afraid that Stone's revivalism would lead many to be deceived as to the true nature of his beliefs. Orthodoxy in Kentucky placed Stone in the same category with the heretical Unitarians and infidels. He was pictured as preaching deism in "a thin Christian garb."⁸

Stone, however, felt that orthodox Presbyterian preaching at the turn of the century itself contained so much fatalism that, along with infidel French philosophy, it cut the nerve of moral action in numerous communities. By 1835, he noted that a big change had taken place in the Presbyterian climate. He believed that its hard doctrines had been considerably softened. Stone might well have been lost among the people who opposed Calvinism in a purely negative way. With a peculiar and positive approach, he built a simple theology satisfying to himself and to some unfettered frontiersman in at least three areas: (1) the nature and work of Christ, (2) stress on man's need of response in conversion, and (3) creeds as a barrier to Christian unity.

I. STONE'S ATTEMPT TO FIND A MIDDLE POSITION BETWEEN
THE ARIANS AND PRESBYTERIANS ON THE NATURE AND WORK OF CHRIST

All of Stone's doctrinal positions were severely attacked, but it was his doctrine on the nature and work of Christ which received the greatest amount of fire from his detractors. Long after Thomas Cleland and John Poage Campbell attacked Stone, the charge of Arianism, Deism, and Unitarianism came up to haunt him.⁹ When he was engaged in his most significant work, the attempt to unite the "Stoneites" with the

⁵ John Poage Campbell, *Vindex: or the Doctrines of the Strictures Vindicated, Against Reply of Mr. Stone* (Lexington, Kentucky: Daniel Bradford, 1806).

⁶ Cleland, *The Socini-Arian Detected*, p. 124.

⁷ *CM*, III (1829), 274.

⁸ Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁹ *CM*, VIII (1834), 244.

"Campbellites" and later the Christian Connection with these two groups, he was called both a Unitarian and an Arian. Spencer Clack, a Baptist, warned Alexander Campbell to be wary of uniting with Stone and his followers because he believed that they were "the Arians of the West." Stone rejected the use of the names, Unitarian and Arian. He admitted that a few of his brethren at Hopkinsville, Kentucky, called themselves Unitarians, a fact which "grieved" him. In a letter to Doctor James Blythe he wrote: "We have again and again proved that we are neither Socinians or Arians. We have as often shown that we do not deny the divinity of Christ nor the atonement."¹⁰ Actually, Stone attempted to strike a middle position between orthodoxy and so-called heresies.

Stone believed that Christ was not God, but the Son of God. He rejected Arius because it seemed to him that Arius denied the "divinity" of Christ. "If we are Arians," he wrote,

so were the Fathers of the first three centuries. This we have proved in our letters to Doctor Blythe; and if further proof be necessary we are prepared to give it. We can prove, if proof be required, that Arius and his followers apostatized from the Apostolic faith, as believed and taught by the most influential Fathers of the first centuries. The Fathers believed that the Son of God, or Logos, derived his being immediately from the Father, and is therefore of the same specific divine nature. Arius believed that the Son was created out of nothing, and therefore, is not the only begotten Son of God.¹¹

Though Stone drew this distinction between his views and those of Arius, there is no doubt that he used many arguments and phrases which have been associated with some of the followers of Arius. Stone's positions are not clear-cut, but he seemed to hold to the absolute unity of God and to assign a subordinate role to Christ.¹² Men such as John Poage Campbell and Thomas Cleland were right in charging that Stone was close to the Arian tradition. Judged by their standards, he was not orthodox. But he was certainly neither an infidel nor a rationalist as they claimed.

He rejected the terms "eternal Son" and "eternally begotten" be-

¹⁰ *CM*, III (1829), 275.

¹¹ *Loc. cit.*

¹² There is also in Stone, a strong emphasis on the full deity of Christ which he stressed by using biblical language and some of the expressions of Isaac Watts.

cause he could not find them in the Bible. Since they were "human inventions," he thought that they could be judged by human reason, "without the imputation of impiety." Stone's untrained frontier mind could not grasp the subtle distinctions made by the theologians in the Christological and Trinitarian controversies. Tortured by what seemed to him to be the problem of logical contradiction in all the popular presentations of Calvinistic doctrines, he alternated between using reason and the Scriptures against these beliefs.

For example, the Confession stated that the Father and Son are "one eternal substance." Stone argued that the voice of reason asserts that the "same individual substance cannot beget itself, nor be begotten by itself."¹³ Therefore the substance of the Son was "never begotten nor born." Stone followed this line of argument:

If the Son be very and eternal God, and as there is but one only true God; then it will follow that the Son begat himself and was his own Father!—that he was active in begetting [sic], and passive in being begotten. I would humbly ask the advocates for eternal generation, did the Son of God exist before he was begotten? If he did, he never was begotten at all—if he did not, he was not begotten from eternity; therefore not the very and eternal God.¹⁴

Stone could not believe that there were two eternal Gods nor that the same one God could at the same instant be active in sending and passive in being sent. Stone here sided with the Arians in the crucial issue between them and the Nicene defenders. Stone believed in the pre-existence of Christ as Son, but he believed that the Son had a beginning. The Father alone was eternal; the Son had the status of a creature. Like the Arians, Stone believed that the Son was not a mere man; since his creation was the work of the Father alone, he was not a creature like other creatures. He was high above other creatures.¹⁵

¹³ Stone, *An Address*, p. 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Stone maintained that he accepted the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul of Christ when as a young student of divinity he read Isaac Watts' *The Glory of Christ*. See Barton W. Stone, *Letters to James Blythe, D.D., Designed as a Reply to the Arguments of Thomas Cleland, D.D.* (Lexington, Ky.: William Taner, 1824). This doctrine was also accepted and publicly taught by Henry Pattillo, who examined Stone in the Orange Presbytery. Pattillo was a devoted reader of Isaac Watts. Watts believed that the Lord Jesus Christ had an existence and was personally united with the divine nature long before the incarnation and managed the affairs of God's ancient church in Old Testament history and then

Stone placed himself close to the subordinationist strain in Arianism which taught the absolute unity of the Father and declared that all other beings have the status of creatures. Christ stands in a mediating position between God and the created world. He is above all creatures, yet he is not deity in the full and true sense. He is not fully God because the Godhead in him is derived from God and he is not fully man because the Godhead is united with a human body having no human mind or spirit.

Yet Stone's treatment of such scriptural texts as Colossians 2:9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," indicates that he tried to take seriously the doctrine of Isaac Watts: that the human nature of Jesus was united to the full Godhead long before the incarnation. Despite all of Stone's distinctions between Jesus as God and the Son of God, he believed that the fullness of God dwelt in Christ. He expressly stated that he believed that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."¹⁶ Stone admitted that the doctrine that God dwelt in his Son is mysterious. As for Watts, so for Stone, this doctrine cleared up the interpretations of such Scriptures as those attributing miracles to Christ. According to Stone it was not Christ as God, but rather God in Christ who worked miracles. He asked, "If the Son, as Son, was God independent, why did he attribute the works to the Father in him, and not to his own Almighty independent power?"¹⁷ Stone made a distinction between the Son of God and the Godhead which dwelt in the Son of God.

Stone seemed to stress both the subordinationist strain of the Arians and the emphasis of the orthodox on the Godhead in Christ. What he actually attempted to do was to follow Isaac Watts without fully understanding all the subtle distinctions of the position of Watts. Isaac Watts taught that Christ's human soul in some "unknown moment of God's own eternity" was united with the Godhead to form a God-man. This human soul was derived from God and thus was a creature. But the "Godhead was co-essential and co-eternal with the Godhead of the

was sent by him, divested of primitive joys, to dwell in a human body, to grow gradually, and to suffer intense agony and to submit to death. He denied that his view was Arian because Arians attributed divine characters to the man Christ Jesus, whereas Watts believed in his personal union to the Godhead.

¹⁶ II Cor. 5:19.

¹⁷ Stone, *An Address*, p. 27.

Father, for it was the same divine essence."¹⁸ Watts rejected the ancient Arian point of view which portrayed Christ as being a glorious person, but "inferior to the true and eternal God." He also veered away from the orthodox position in his doctrine of the pre-existence of the "human soul of Christ" and in holding that a human mind and will were not united to the Godhead at the moment of the incarnation. According to Watts, the human soul of Christ which was united with the divine nature before the "world began," was united at the incarnation with a human body only.¹⁹

Seen in this perspective, the opposition of the Presbyterians to Stone is understandable. Much of the time, Stone used the language of the Arians in describing Christ as the "Son of God." But he also used many biblical terms which stressed the fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Stone maintained that his view of the nature of Christ exalted him more than did the orthodox doctrine. By holding that the Father and the Son are two distinct beings, he did not "fritter" Christ down to a "mere mode or abstraction."²⁰ Stone felt that both Trinitarians and Unitarians agreed on the object of their worship, the only true God, and on "refusing to worship the Son of God, as a being, not the true God." He implied that there was too much speculation on the subject which prevented men from worshipping Christ as the Son of God. He failed to see that concerted opposition against him and his movement arose from his own speculation and failure to grasp fully the views of Isaac Watts and also the difference between the orthodox and the Arians. This opposition had to be overcome and his movement strengthened before he could undertake the major work of his life: the attempt to lay a practical basis for the unity of the church.

Controversy between Stone and the Presbyterians continued over the doctrine of the work of Christ. Thomas Cleland felt that Stone's

¹⁸ Isaac Watts, *Works* (London: 1821), I, 214.

¹⁹ Watts attempted to avoid the "pitfalls of Arianism" and the difficulties of the Orthodox Trinitarians. His object was to lead the Arian "by soft and easy steps, into a belief of the divinity of Christ," and to lay a foundation for reconciling bitter contentions which had troubled the church so long. He sought to stress the unity of God without dividing Him into three infinite spirits. "Sabellius and all Unitarians" would find the doctrine acceptable.

²⁰ Barton W. Stone, *A Letter to Mr. John R. Moreland, in Reply to His Pamphlet* (Lexington, Kentucky: Printed at the Office of the Public Advertiser, 1821).

rejection of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement was the natural outcome of the road he was traveling. Cleland held that anyone who took Stone's position on the deity of Christ would oppose the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.²¹ The orthodox felt that Stone's position on the atonement followed the new German school, headed by Semler, Eickhorn, Paulus, Henke, Herder, Eckerman, and others.²² Stone was accused of borrowing the "language of infidels" when he wrote on the atoning sacrifice.²³ His views on the atonement were also compared to those of the deists.²⁴

The crux of the argument over the atonement came over its design. The orthodox held to a substitutionary theory of the atonement while Stone generally accepted the moral influence theory. The conviction is inescapable that Stone's opposition to the orthodox theory resulted from hearing presentations of the substitutionary doctrine by emotional frontier preachers who heightened the effect of their sermons by the use of extreme metaphors. Until 1804, Stone believed that Christ died as a substitute or surety in man's stead and "to justify man by making satisfaction to law and justice for man's sins."²⁵ He rejected this doctrine that Christ's sacrifice purchased reconciliation because it seemed to him not to be in the Bible and also to contradict biblical teaching on grace, forgiveness, and the love and character of God. Stone's opponents held that he reduced the death of Christ to a natural event, which robbed it of its efficacy, and moreover stressed love in God's nature without any consideration of his exercise of judgment on man. The most potent argument made against Stone's movement was directed against his doctrine of the atonement since the average frontiersman entertained more precise ideas on this subject than on the more abstruse subject of the nature of Christ.

Stone had accepted Watts' doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, but he rejected Watts' doctrine of the atonement,²⁶ which was pre-

²¹ Cleland, *Vindication*, p. 99.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁴ Campbell, *Vindex*, p. 8.

²⁵ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²⁶ Watts held that the sacrifice of Christ was made both to the fury of men and to the "arrows of vindicative justice." His infinite sufferings are for the infinite offenses of mankind. See Isaac Watts, "The Glory of Christ as God-Man" *The Works of Isaac Watts* (London: 1821), Vol. VI.

sented in an orthodox substitutionary pattern. Having little time for either reading or writing, Stone carried materials to the cornfield to write his first pamphlet, which was on the atonement. He discussed the subject more fully at a later date in the *Address to the Christian Churches*.

Stone rejected the doctrine that the blood of Christ satisfied God's law or justice. He argued that the orthodox doctrine militated against the Christian idea of grace and forgiveness. If a surety or substitute paid a debt for man it would "not argue grace in the creditor" to forgive him.²⁷ The doctrine also seemed to contradict the teaching that God was no respecter of persons. If Christ served as a "surety" of the "elect" only, then these blessings would be for a part of mankind only. This struck at the heart of Stone's belief that Christ died for every man,²⁸ and that God's grace must be freely offered to all. The doctrine also represented God as being full of wrath toward the sinner who was "appeased" by the blood of Christ. If wrath were in God, Stone observed, it would argue two infinite and unchangeable principles in him, namely, love and wrath. When God's wrath fell on any creature, he could not be saved unless God changed. God's nature must be unchangeable.²⁹ Therefore, the "wrath of God" mentioned in the Scriptures is not really in God, but is a "relative term only" which Stone understood to be "nothing else but his holy nature standing in opposition to sin."³⁰

Stone's opponents felt that he failed to stress the judgment of God on the sinner. For example, John Poage Campbell believed that God's nature included the principle of wrath and "vindicative justice." When Stone spoke of forgiveness of sin, he meant no more than that "the sinner has made himself free from his own wrath."³¹ Thomas Cleland, a more able opponent³² of Stone than Campbell, accused Stone of

²⁷ Stone, *An Address*, p. 65.

²⁸ Barton W. Stone, *Atonement: The Substance of Two Letters Written to a Friend* (Lexington, Ky.: Joseph Charless, 1805), p. 17.

²⁹ Stone *An Address*, p. 67.

³⁰ Stone, *Atonement*, p. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³² John Poage Campbell and Thomas Cleland stressed wrath as a part of God's nature, but never went so far as James McGready, whose vivid metaphors Stone had often heard. McGready spoke of the "infinite wrath of an angry God" due to the sins of the "elect world." Sinners were redeemed by the "bitter agonies,

using the "language of infidels" against the orthodox doctrine of the atonement. He warned Stone of the "awful consequences" of "philosophizing" the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Christ into "Naturalistic Christianity."

This criticism probably kept Stone from going too far in his theory of the atonement. Though he rejected all substitutionary theories of the atonement, he had to face up to the criticism of J. P. Campbell and Cleland relative to his tendency to reduce the death of Christ to the level of a martyrdom. Salvation then would be man-centered. While opposing the orthodox doctrine of the atonement, Stone nevertheless used many scriptural phrases regarding the death of Christ which seemed to be satisfactory to a man like Thomas Cleland, who specifically stated that Stone's affirmative views were satisfactory as far as they went.

Stone insisted that the word *atonement*³³ meant reconciliation in the Scriptures. In Old Testament history sin separated man from God. The sacrifice was made to cleanse the transgressor. The consequence of this act was that atonement or reconciliation took place between God and the "purified offender."

The main point of difference between Stone and the orthodox was over the influence of the death of Christ on God. The orthodox Presbyterians were afraid that Stone's doctrine tended to deism by reducing the death of Jesus to the level of the death of other men. Stone feared

bloody sufferings and dying groans of the incarnate God" who felt the "poisoned arrows of the wrath of God sticking in his heart," and the flaming sword of God's justice penetrating body and soul. Those who reject his salvation will be bruised "eternally in the wine press of his [God's] wrath," and weep and wail through all eternity, in the society of devils and damned ghosts beneath the flaming billows of God's wrath. *McGready's Works*, I, pp. 109, 259, 260, 301, 303, respectively.

³³ Stone many times referred to the etymology of the word atonement. He asserted that lexicographers derived the word *atone* from the two words *at* and *one*. He quoted from the dictionaries of Johnson and Bailey and L. Brown of Haddington. "To be *at-one*, signifies to be reconciled." He used Maccabees 1:5 "and the next day he shewed himself to them as they strove, and would have set them *at one*; that is, he would have reconciled them." Thomas Cleland in his reply to Stone cited many authorities to prove that the true definition of atonement cannot mean reconciliation. Stone replied that he did not mean that the word is defined as such, but only that its root-meaning comes from *at-one*. See Stone, *Letters to James Blythe*, p. 119 f.

that the substitutionary theory of the atonement was so contrary to the true nature of Christianity as to be itself a cause of infidelity. He believed that the alternative was the moral influence theory of the atonement. The moral influence is exerted not on God, but on man. The death of Jesus has a "moral tendency" to lead man to repentance, obedience, and love. His enemies attacked him more strongly at this point than any other to stop the defections from the orthodox ranks. They attempted to expose him as a deist and an infidel on this question. They were unable to see any merit in the moral influence theory of the atonement; Stone saw no merit in any substitutionary theory. The battle was hard fought here and Stone's movement was in danger of being submerged in the frontal attack of the Presbyterians on the Unitarians and other liberals, who for a time threatened to penetrate Kentucky.

Stone was unalterably opposed to the orthodox doctrine, but did not hold that man must have an intellectual understanding of the death of Christ before he could enter into the Christian community. If a sinning individual discovered the love of God in the face of Jesus, he could trust the Father before he fully comprehended the atonement. Stone drew the analogy of a father who provides for a large family of children,

Some of them may know the means by which the father got the provisions—others may not so well know, and the youngest may scarcely know anything more than that the father's love provided these things. Yet, they all eat and thrive, without quarreling about the means by which the provisions were obtained. O that Christians would do likewise!³⁴

This was written in 1815. A little later Stone wanted to forget this theological controversy completely. He was interested in laying a practical basis for Christians to be united and he was likewise conscious of the softening of the harsher presentations which had characterized earlier popular Calvinism in Kentucky. Good biblicalist that he was, Stone proposed that the controversy be ended by using "scriptural expressions" on the doctrine and nothing more.

In order to remove this unprofitable and injurious controversy, I would propose, that we all teach this doctrine, and speak of it in the language of scripture, none affirming that God was influenced by Christ's death to

³⁴ *An Address*, p. 62.

forgive and save the sinner, and none denying it. To affirm it we cannot be clearly supported by scripture; to deny it we cannot be positive. Till this course be pursued by us all, the controversy can never cease.³⁵

This is a different mood from that of the man who had vigorously replied to opponents who had accused him of using the language of Thomas Paine on the atonement. Stone had previously written that he did not wonder that infidels opposed a doctrine so absurd.

It is rather a wonder that there are not a thousand infidels for one, when such doctrines has [sic] been held up to the world as the doctrine of revelation, and supported and defended by the whole weight of talents, learning, and religion of the christian world, as the foundation stone, and the distinguishing trait of the Christian religion.³⁶

2. STONE'S STRESS ON MAN'S NEED OF RESPONSE IN CONVERSION

As noted, some Presbyterians welcomed the revival when it first appeared in Kentucky. They saw that it actually produced some good fruit in the changed lives of individuals and communities. They were in favor of converting an irreligious, sports-loving, commercially-minded people into a religious, serious-minded, God-loving community. The revival seemed to do this. But they soon came to believe that the excesses of the revivalists produced more harm than good. The new converts were not always stable in their religious reformation. Many seemed to equate religion with emotional fervor. To the orthodox, the "New Light" did not always seem to have light, but rather to take a light view of the nature of man and the kind of experience which is required to re-orient man to God.

Barton W. Stone did take an entirely different view of man from that current in popular Presbyterian preaching. He believed that man is depraved, but he more often spoke of the good possibilities in man. He was inclined to emphasize man's part in salvation rather than God's. Stone believed that popular preaching on the helplessness of man only emphasized his hopelessness. Much of the preaching emphasized the doctrine of total depravity, which he believed devitalized moral activity and was responsible for the prevailing religious declension. He assumed that irreligion was caused not by the depravity of man or by social conditions existing on the frontier, but by the doc-

³⁵ *CM*, IX (1835), 233.

³⁶ *CM*, VI (1832), 234.

trinal teachings of orthodox Calvinists in Kentucky. For their part, the Presbyterians were just as alarmed by this free-lance revivalist who was leading numbers away from the orthodox faith to new doctrines which they believed were really old heresies in the sheep's clothing of emotionalism.

Stone, however, believed that if he could show the fallacy of certain doctrines such as the doctrine of original sin, it would "remove a point of endless altercation," and pave the way for Christians "to come to a better understanding of each other."³⁷

Stone believed that man is a sinner. The depravity of man is taught in the Bible and confirmed by universal experience and observation.³⁸ Man's thoughts are unlike God's thoughts and his ways are unlike God's ways. "All mankind," wrote Stone, "are polluted and unclean—all bearing iniquity—all guilty. God's holy nature stands in opposition to our unholy nature, and our sins have separated us and our God."³⁹ Sin, said Stone, cut the cords of love existing between Adam and God. The result of sin is spiritual death that alienates the heart from God, so that there is neither love in the sinner nor in his ways.⁴⁰ This death is represented by a carnal mind which is set in enmity against God. Such minds lack what they were made to enjoy: God. But they feel impelled to fill this craving for God with "meaner things." Hence, man engages in hectic business pursuits and incessant labor, only to find in them no lasting good.

How did sin arise? Stone rejected the idea of original or "birth sin." He maintained that God made man good, but neither "holy nor bad." The body and soul of Adam were good, that is, undefiled with physical or moral pollution at the time of birth. But Adam became holy only after he knew and loved God as his Creator. Adam begat neither holy children nor sinful children. Adam's children had his human nature, subject to mortality. Sin and holiness could not be transferred from one creature to another because moral qualities were incapable of being transferred as were physical qualities.

Man is not born with a sinfully corrupt nature. Stone seems to adopt

³⁷ *CM*, IX (1835), 5 ff.

³⁸ *An Apology*, p. 192.

³⁹ Stone, *An Address*, (2nd ed.), p. 51.

⁴⁰ *CM*, XII (1841), 46.

a Lockean view of the nature of man when he rejected innate ideas, innate sins, innate knowledge and holiness

as without meaning, contrary to scripture, and sound philosophy. That man is born with capacities to receive ideas, knowledge and the moral qualities of holiness, sin, and conscience, is true. A vessel may be made with a capacity to hold water; but if water be not infused it will forever remain empty.⁴¹

Stone held that man, created in the image of God was capable of growing, understanding, willing, choosing, loving, hating.⁴² There also dwells in every man "a law of sin" which Stone calls an inclination to evil. The law of sin may also be called "spiritual death, or depravity, or the corruption of our nature, which in moral agents inclines to evil, as the sparks fly upwards."⁴³ Stone stated that he and his group had never denied that by the transgression of Adam the world was condemned to death, but denied that moral evil or qualities are transferred from Adam to his posterity.

Stone, convinced that the doctrine of total depravity militated against religious revival, labored to establish the doctrine that men can respond to God's initiative. In man's mind and spirit some good dwells. Man is not born holy, but even by nature possesses some good things. He thus backed away from the complete Lockean emphasis when he wrote that man has a "willingness to do good, to hate and shun evil—to be pleased with the law of God." Though alienated from God, man possesses rational facilities, capable of knowing and enjoying God. If he does not, then he ceases to be a moral agent and is no longer "a fit subject of moral government." Stone thus differed from the popular preaching which was represented by an individual like James McGready. McGready held that through the fall of Adam, the image of Satan replaced the image of God in man; Stone held that the image of God is still there, though hidden as seen through a darkened glass which can be cleaned to increase vision.

Stone emphasized man's ability to respond to God's initiative taken long ago in Christ. As a corollary to this belief, he developed a simple

⁴¹ *CM*, XI (1841), 245.

⁴² *CM*, IX (1835), 8.

⁴³ *CM*, IX (1835), 221.

plan of salvation for sinning man which taught that man does not have to wait for any special illumination to respond to God. His opponents charged him with ignoring the activity of God completely. They felt that Stone pushed his opposition to the special activity of God in conversion too far. Strange as it may seem, one of the chief reasons why some of Alexander Campbell's followers were suspicious of Stone is that they believed that he overstressed the activity of God in salvation. The Presbyterians felt that Stone was an enthusiastic rationalist and the followers of Campbell felt that Stone was a rational enthusiast.

By 1835 Stone stated that a majority of the people who drove the "revivalists" out of the church were so near the truth they once rejected that the "shades of difference are hardly discoverable."⁴⁴ This would indicate a tremendous shift in the religious climate of Presbyterianism within a generation. Arminianism,⁴⁵ preached both by the Methodists and the "New Lights" of Stone, had softened the hardened interpretation of the doctrine given by the average Presbyterian preacher in Kentucky at the turn of the century. Certainly this kind of accommodation on the part of the Presbyterians would explain both why Unitarianism did not succeed in Kentucky and also why there were no significant defections after the "New Lights" and Cumberland Presbyterians left the orthodox fold.

Stone held that man must be born again. He and the Presbyterians were agreed that this necessity is laid on man. Stone believed that man must be born again, or "renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness after the image of God." He accepted Paul's language relative to casting off the old man and putting on the new. Man becomes reconciled to God and is made a partaker of the divine nature. But human wisdom and power cannot effect the regeneration.⁴⁶ Men become creatures of the new birth through the will of God. "The spiritual change or new creation in the creature is the work of

⁴⁴ *CM*, IX (1835), 258.

⁴⁵ Stone was an Arminian on the question of free will in man, but opposed both the Arminian and the Calvinist because they taught the doctrine of "birth sin."

⁴⁶ *An Apology*, p. 192.

the creator.”⁴⁷ The turning itself is the work of man.⁴⁸ God upon the mercy seat gives grace and mercy to “a lost race.”⁴⁹

It [the work of regeneration and salvation from sin] is a work infinitely beyond the power of man, who cannot make one hair white or black—who is as unable to change his nature as the Ethiopian his skin, or the Leopard his spots.⁵⁰

Stone rejected the doctrine that man can do nothing to be saved until God works faith and repentance in him by his physical creative power. He rejected the doctrine because he could not understand how a God of love could grant this power to some and withhold it from others. He also felt that the Scriptures taught that man must act in response to God. God freely offers saving grace to all. But man must take the next step in response to the prior activity of God⁵¹—a basic teaching of the Scriptures.

Stone’s biblicism was strong. It was rarely legalistic. However, he seemed rather close to legalism in the import he attached to the Scriptures in the role of conversion. Two attitudes are necessary on the part of sinning man. He must apprehend the Scriptures as containing historical truth. God works through the testimony of the Scriptures. The Word of God is living and endures forever because it is a validly objective word. The Gospel is based upon historical facts which are irrevocably true.⁵²

Again, the Gospel is not effective until man accepts it through an act of faith. The Gospel produces no effect on the unbeliever. When the sinner believes the Gospel, he is “quickened, renewed, and sanctified.” The “fallow ground of the heart” is then broken up by the good seed of the gospel.

It [the word] may remain in the Bible till the day of our death; unless we believe, it will no more effect a change in our hearts, than seed will grow while it lies dry in the garner. God does not operate upon us as upon dead matter. He might speak a stone into an angel, but he will not do it. He deals with man as a rational creature. The strongest motives are presented

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁸ *CM*, XIII (1843), 87.

⁴⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ Stone, *An Address*, p. 82.

⁵¹ *An Apology*, p. 203.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

to our understandings; but they cannot move, excite, or influence us, unless we believe: in other words, they are no motives at all, without faith.⁵³

Our true knowledge of God comes when by faith we receive "the testimony he has given of himself in his Word." The Word is not only the foundation of faith, but "it has sufficient evidence in itself to produce faith." If the sinner cannot believe the Scriptures, Stone argued, it must be for one of two reasons—either he finds the Scriptures incredible, or he has not the capacity to believe them. To say that they are incredible and yet that God commands us to believe them "on the pain of eternal damnation" is to present God as a cruel tyrant. To say that God requires sinners to believe when they have no capacity to believe is to make him an equally unreasonable tyrant.⁵⁴ To Stone, the contradiction of Presbyterianism lay here. He felt that popular Calvinism made this impossible demand on man.

Stone did not believe that the force of this objection is dulled by explaining that man by sin lost his capacity to believe in God. The Scriptures, he asserted, were not given to perfect, but to fallen men. "If God knew that his fallen creatures could not believe, would it not appear cruel to command them to do it, and inflict a more aggravated condemnation upon them for not complying."⁵⁵

No special illumination is necessary to understand the Word of God. No man need wait for supernatural power to believe the Word of God. To assert that it is necessary for the will or disposition to be charged by the miraculous activity of God is to make the Word of God neither the cause nor the foundation of our faith, but a previous work. Stone wrote:

Faith depends not on the will, inclination, or disposition, but on testimony. Were I from home, and a messenger should come and inform me that my wife was dead, I should believe it; not because I was willing, but because of the testimony of the messenger. Many sinners believe they are on the brink of ruin, not because they are willing and pleased that it should be so, but because of the testimony of truth.⁵⁶

Stone was faced with a frontier community which had hardened the doctrines of total depravity and predestination to the point that man

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵⁴ Stone, *An Address*, p. 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

was not expected to act in conversion until God had first granted faith. He met this situation by the vigorous affirmation that man could believe the testimony of the Scriptures before the Spirit operated on him.⁵⁷

In the story of the Great Supper related by Christ, the faith of those who partook of it "did not depend upon the provision they ate, nor the sight of the well-furnished table, but upon the report of the servants who invited them."⁵⁸ Consequently, Stone asserted, the faith of those who accept the provisions of the Gospel does not depend upon "their partaking, but upon the divine testimony furnished in the Scriptures."⁵⁹

Despite his great stress on the role of the Scriptures in conversion, Stone attempted to give some place to the activity of the Spirit. Within his own group of followers were some who in opposition to extreme Calvinists became extremists themselves, stressing the rational to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit. When he and his followers were charged with denying the operation of the Holy Spirit, Stone replied with the argument: if God gave the Bible to the sinner and told him not to expect any other "help, aid, or assistance" it would be useless to pray to God for his spirit. Stone thought this plan would lead to despair. If God said that the Bible held all that a man need "know, believe, and do," but that man could neither believe nor act until God in his "sovereign time and way" gave his Holy Spirit to him, it would likewise lead to despair. No active demand would be made on the unconverted man until the time arrived, if it ever should come. Stone felt that to make the Scriptures "*everything* in regeneration was just as extreme as to make them *nothing*."

That which I think to be the truth, is this: suppose God, having handed me the Bible, should thus speak: "Take this book—in it are all things necessary for you to know, believe, and do—believe them as the truths of heaven, and come to me and ask, and I will give you the holy spirit, and every promise of the New Testament." On this plan I should be encouraged to activity in every duty, in the confident expectation of help and salvation.⁶⁰

Stone attempted to strike a moderate position; he did not wholly concur with the Arminians who prayed at the "mourners bench," the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁸ *An Apology*, p. 208.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Stone, *An Address*, p. 83 f.

extreme Calvinists who simply waited for the invasion of God's spirit, or with some of his own followers who used the Scriptures mechanically in conversion. While the regenerated sinner does not receive "divine illumination apart from the Word"⁶¹ Stone encouraged the unconverted to pray in faith, as he himself had done at the time of his conversion in the Virginia backwoods. Stone encouraged sinners to pray for pardon and salvation, but not to continue for hours and days without any other activity.⁶² Stone, confronted with some of his own followers, who discouraged prayer in the unconverted, stated: "I do seriously doubt the truth of any doctrine that discourages prayer in the saint or sinner."⁶³ He also wrote that prayers will not make God more willing to bless either sinners or saints.

Prayer does not make God more willing to give; but "that his children shall feel their dependence on him, and possess the graces of humility and gratitude." It is enough for us to know the will of God and our duty is to obey it.⁶⁴

Stone stressed the fact that the individual prayed because he already believed this gospel. When some said that they remembered the time "when they would have given the world to have believed, but they could not," Stone replied that what they really sought was not faith, but "the fruits of faith." Faith for him was involved even in seeking and asking.⁶⁵

Some objected that Stone and his followers became "their own saviors" because they declared that man "must believe the gospel, prior to his receiving the Spirit." Stone, in reply, offered a parable of the starving beggar who took bread from the rich man. He ate and lived, and thus was saved by the bread and the hand that received the bread.⁶⁶

To the objection that the creature's faith gave glory to the creature rather than to God, Stone offered the analogy of two artists. The first artist formed an image of man with "eyes, ears, mouth, and every feature and member in perfect symmetry." The spectators admired the skill of the artist, but none were so stupid as to give the praise to the

⁶¹ *CM*, V (1831), 4 f.

⁶² *CM*, IX (1835), 57.

⁶³ *CM*, VIII (1833), 214.

⁶⁴ *CM*, IX (1835), 58.

⁶⁵ Stone, *An Address*, p. 90.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

image. The other artist also made a complete image of man. To it, he "superadded" the faculties of seeing, hearing, understanding, believing, etc.:

He speaks to his image—it hears and understands him. He relates to it a fact—it believes him. He calls it to come to him—it obeys him. All the spectators extol the workmanship, and give the preference of skill to the last artist. Should any of the spectators degrade the workmanship of the image, they would degrade the skill of the artist. This last image I consider a true representation of mankind. God has made them capable of hearing, understanding, believing, and obeying. . . . But is it not rather derogating from his [God's] glory to represent his creature man . . . incapable of hearing, understanding, believing, and obeying him? ⁶⁷

Stone said that some of the preaching he had heard would picture the first artist as speaking to an image which could neither understand nor obey. The artist, enraged at receiving no response from the lifeless image, would break it in pieces with great fury. Some preaching imputed this irrational conduct to God. Stone recoiled at this presentation of God in relation to the conversion of man. The true way of conversion Stone summed up in a scriptural quotation: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Stone made it clear that revivals and warmth were the primary need of the frontier churches in the early nineteenth century. He stressed emotional preaching in contrast to the more sedate preaching of the learned Presbyterian ministers. He contrasted ancient with modern preachers by stating that the former had the Word of God in their hearts, but the latter had the Word of God "not so much in their hearts as in their heads, or in their pockets. They go and preach, or read; but can fire and warmth be expected from icebergs?" ⁶⁸ One of Stone's favorite expressions was to "live and preach in the Spirit." By this he meant more than a "vociferous zeal and manner." He meant a real concern for people. ⁶⁹ Stone expressed the negative reaction of the frontier to ministers who took time "to study and write eloquent" speeches to warn people to fly from impending ruin.

Stone reacted with many frontiersmen against the tendency of ministers of the more wealthy and established churches to wear "costly

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶⁸ *CM*, XII (1842), 258.

⁶⁹ *CM*, XII (1842), 317 f.

apparel" and "tinselled ornaments" of any kind. Poverty was one of the emphases of certain sects in the strong biblical tradition. Stone's teaching on plain dress and money revealed that the cleavage between his movement and the Presbyterians had a deep cultural, as well as doctrinal, basis. If the churches were more spiritually minded, Stone wrote, evangelists would be under no temptations "to demand four or five hundred dollars a year for their services, in order to equip themselves with a gold watch and chain, and with costly apparel to adorn their persons."⁷⁰ The ministers in the Stone movement had to struggle for a living, and Stone was against the richer Presbyterian ministers who lived in "palaces" and "fine houses" and ate "sumptuous fare." Jesus Christ, our great exemplar, was rich, but for our sakes became poor. So did Paul. We read that in apostolic times none became rich by preaching, nor do we read of any that died in want. "God feeds even the sparrows." For all of the emphasis against a wealthy ministry, Stone felt the pinch of poverty himself and believed that ministers should be supported so that they would not have to labor for a living. The poor minister can take but little time from manual labor to improve his mind by reading. When they go abroad to preach, the rich regard them as beneath their notice because they "cannot dress according to the tone of the day."

The reaction of the backwoods frontier minister against the refined, educated minister is seen in Stone's comment on the ministers he had seen

lightly skipping up the stairs of the pulpit—then adjusting their collar and bosom, combing their hair in dandy style—then rising in the vain confidence of their respect, and reading their hymn and text with an affected air and tone of sanctity, visible to all but themselves. Such conduct forestalls any good effect of their preaching.⁷¹

To Stone's mind, more important than these cultural cleavages between the Presbyterians and his "New Lights" was the emphasis on emotionalism to stir the church out of its complacency. He believed that revivalism was necessary to enable the church of his day to repeat the amazing triumphs of the ancient church.

⁷⁰ *CM*, XIV (1844), 144 f.

⁷¹ *CM*, XIII (1844), 258.

No sooner was the ancient church organized, he noted, than its influence was manifested not in the fire of controversy alone

but felt in the daily sympathy it had with, and the succor it afforded to the distressed, and heard in those joyful sounds which announced pardon to the guilty, admonition to the unwary, and a home of future bliss to the distressed faithful in Christ.⁷²

It not only won tens of thousands from Judaism, but also entered the market place, the court of Areopagus, and Caesar's judgment seat, without fear of ill or hope of favor, and attacked the most violent prejudices. The slavish fears of the superstitious on the one hand, and the selfish interest of the crafty on the other, were overthrown.⁷³ The dynamic ancient church stood in contrast to the present church which was lukewarm, worldly-minded, and careless.⁷⁴

Stone felt that the attitude of the Presbyterian churches in opposing revivals kept the church from recovering its pristine vigor and glory. He did not, however, equate Christianity with increased accessions to the church. While it is the mission of the church to grow, a mere expansion of membership would not bring peace to the world. He agreed with the *Cumberland Presbyterian* that the church must undergo conversion.⁷⁵ The ground for hope in the conversion of the world lay in exhibiting "Christ's character" in daily behavior, as well as in the public proclamations of the gospel.

Though revivals were frequently carried to excess, Stone held that they had worked a "grand revolution to religion in the United States of America." He contrasted the religious apathy at the close of the eighteenth century with the marked vitality at the beginning of the nineteenth. Stone felt that religious revivalism which had been unparalleled for centuries marked the commencement of a new era that would close "at the coming of the Lord." The great work of the revival was the emancipation of the people from the doctrines not only of the Presbyterian Church, but of all parties and authoritative creeds. The only creed of the emancipated "New Lights" was "the Bible alone."

⁷² *CM*, IX (1835), 145.

⁷³ *CM*, IX (1835), 146.

⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ *CM*, X (1836), 61.

3. STONE'S OPPOSITION TO CREEDS AS A BARRIER TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

Barton W. Stone and the "New Lights" opposed the use of written creeds by the Presbyterians; the original opposition to creeds such as the Westminster Confession was occasioned by the way it was used as an instrument against the revival. The revivalists stated that in their revival preaching, they neglected to preach the "dry doctrines" found in the Confession. They were soon charged with neglecting these doctrines, and the Confession was used "as a weapon against the growing revival."⁷⁶

To avoid raising a flame of controversy, we said as little as possible concerning the Confession of Faith. But its vigilant friends could not bear to see some of its peculiar tenets neglected; while the Scripture doctrine of free salvation, through the blood of the Lamb, was proclaimed aloud to all, and drunk down by many, inflaming their hearts with the love of God, and demolishing the strongholds of Satan and of sin. They arose to preserve their beloved book, and its peculiarities from destruction.⁷⁷

Later, creeds were opposed for two additional reasons: they were used to supplant divine revelation and they caused division among Christian people. Stone and his followers professed to reflect only the religious light shining in the Bible. When they were nicknamed "New Lights" by their enemies, Stone recalled "that the name had an honorable history, being applied in the past to such stalwarts as Whitfield, Wesley, to New-Side Presbyterians, to some Methodists, to the first Baptists in Virginia, and to every sect of living Christians in my remembrance for years past." Stone did not object to being called by the name of "such worthies," but he felt that the name did not agree with their profession. "We have professed no new light," said he, "but that old unsullied light which shines in the Bible."⁷⁸

Testimony from the creeds and also from the feelings were worthless to Stone. The truth of doctrines was to be established by the Bible. He held the leaders of the Protestant Reformation in high esteem because they "declared the Scriptures to be the sole law of Christians and submitted the interpretation of them to the enlightened conscience and

⁷⁶ *An Apology*, p. 230 f.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Stone, *An Address*, p. 97.

sound judgment of each individual disciple."⁷⁹ The Bible alone was the "standard of true theology."⁸⁰ Creeds were "competitors" of the Bible. "The authority of one inspired writer, with me," Stone wrote, "outweighs a host of bishops and doctors. I detract not from their virtues; many of them I esteem; but they are fallible men."⁸¹

Despite his stress on "spiritual religion" and the immediacy of religious experience, Stone rejected feelings and experiences as the criteria for measuring the truth of doctrines. If feelings were established as the norm of truth in doctrines, skepticism would be the result. The ecstatic felt that he had salvation when he saw an uncommon light or heard a voice. The Roman Catholic felt happy when he made a confession to the priest and received forgiveness. But these experiences could not be set up as norms in testing religious truth. Stone's view of the Bible was practical;⁸² it was the only criterion "to test the rectitude of our feelings or experience."⁸³

Stone did not oppose knowledge and reason, but he gave priority to revelation. He believed in uniting knowledge and zeal, but was so firmly attached to revelation that he placed it first, even if reason contradicted it.⁸⁴ He upbraided Walter Scott for turning away from the Scriptures to speculative philosophy on the doctrine of the atonement.⁸⁵ He announced his position with regard to the Scriptures when he first launched the *Christian Messenger* in 1824. He proposed to use the Bible to expose errors and to exhibit true doctrine, "unsullied by the unhallowed touch of man's wisdom." One of Stone's favorite quotations, which he constantly used in the *Christian Messenger*, was the famous quotation by William Chillingworth (1602-1644), that the re-

⁷⁹ *CM*, IX (1835), 30 f.

⁸⁰ *CM*, IX (1835), 43.

⁸¹ Stone, *An Address*, p. 92.

⁸² Stone stated that when he left the Presbyterians he examined the Bible "to learn from it, and not to put it under my pillow, or to carry it in my pocket as an amulet against Demons." See *CM*, XII (1842), 113 f.

⁸³ *CM*, XII (1841), 20.

⁸⁴ Isaac Watts, who influenced Stone greatly, urged that men maintain holy awe at the "authority and majesty of God speaking in his word" and build faith upon the word not "upon the books of men." See Isaac Watts, *The Works of . . .*, VI, 202, 204. Henry Pattillo, Stone's old teacher in North Carolina, said that one may as well try to measure the sun's distance with a surveyor's chain, as to attempt to weigh revealed truth in the "scale of reason."

⁸⁵ *CM*, X (1836), 169.

ligion of Protestants is not the doctrine of the Reformers or Confessions, but the "Bible only is the religion of Protestants."

The most extreme instance of Stone's faith in divine revelation is seen when he used it as an argument as to why he himself did not join a temperance society.⁸⁶ He was willing for people to unite with temperance societies, if it would keep them temperate. He encouraged his own children to become affiliates, but refused to join one himself because he did not wish to suggest to the world that the Word of God was too weak to keep him sober. "For 40 years," he wrote, "the Word of God has kept me from the evil by its powerful influence on my mind, and I am persuaded it is able to keep me to the end. This word is far more powerful on my mind than the words or obligations of any society on earth."⁸⁷

Though Stone pushed this position on divine revelation to the extreme, the significant thing is that he did not try to force the position on others. His biblicism was deeply rooted, but he allowed freedom in interpreting the Scriptures. He always maintained that he would have remained with the Presbyterians if they had permitted him to "read and understand the Scriptures" for himself.⁸⁸

Stone also opposed creeds because he believed that the introduction of creeds first divided the church and had disrupted its unity ever since. He dated the apostasy of the church from the day that authoritative creeds were introduced. As nearly as can be discovered, Stone felt that this occurred when the doctrines of the Trinity first were being formulated. Thus, the ground was laid for founding the seat of Rome and tearing the church apart by setting up infallible standards to test heretics.

Creeds have perpetuated divisions throughout church history. Stone asserted that creeds of his own day brought about three divisions in the Presbyterian Church: the Cumberland Presbyterians, the Christians, and the New School Presbyterians. He also pointed out that in the nineteenth century Methodists and Baptists also had divided over credal

⁸⁶ Though Stone was a revivalist, he did not take an active interest in temperance societies, Sunday Schools, or missionary societies whose origin and expansion are traceable to revivals.

⁸⁷ *CM*, IV (1830), 249 f.

⁸⁸ *CM*, VI (1832), 263.

differences.⁸⁹ Creeds have a tendency, Stone thought, not only to condemn those of opposite denominations, but also to exclude them. Creeds forced people not together, but apart. Creeds provided soil in which infidelity and unbelief grew. A creed was a "paper pope," equally "infallible and sacred as his holiness at Rome." Stone pictured a creed as the "vicar of the Bible" who frowned "horribly upon every dissentient from its doctrine and would coerce submission . . . if it had the power of the sword at command."⁹⁰ Stone felt that Protestants were inconsistent in ridiculing the papists for having an infallible Pope when they themselves had "infallible" creeds to test "heretics."⁹¹

Stone's opposition to "unwritten creeds" held by some of his own followers was decisive. He recognized that many who harangued against creeds actually were guilty of holding to unwritten creeds which were just as binding as any written theological instruments.⁹² "Whether these opinions be embodied in a creed book or not," said Stone,

the effect is the same, they will divide christians. A person, or a church may renounce all such creeds, and books, and boast in the Bible alone as his only creed; yet that very church through weakness, may attach such importance to their opinions, as to condemn all who dissent from them unworthy of christian fellowship. The Bible is not to be blamed for such unhallowed deeds.⁹³

One of Stone's followers, John Hubbard, took the phrases "gospel preaching," "apostolic preaching," and "New Testament preaching" literally. John Hubbard proposed that all attempts to explain the Scriptures be abandoned in order to abolish conflict among Christians. He favored reading the Bible without any comment or exhortation, feeling that the Bible would explain itself without commentaries by men. Stone felt that Hubbard's views on modern preaching were correct, but saw that the proposal would exclude preachers and teachers from the church.⁹⁴ New Testament preaching, such as extremists in Stone's movement favored, would literally have come down to quoting Scripture without comment! The extremists failed to see that a few docu-

⁸⁹ *CM*, IX (1835), 27.

⁹⁰ *CM*, IX (1835), 28.

⁹¹ *CM*, IX (1835), 3.

⁹² *CM*, IX (1835), 30.

⁹³ *Loc. cit.*

⁹⁴ *CM*, VIII (1834), 56 f.

ments produced largely by first generation Christians could not exhaust the content of Christian reaction to God's revelation in history.

Stone opposed creeds also because he believed they had a tendency to make men "slaves and hypocrites, and to banish the lovers of liberty, and truth from Christian society."⁹⁵ When supported by civil power, they led to the fear of penalty, persecution and death. When the creed was supported by ecclesiastical authority alone, the dissenter suffered the "pain of being excluded from the society of his heart" and forfeiting the privileges of the church.⁹⁶ Yet, Stone's main concern was not against creeds *per se* as much as against the use men made of them.⁹⁷ In 1836 when Stone feared that the *Christian Messenger* would die, he published "a statement of a few doctrines" which began in creedal fashion. The text was three pages long and attempted to state Stone's position on the doctrines that his opponents had held were unorthodox.

Stone, near the end of his life, softened his stand against creeds by proposing that none be held as authoritative. A few years earlier, in his discussion with Alexander Campbell, Stone had recommended the Apostles' Creed as a good statement of Christian doctrines.⁹⁸ Now Stone's major interest was the unity of Christendom, and he proposed a two-fold plan by which this goal might be reached: (1) to hold up the Bible alone as the foundation of the church—to believe what it says and do what it enjoins; (2) to reject none of those who do not wish to give up their human creeds, provided they take "the Bible for their directory in faith and practice." Indeed, Stone boldly declared, "They may have a dozen creeds, if they do not propose them on others as authoritative."⁹⁹ After the vigorous attacks which Stone and his followers had launched against creeds, this comes as a startling concession. It was characteristic

⁹⁵ *CM*, IX (1835), 27.

⁹⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁹⁷ This was James McGready's position on creeds. McGready recognized that a system of sound doctrine is necessary to the power of religion "as the body is to the living man." McGready did not reject creeds, but he objected to placing them, whether written or unwritten, in Christ's stead. "He argued that the Presbyterian makes a Christ out of his Confession; the Baptist out of immersion; the Methodist out of the doctrines of Wesley; and the Marshalites' Christ is in having no system at all." See *McGready's Works*, II, 39.

⁹⁸ Campbell agreed that this would be an excellent résumé of Christian belief provided it were not held as authoritatively binding on all Christians.

⁹⁹ *CM*, XIV (1844), 133 f.

of Stone's own freedom from dogmatism in his struggle to be free from what he termed the slavish doctrines and control of the Presbyterian Church.

The Presbyterian Church failed to adjust itself to the conditions on the American frontier in Kentucky, and it failed to allow sufficient latitude in the interpretation of doctrines. Yet, Stone failed to appreciate what Calvinism had contributed to his own growth. He did not see that the doctrines of Calvinism had been perverted through the emotional preaching of men such as James McGready. Stone described Calvinism as being

among the heaviest clogs on Christianity in the world. It is a dark mountain between heaven and earth, and is amongst the most discouraging hindrances to sinners from seeking the Kingdom of God, and engenders bondage and gloominess to the saints. Its influence is felt throughout the Christian world, even where it is least suspected . . . yet there are thousands of precious saints in the system.¹⁰⁰

The misunderstanding was not Stone's alone. The Presbyterians in Kentucky did not sense the frontier feeling of religious freedom which was rising to keep pace with political and economic freedom. Such freedom was often unrestrained and anarchic, but it arose as an increasing tide of strength which could not be held back by men who were iron-bound by the past. Some flexibility on their part would have prevented a bitter struggle which ended in a blocked road.

Stone's break with Calvinism in Kentucky reflected the difference between those who appealed to the emotions and those who appealed to the intellect, those who frowned on cultural accomplishments and those who felt them to be merely superfluous, those who appealed to the Bible and those who used creeds as vehicles of Christian thought, and those who liked unrestrained freedom and those who wished to have authoritative restraints over individual members and churches.

For Stone it was a worthwhile battle for the individual's right to a first-hand religious awakening, to a simple firm belief in biblicism, to a desire for perfection in the life of the Christian, and to a belief in the unity of the church. These insights were rooted in the Protestant tradition. Luther, for example, emphasized the centrality of the Bible and the fundamental necessity for first-hand religious re-orientation. Luther

¹⁰⁰ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

did not embrace perfectionism, but the Spiritual Reformers and many of the Anabaptists did.

Stone's perfectionism was reflected in his desire for discipline, work, and a simple diet when he attended school in North Carolina. It was revealed in his restless desire for peace of mind in his conversion and ordination experiences. It was to be found in his struggle to reject such doctrines as total depravity and atonement for only the elect, which seemed to him to conflict with the perfect love of God.

Stone was able to subordinate all other emphases, namely, the opposition to Calvinism, the love of freedom, the belief in simple biblicism, the necessity for religious re-awakening, and the desire for perfectionism, to this major concern: *the followers of Christ must come to the place where they will not let any doctrine break their perfect fellowship in Christ.*

If Stone had been content simply to oppose Calvinism as did many of his colleagues, he would be unremembered today. Some of his associates joined hands with "the dancing Shakers." Others of his companions returned to the Presbyterian fold. Stone remained firm to the vision of the light which had come to him in the backwoods of Virginia, as, alone, he meditated on William Hodge's presentation of a "God of love." He resisted all appeals to return to the "old paths" of the Presbyterians, which brought no peace to his unresting spirit. Controversy, however, with the Calvinists of Kentucky brought him no satisfaction either. He was committed to a larger vision. Beyond acceptance of new faiths and controversies over old ones, he saw a new American dream, a society of Christian believers so bound together by love on earth that men could not be loosed from it by either the lure of the new or the fight over the old.

CHAPTER VII

STONE AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

STONE BELIEVED in Christian unity as a practical program which could be achieved on earth. He went far beyond either Pattillo¹ or McGready² who, while condemning strife among the followers of Christ, accepted division as inevitable within the framework of earthly existence. Stone felt that controversy among Christians was unnecessary and by no means inevitable. He was certain that unity of Christian believers need not be postponed till that "awful day" when McGready predicted that differences between Presbyterians, Seceders, Covenanters, Baptists, and Methodists would be resolved.

The difference between Stone and many of his contemporaries on the question of Christian unity is that he labored for unity as though his life depended on the achievement of this goal. Unity was the dominating passion of his life. He not only discussed the theory of Christian unity, but attempted to do something practical about it. In all of his efforts to achieve unity, he manifested a spirit of conciliation. He felt that Christian love and trust were the essential bases of unity.

In this emphasis, he differed sharply from Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), who believed that Christian unity should be established on a particular biblical pattern of entrance requirements into the Church,

¹ Pattillo deplored divisions among Christians, but his faith in unity was posited in heaven rather than among men on earth. See Pattillo, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

² McGready believed that strife among Christian people is one of the "most subtle and effective engines of hell" by which the devil kills revivals and the power of religion. He did not stress many doctrinal differences in his preaching; still less did he erect denominational barriers. Actually, McGready made sport of narrow sectarian loyalties, but he had no real faith in the achievement of unity until all are united in heaven "by the most pure and disinterested love." See *McGready's Works*, I, 283, 332.

a set of biblical doctrines and biblical church polity. Campbell, with his viewpoint, probably never would have been able to bring his followers together with those of Stone. It was Stone's spirit and active practical interest in unity which generated the drive necessary to cement the union of the two groups.

Stone was firmly convinced that division among the followers of Christ was sinful scandal. He felt that controversies over theological questions only increased conflict. "Partyism," which causes the church to divide, condemns other good Christian people and brands them as heretics, is contrary to the spirit of Christ. Love of parties in the church leads to intolerance as each sect or party seeks to exclude the other. Men who encourage division have "carnal" motives such as pride, profit, and love of ease. Sectarian debates lead to a tremendous dissipation of energy.

Stone saw that the missionary effort was retarded by division, and felt that Christian unity at home must be achieved before Christianity could win abroad. He opposed attempts, however, to unite Christian believers on a purely creedal basis. He wished to restore the unity of the New Testament Church, but differed from some of his friends who wished to base such unity on certain isolated doctrinal emphases. Stone argued that this approach was essentially no better than the attempt to base unity on written creeds. Stone enunciated no precise biblical pattern as a basis for union; rather, he went to the Bible for the spirit and love of Christ which he maintained were the only bases of unity. Unity would be restored to the churches with the restoration not of "new Testament doctrines," but of New Testament life, as it is seen in the love of Christ. He looked forward to a national American conference on Christian unity, but always stressed the fact that unity would never come until its spirit existed in man himself.

Disunity was to him a sin of great magnitude. Division supported the "Prince of Darkness" and opposed the "King of Heaven." It was

in opposition to the will of God, the God of peace,—to the ministry of the Prince of peace—which ministry is to reconcile the World to God, and to one another—it is contrary to the kingdom of peace, the essential nature of which is *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*—it is contrary to the prayer of Jesus that all that believed him should be one, even as he and the father are one, that the world might believe in him and be

saved; it is a mountain raised between the world and their salvation—it extinguishes the light of Zion—makes heaven mourn, and hell rejoice—strengthens the kingdom of darkness, discourages the saints, destroys millions, unchristianizes the professors of Christianity and disgraces the Church so called.³

The sin of division had existed so long that some had stripped it of its odious features and clothed it in saintly robes, so that its very existence was deemed necessary for the expansion of Christianity. Many acknowledged that the unity of churches was desirable, but whenever the effort was made to bring them together, parties arose to oppose unity. This narrow party spirit has always arisen to oppose every reformation from John the Baptist to the nineteenth century.⁴

Stone pictured his own group as the new reformation of the nineteenth century, which was opposed to the “jealous demon of partyism.” Civil power had forbidden this demon the use of lead, fire, and steel, but calumny, detraction, and verbal persecution were the continual weapons of the orthodox against the “union reformers.” The orthodox world, he said, attacked the reformers to sustain its own “pride of opinion,” “love of honor,” and “streams of wealth.” Such “God dishonoring warfare” Stone called the “boast and joy of hell, the grief of every humble saint.”⁵ Indeed he carried his opposition to partyism so far that some believed that he opposed all Sunday Schools!⁶

Stone felt that the churches were adding their own tenets to scriptural truth and making them serve as the tests of Christianity and fellowship. Controversy arose over the opinion, pride became involved, and everyone was forced to submit to the “opinion” or be “anathematized and rejected.” He recognized that his own followers who opposed creeds and parties might be more intolerant than the “sectarian” or established churches. Conversely, a Calvinist who believed in the “five points” may be a Christian, having the Spirit of God.

The difference between the Spirit of God and a sectarian spirit is this: The Spirit of God leads to humility, forbearance, love, peace, and unity in Christ Jesus, the spirit of sectarianism leads to pride, pre-eminence, intolerance,

³ *CM*, XI (1840), 128.

⁴ *CM*, XI (1841), 312.

⁵ *CM*, XI (1841), 235.

⁶ See A. W. Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1932), p. 321.

hatred, and opposition to others not of their party—to discord, strife, and division contrary to the doctrine of Christ. The Spirit which is of God, seeks his glory. The Spirit of God rejoices in the truth, a sectarian spirit will oppose it, if it endangers its party.⁷

The tendency of “partyism” is to encourage slavish subjection to ecclesiastical authorities and, above all, heresy hunting. The Pope of Rome claims to have the key of Peter with which he lets in all who bow in submission to his will and dogmas. But with the same key “he locks the door against the millions who will not submit to him and binds and excludes them, and if he is right, they are all bound and excluded from heaven.”⁸ Many protestant sects dispute the justice of the Pope’s claims to the key. Yet they, in excluding some who fail to accept certain dogmas, practice “popery without a pope.”⁹ The Pope’s explanation of the Scriptures is said to be above the Scriptures themselves. Similarly, the explanation of Protestant Creeds is actually above the Scriptures! If any man forms an opinion differing from the creed, he is “condemned as a heretic” and cut off from the establishment. Thus, destruction and even persecution are the fruits of “partyism” which engages in hunting heretics.

The heresy-hunting spirit has “crimsoned” the Christian world with the blood of saints, robbed man of his inalienable rights, built racks and gibbets, driven sceptics into open infidelity, and filled the church with confusion.¹⁰ Stone saw the nineteenth century as attempting to revive the spirit of the sixteenth in using anathemas against those who exercise liberty in thinking on “matters of an indifferent character.” In the heresy cases of such men as Albert Barnes, Stone felt that the intolerance of the dark ages was only being whitewashed and refined.¹¹ Stone denounced those who set up “test-words” like the “Shibboleth” of the Gileadites and excluded those who could not pronounce them.¹² He agreed with Doctor Skinner of Andover Theological Seminary who asserted that “heresy-hunting preachers” were a type not needed in the

⁷ *CM*, VI (1832), 20.

⁸ *CM*, VII (1833), 180.

⁹ *CM*, VII (1833), 181.

¹⁰ *CM*, IX (1835), 234 f.

¹¹ *CM*, X (1836), 126.

¹² *CM*, X (1836), 131.

church. Stone added, however, that the term "heresy-preaching ministers" would more accurately describe the class from which the church ought to be delivered.¹³

In the *Christian Messenger*, Stone quoted a lengthy extract from William Ellery Channing's *Election Sermon*, in which that preacher referred to the danger of religion's being not the source of man's liberation, but the "chief instrument of usurpation over the soul." Channing maintained that even in a country like America, which never had an inquisition, there was a perpetual menace from the clergy, who control opinion, to stifle individuality.¹⁴ Stone agreed with his denunciation of the spirit of exclusion in existing parties and sects. The *orthodox* clergy have always been the opposers of reform. "Such were the persecutors of our Lord and his Apostles—of Luther and his companions—of the Wesleys and their people. And who but the *orthodox* clergy, as leaders, are now opposing reformation, persecuting the reformers."¹⁵

When Lyman Beecher stated that the resources of the Protestant churches had been "exhausted in standing still" because narrow denominational interest and disputes were made paramount, Stone said that language never did "more fully express the sentiments of my heart." He called on Beecher to designate the time and place for delegates of every Christian denomination to meet to carry out Beecher's desire that bigotry and heresy be buried in the same grave "till the trumpet of the archangel shall call them to judgment, to answer for their crimes, and to receive the punishment of their deeds."¹⁶ Stone felt that this would be a step toward the "unity of Christians."

One of Stone's most vivid analogies concerning the quarrels of sects he drew from sports. The name-calling among Protestants, Catholics, and Dissenters, said he, was like bandy-ball playing. "Heresy," he wrote, in popular opinion, is like a bandy-ball, and the heretics like a large collection of boys in an open plain, playing at bandy. They are divided in two parties, each party laboring to throw the ball on the ground of its opponent, and to repel it from its own. The contest is hard, and often bruised shins and bloody noses have been the consequences of the scuffle. To a spectator, not interested in the play, how foolish such conduct appears! He in the

¹³ *CM*, X (1836), 27 f.

¹⁴ *CM*, IV (1830), 193 f.

¹⁵ *CM*, IV (1830), 229.

¹⁶ *CM*, IX (1835), 282.

midst of the contest approaches them, and succeeds in calling them to a parley. "Boys, why all this noise, labor, and contention?" One party answers, "those boys are endeavoring to throw the bandy-ball on our ground, and we are determined to prevent it and throw it over on theirs." But what evil would follow if those boys should succeed and throw it on your ground? O, that would be a disgrace on our skill and activity, which we cannot submit to bear. You cannot bear to have a superior, but wish to be the superiors yourselves. This, he continues, is the spirit of the world—it is pride. This plain talk offends each party, and they both become his enemies, and persecute him from their company.¹⁷

To Stone, this account truthfully represented what took place in the religious world. Each religious party endeavored to throw the "heresy-ball" into the neighbor's encampment with "the same spirit and temper as the bandy-ball players." Stone saw himself and his followers cast in the role of the peacemaker who was repaid for his activities by opposition from all the parties.

Stone defined heretics not as those who believe wrong doctrines, but those who do not "feel the spirit of love and union with the whole body of Christ" and who dare not openly confess their error.¹⁸ The body of Christ is composed of those who are baptized by one spirit into the one body. Since Christ has but one body, every member partakes of his spirit, which is "loving, obedient, heavenly, meek, and humble." All who are in Christ have freedom which is not bound by man-made barriers of credal exclusion and party hatred.

Stone boasted that he would never prostrate his liberty to man. "I should live and walk alone in the truth, and yet not be alone, for God would be with me."¹⁹ In a land which had been caught up in the wave of growing expansion and liberty in all the areas of national life, Stone and his followers were thrilled by their freedom. One follower wrote that their new-found subjection to Christ was joyous since it "frees us from all other religious servitude. . . . Christ is our only lawgiver. . . . The spirit of liberty must exist within us or it cannot exist at all."²⁰

Stone believed that all forms of religious controversy promoted disunity, and endeavored to practice peace in a highly controversial period

¹⁷ *CM*, III (1829), 195.

¹⁸ *CM*, III (1829), 197.

¹⁹ *CM*, III (1829), 207.

²⁰ *CM*, VI (1832), 44 f.

in American life. Religious debating, he said, increased speculation and dissension. Ecclesiastical duels tended to produce strife, to deaden piety, and "destroy the spirit of prayer, puff up the vain mind, annihilate the taste for the marrow . . . of the living word."²¹ Seldom did he find the temper of the warrior and of the humble Christian united in the same person. He noted that young preachers generally are fondest of preaching on controversial points and the least qualified to do it profitably.²²

The churches had warred over systems and creeds for centuries. Often the still small voice is drowned in the "din of furious contention." "The strife of Christians is the food of infidelity and the sport of hell."²³ The war of words and "verbal persecution" among Christians does not differ essentially from the skirmishes between the Democrats and Whigs.²⁴ Politicians will hurl "trash and vituperative slang" against one another until a more healthy state in the body politic comes. So debates among Christians will endure until the health of the Body of Christ is restored.²⁵ Christianity should lead not to hatred, wrath, or strife, but to love, forbearance, union, and peace. Yet the righteous shall not despond for the meek "shall inherit the earth where not one persecution shall be found, not one bitter word heard."²⁶ The argument of "an humble and holy life" will at last prevail.

Forensic activities appealed to men on the frontier who liked the "give and take" of spirited contestants. Stone felt, though, that few in his day had Christianity "enough for debates."²⁷ He avoided controversy whenever possible,²⁸ yet, his opponents and many of his and Camp-

²¹ *CM*, XII (1842), 316.

²² *CM*, XIV (1845), 332.

²³ *CM*, XII (1842), 135.

²⁴ *CM*, XII (1842), 140.

²⁵ *Loc. cit.*

²⁶ *Loc. cit.*

²⁷ *CM*, XIV (1844), 5.

²⁸ Stone was almost pushed into a public debate once by some of his friends who sought to make arrangements for him to debate against John R. Moreland, a Presbyterian preacher, in the courthouse at Cynthiana, Kentucky. Moreland published a pamphlet in which he attempted to show Stone in the unfavorable light of first agreeing to a public debate and then refusing to participate. Stone replied that this was "children's play" and also a species of ecclesiastical dueling "degrading to the character of a gospel minister." Moreland, *op. cit.*, p. 8, and Barton W. Stone, *Reply to John R. Moreland*, p. 3.

bell's followers sought public religious debates constantly.²⁹ Though very bitterly opposed by many of his religious contemporaries, Stone tried to maintain an even temper. As already noted, he was variously called an Arian, a Socinian, a Pelagian, an atheist, and an infidel. The editor of the *Baptist Chronicle* had represented him as a "vulture feeding on carrion meat." In reply, Stone said that the Word of God was his meat and it could only be putrid to those who preferred "systems of mysteries and contradictions." Then he said, "Forgive my plainness. May the Lord grant us his meek and gentle spirit."³⁰ The evidence suggests that this was not play-acting with Stone. David Purviance, one of the signers of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, and a member of the Legislatures of Ohio and of Kentucky, pictured Stone's spirit when he wrote:

His [Stone's] manner and talent and mine, were somewhat different. He would preach the word and substantiate the truth, but seldom attack the opposite error. . . . One day I handled Calvinism without gloves. Next morning he said to me, that he thought my preaching yesterday was too hard.³¹

Barton Stone was greatly concerned over the effect of the sectarian approach to the missionary effort. When Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists went to the "heathen" with contradictory doctrines, chaos resulted. The vile spirit of competition, he felt, would cause unbelievers to reject the missionaries as unbelievers.³² He was conscious of the great progress begun by Protestant missions in the early part of the nineteenth century. He felt that the effort was "commendable" but believed that "we must be united here in Gospel mode before our labors will be

²⁹ The printed debates alone which survive from the forensics of first and second generation Disciples probably number over one hundred.

³⁰ *CM*, IV (1830), 116.

³¹ *David Purviance, The Biography of . . . , Written by Himself* (Dayton, Ohio: Reprint Edition, 1940), p. 236.

³² Stone was elated to publish a letter taken from the *Journal and Luminary* which had been written by missionaries in Jaffra, India, August 17, 1835. The missionaries did not object to denominational differences, but to strife over doctrines and names. They appealed to the churches to kill the spirit of pride, complacency, party feelings, and to hold fellowship with one another on the basis of equality. Quoted by Stone in *CM*, X (1836), 99 ff.

blessed abroad."³³ Christian unity was "indispensable to the conversion of the world."³⁴

He observed that only a few of the nine hundred millions of the human family knew God or his Son, Jesus Christ.³⁵ Only a small part profess Christianity. This small number is divided into sects and factions, seeking the destruction of one another. The sects are impotent to convert the pagan world until they reform.³⁶ If one half of the zeal spent in proselyting were expended in making Christians, infidelity would be unknown.³⁷

When Stone and his followers were accused of opposing missions, he replied that Christian unity at home was of greater import. "Till we become united at home," he wrote,

but little can be expected abroad. We do not oppose missions, but we hope to see the world filled with real Evangelical missionaries carrying with them the sword of the Spirit, the word of God alone, and turning the nations from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the service of the living God. We hope shortly, to see such take the wide field of the world, having the Everlasting to preach to every creature.³⁸

Christian unity with Stone was positive rather than negative. He saw clearly that unity must be based on positive principles. He considered a union of Protestants and others against the Catholics in the 1840's superficial. The growing strength of the Catholic Church in America had awakened extensive opposition in this period. The Native American Party was formed in 1837 as a crusade against liberal immigration laws, but it soon became openly anti-Catholic. In 1844 there were anti-Catholic riots in Philadelphia.³⁹ Stone was cognizant of the meetings which organized anti-papal societies. He believed that this type of strategy would neither succeed nor manifest true unity. "Practical Christianity," he wrote

³³ *CM*, X (1836), 183.

³⁴ *CM*, X (1836), 182.

³⁵ Stone opposed the plan of the Assembly of Scotland to teach European education to the heathen. He believed that missionaries should teach Christian teachings in the language of the people to whom they were sent. See *CM*, IX (1835), 279 f.

³⁶ *CM*, IX (1835), 265 f.

³⁷ *CM*, IX (1835), 281.

³⁸ *CM*, VIII (1834), 73 f.

³⁹ Luther A. Weigle, *American Idealism* ("The Pageant of America," Vol. X, New Series [Yale University Press, 1928]), p. 169.

can only save Protestantism from popery and skepticism, as also from eternal ruin. Excitements of an alarming character are becoming frequent, because of the rapid spread of popery. Many of the Protestants of every name have formed, and are forming anti-papal societies, in order to counteract and stop the influence of popery. We fear the reverse will be the consequence, unless managed in the spirit of truth. If all the parties among the Protestants would agree to reform their lives, to be holy, humble, and obedient to *all* God's commandments—if they would agree to cease from their unhallowed debates and striving one against the other, and to unite as one to promote Godliness and brotherly love in the earth—if they agree to meet together at the throne of grace in fervent, solemn and faithful prayer, then, the spread of popery would cease, and skepticism be confounded and silent, if not converted to the Lord. Nothing short of this will save us from the iron grasp of popery—nothing less will save the world. Such are our calm convictions.⁴⁰

The road to unity is paved not by opposition to something, but by vigorous affirmations which come from rallying around positive principles of love and trust.

Stone was convinced that no doctrine could be used as a basis of union. No creed, reducing Christianity to a few minimum "*essential*" doctrines, could succeed as a bond of union. This plan was tried in the fourth century by the Council of Nicea when unity was sought on the basis of a creed or a system of doctrines made by the collective wisdom and authority of the council. None were to depart from the creed on pain of "earthly and eternal anathemas." Stone admitted that the plan was "plausible" and had kept the Catholics united until now. But he maintained that this unity was not "true Christian union" for it sacrificed the right of freedom and forfeited the possibility of accepting new light which might come to the Christian believer.⁴¹ Stone likewise rejected unwritten creeds or "unwritten opinions of the Bible truths" as the basis of union. His followers were apt to reject written creeds, but to replace them with unwritten creeds which were just as iron-clad and binding as written creeds. Stone avoided this pitfall.

He believed that the Church went into apostasy in the age of Constantine and needed a reformation—needed to go back of creeds to a strong stress on biblicism, with the fruits of the Christian life as the basis of union—love, peace, and trust. Over and over again, he stated

⁴⁰ *CM*, XIV (1844), 4 f.

⁴¹ *CM*, XI (1841), 313.

that the "spirit of Christ" is the foundation of unity. Herein, he differed from many of his own followers as well as the "Reforming Baptists" of Alexander Campbell, who allowed their biblical insights to wither by underscoring extreme interpretations of the Scriptures as the norm of unity.

Stone was convinced that Christians would never be united until they understood their real situation. Recognizing that it is a subject of "great delicacy" Stone nevertheless declared that nineteenth century Christians were still in apostasy." They lived under the "reign of the man of sin." They were yet in the wilderness of "Babylon." It was a humiliating truth, but Stone felt that the churches needed to grasp the fact of apostasy. "Babylon" was his favorite term to designate this departure. Babylon was but another name for "pride and confusion" and disunity. The new Jerusalem or the present church was called Mystery-Babylon because she resembled that city "in her spirit and conduct." He compared the confusion over language in ancient Babylon to the quarrels over doctrines and terms in the church, or Mystery-Babylon. The spirit of ancient Babylon was manifested in her later history when Nebuchadnezzar commanded all to worship in a prescribed manner under penalty of death. The spirit of the church or Mystery-Babylon was manifested now not in threats of death, but in bitterness, clamor, strife, and the exclusion of members from the fellowship. Stone asserted that he did not wish to "offend nor wound one Christian on earth," but he called on people to come out of Babylon in a movement of reformation.

Old Babylon was ultimately destroyed by the righteous judgment of God. The desolation of Old Babylon was so entire, that its ruins cannot be found. The desolation of Mystery-Babylon shall be so complete, that its place shall not be found on earth forever. O! let us hear the warning voice of heaven. "COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues!" Rev. 18:4. Too long have our eyes been directed to Rome when we have read of Babylon. Thus have we deceived ourselves. As the spiritual Jerusalem is only known by the character she bears; so spiritual Babylon is to be known in the same way.⁴²

One question opponents of the reformation of the nineteenth century asked was this: "Why have the great, the learned, and the pious

⁴² *CM*, II (1827), 27.

so long and so universally erred?"⁴³ Stone replied that many reasons might be given, the primary one being implicit in the question itself. The great, the learned, and the pious published their speculations which were accepted because they were advocated by such distinguished personages. This reason had greater weight than was generally admitted, especially when "relatives, friends, or associates" accept the speculations. The thirst for temporal gain, or the desire to be with a popular party may influence others to follow along.

Stone was likewise asked why God had blessed churches with his mercy despite their erring ways. He replied that God was God, and not man. He was long-suffering and forbearing.⁴⁴ When it was objected that Stone's plan of reformation would mean the discarding of creeds and names and the amalgamation of a heterogeneous mass of sectarian people whose diversity would disgrace the profession of religion, he made it clear that by union he had in mind more than amalgamation. All attempts to amalgamate on the basis merely of discarding wrong doctrines would fail.⁴⁵

Another objection was that the churches would become disunited again under a plan of reformation based on the Bible without a creed or an explanation of its doctrine. Stone argued that the experience of fifteen centuries proved that division went hand in hand with the very introduction of explanations as tests of Christian fellowship.⁴⁶

Still another objection urged by some was that Stone was really trying to lay his basis of union upon a denial of biblical doctrines. Such a foundation in negations would never succeed. His reply was that men must learn to distinguish between a doctrine of the Bible, and human formulations or "opinions" of those doctrines. There was "no Christian of any name among us," he assured his opponents, "but received every doctrine of the Bible clearly stated; yet Christians may have various opinions respecting the doctrine." Stone pointed out that in the Scriptures none were ever excluded for doctrinal beliefs, but rather for immoral conduct; either ungodly conduct, or belief in doctrines directly connected with sin was the only basis for exclusion from the church.⁴⁷

⁴³ *CM*, I (1827), 115.

⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁵ *CM*, I (1827), 110 f.

⁴⁶ *CM*, I (1827), 111.

⁴⁷ *CM*, I (1827), 112.

Stone's stress on biblicism as the basis of Christian unity must always be seen in the above perspective. He stressed a biblical basis for Christian unity, but did not harden this emphasis into a legalistic pattern. He believed that the Bible contained the only system of truth while the New Testament contained the rule given by the true lawgiver.⁴⁸ He believed in restoration of New Testament emphases. He believed that the name Christian should be used, and party names consigned "to the winds." He believed that the laws made by Christ were sufficient and that all other laws tended to enslave men. He believed that the clergy of the ancient church cared more for the "flock than the fleece"; now the clergy is corrupted by the love of power. He believed that the original gospel was pure, unlike the contemporary gospel filled with philosophy and human absurdities. He believed that Christianity in his day had fallen far below "the glory of primitive Christianity." He believed that Luther's "coarse" statement is true "that every man is born with a 'Pope in his belly.'" He believed that pious and learned men must be followed only as far "as they follow Christ but no farther." He believed that men's doctrines should be brought to the Bible and judged in this light. He believed that the Bible contained simple facts which could be accepted and obeyed by all rational creatures, not only by a few favored clergy. But Stone believed above all that the primary basis of Christian unity lay in the spiritual emphasis of Christ on love; the only biblical doctrine he emphasized constantly as the basis for Christian unity and life was "brotherly love and forbearance."

Stone was sure that men should go to the Bible to discover the kind of unity existing between the Father and the Son, as a prototype of the kind of unity which should exist in the churches. Christ prayed that his followers might be one "even" as he and the "Father were one."

According to the Bible, the Father and the Son are not one in substance; even if they were, our Lord did not pray "that believers should be one in this sense." The kind of union existing between Father and Son is threefold and suggests the kind of unity which should exist among his followers on earth. In the first place, the Father and Son "are one in character." What we see in Jesus is not the substance of the Father, but the "express image" or character of his person. The glory, or character, of God is what man sees shining in the face of

⁴⁸ *CM*, IV (1830), 229.

Jesus. God is manifest in the flesh, so that when believers see this glory in Jesus, they are changed into the same image. The character of God is manifested in all of the love, mercy, grace, goodness, faithfulness, and truth which is seen in the activity of Jesus.

This character of the Father and the Son appears to flow from that intimate union described by the Father living in the Son, and the son in the Father; and this same character is formed in all believers by their being in the Father and Son, and the Father and Son in them. The believers become partakers in the divine nature. Stupendous grace! A worm of the dust united with the Father of the Universe! And consequently with the Son and with all holy beings! They are holy as God is holy, righteous even as he is righteous—pure even as he is pure—good and merciful, even as he is—meek, gentle, obedient, patient, forgiving as was the Son. What Christian on earth would not respond a hearty *Amen* to this prayer of Jesus? ⁴⁹

The second point is that the Father and the Son are one in the spirit of love. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father. The Father loves the saints and so does the Son. The Father loves the world; likewise the Son loves the world, and gave himself as ransom for it. Believers share this spirit of love. They love the Father and the Son and

manifest that love by an unreserved obedience to all his commandments—they love one another with a pure heart fervently—they also love all mankind and like the Savior, weep over their miseries, and pray for them, and sacrifice their worldly substance for their good—to save them from ruin.⁵⁰

Thirdly, the Father and the Son are one in operation—one in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. God created all things visible and invisible by his Son, Jesus Christ. He preserves all the sheep through the Good Shepherd, who will not allow anyone “to pluck them out of the Father’s hands.” God saves believers in the work of redemption, at which time the one heart, one mind, and one purpose to redeem man, exists in both Father and Son. By becoming co-workers with the Father and the Son in the work of redemption, believers become one with another. When they use all divine means ordained to effect this great end, they are one. Then, they divide their substance with “the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherless; nor do they

⁴⁹ *CM*, XI (1841), 256.

⁵⁰ *CM*, XI (1841), 257.

withdraw the hand of mercy from giving the means of sending the gospel to the world in darkness.”⁵¹

If believers were to analyze the unity of the Father and Son, and see clearly the character of God reflected in Jesus, they would themselves become partakers of this divine nature. They would manifest the divine spirit of love to one another as they cooperated in the divine work of redemption. Such unity would help the world to see and believe in God.

Stone was convinced that there would never be unity among professed Christians unless they possessed the spirit of Christ. Stone saw that a formal union “on the Bible” without the good spirit of the Scriptures would be more of a curse than a blessing to society. He believed that it would be analogous to possessing faith without works, or a body without an ordering spirit. Stone sought more holiness in the lives of believers rather than “schemes and plans of union.”⁵² Only the truth “copied in our lives” would gain the heart of the “drowsy world.”⁵³ While discussing the warmly debated topic of immersion as baptism, Stone tried to still the troubled waters with the injunction to his followers to exhibit truth in “tenderness, brotherly love, and forbearance.” Only as pity, justice, and mercy were cultivated by “us all” would the “union of Christians” take place.⁵⁴

The church would never have been divided had the “humble in heart” prevailed. Those who were “poor in spirit” gave the nearest glimpse of God and heaven found on earth. Only by recapturing this kind of spirit will unity among churches come.

Had this temper [the humbled spirit] prevailed in the church, that emulation for Peter’s chair, and to be called Rabbi—that domineering spirit among the Bishops—that thirst for parties, and strife for party establishment would never have been known; nor will the church ever be converted to unity again, till each member becomes *poor in spirit*.⁵⁵

Stone, on beginning the publication of volume twelve of the *Christian Messenger* after a paralytic stroke, wrote that one of his objects

⁵¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁵² *CM*, V (1831), 185.

⁵³ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ *CM*, V (1831), 20.

⁵⁵ *CM*, XIII (1843), 206.

was to break down all barriers "to Christian love and union."⁵⁶ The men who kept the church disunited by holding to confused systems

are to be pitied, rather than blamed, but never derided or insulted for their errors. They are humble believers, and are laboring to please their God. We should labor in love, in the meekness of wisdom and plain truth, to convince them. Such arguments alone can prevail and bring them into the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus. Had such a course, connected with an humble, holy life, been pursued by us from the beginning, what incalculable good would have followed? The prejudices of the sects would have been uprooted in a great degree, and the truth received in the love of it by thousands, who have been driven from some assemblies by our hard intolerant speeches.⁵⁷

The spirit of Jesus was the test of religion in apostolic times. Men are able to judge the presence of this spirit by the "fruits of the Spirit," such as love, joy, peace, and long suffering. Faith, prayer, and baptism are only means of salvation and not until the test of love alone is "received and acted out" shall we see Christian union.⁵⁸

Stone reproached many of his followers who persisted in harsh criticism of their religious neighbors. If they loved people, they would not "rashly reproach" them nor wound them by unkind words. Rather than taking pleasure in their weaknesses, one should throw a mantle of charity over their sins in public. The same charity should lead one to seek "to convince and save them." A church which detracted from others' well-deserved virtues in order to exalt its own superiority would be comparable to a young woman who "in order to raise herself in esteem, detracts from the virtues of all other young women." Rather the church should labor in love to direct other believers in the way of life.⁵⁹

He urged constantly an inner reformation as well as an outer. He wrote:

If the heart be reformed it is an easy matter to rule the tongue; and govern our life by the holy precepts of infinite wisdom. If we love God, how easy—how delightful to keep his commands! They are not grievous, but pleasant

⁵⁶ *CM*, XII (1841), 4.

⁵⁷ *CM*, XIV (1844), 131.

⁵⁸ *CM*, VIII (1834), 68.

⁵⁹ *CM*, VII (1833), 86.

—we delight in his ways, nor is any sacrifice too great to make, in order to please him.⁶⁰

He cautioned his followers many times to think of union in spiritual rather than formal terms. He realized that many sought union on the basis of a magic formula or platform. Many times he wrote that the goal of union was beyond a neat pattern of rejecting doctrines and accepting the Bible. Men must possess “the spirit of Christ” to make union effective. “We may abandon all human creeds,” he wrote

and formularies as bonds of union—we may relinquish the idea of making opinions of truth the test of fellowship. We may take the Bible alone, and bible facts, without note or comment, as the only standard of faith and practice, and of christian union; yet without the spirit, union can never be effected, nor continued. The attempt to unite righteousness and unrighteousness, piety and unpiety, the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world, is as vain as the attempt to unite fire and water, or light and darkness.—Such union is impossible, unnatural, and not to be desired. Vain attempts to promote such union have been the ruin of the church, and must be abandoned.⁶¹

Stone from the very beginning of his movement spoke of four different kinds of union: book union, head union, water union, and fire union. He defined book union as unity founded on an authoritative creed, confession of faith, or a discipline. Such instruments of union themselves produce “disunion” and he expected them to disappear from the Christian community as light and liberty increased. Head union he defined as union founded on a common opinion. Stone recognized that many within his own movement denounced creeds as anti-Christ. Such enthusiasts proudly boasted that the Bible was their only creed. But Stone saw that interpretations of the Bible led to different opinions which could not be considered essential to salvation. Such a non-creedal basis did not essentially differ from union proposed on a creedal basis. Stone’s theory was that no opinion, written or unwritten, should be made a basis of fellowship. Stone did not ask men to give up “their opinions,” but to hold them as private property.⁶² Faith in the gospel

⁶⁰ *Loc. cit.*

⁶¹ *CM*, X (1836), 30.

⁶² Stone asserted that he and his group would accept all to be Christians “who acknowledge the gospel facts, and obey Jesus Christ.” They would reject Unitari-

facts was public property which all accepted as being true.⁶³ Stone rejected the third type of union called "water union." This union founded on the immersion of believers into water was easily dissolved!⁶⁴

The fourth type of union, according to Stone, is the union of fire or of the spirit. This is the perfect type of union which is obtained by faith not in opinions, but in the "Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, and by a cheerful obedience to all his known commands."⁶⁵ In vain one expects unity without this spirit. There can be no unity between light and darkness, the saint and the sinner, iron and clay. A bundle of twigs cannot be united to bear fruit!

They must first be united with the living stock, and receive its sap and spirit, before they can ever be united with each other. The members of the body cannot live unless by union with the head, nor can the members of the church live united, unless first united with Christ, the living head. His spirit is the bond of union. Men have devised many plans to unite Christians—all are vain. There is but one effectual plan, which is, that all be united with Christ and walk in him.⁶⁶

Stone was one of the first men on the American religious scene to call for a national convention or conference to discuss the various matters respecting Christian unity. He failed to elaborate on the national conference except that it should be held in some central location. He wrote his fellow editors,

O Christians, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another? Would it not be a good thing to have a convention of the various denominations to be holden in some central point in America, and there and then consult upon some general points respecting the union of Christians? The query is proposed for an answer from the religious journals printed in America.⁶⁷

He admitted that this union would probably never come through

ans, if they contend that Jesus Christ "is not the Son of God," but will accept the Unitarians who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the "Son of God in a sense of their own." The words used to express their faith concerning Christ must be Bible words. Likewise, Stone was willing to accept the Trinitarian who ascribed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit what the first believers ascribed, but nothing of "scholastic and barbarous epithets."

⁶³ *CM*, IV (1830), 163 f.

⁶⁴ *CM*, VII (1833), 315.

⁶⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁶ *CM*, VII (1833), 316.

⁶⁷ *CM*, XI (1841), 247.

having denominations singly discuss unity, because "large bodies move slowly." Still he felt that the present moment was ripe for sacrifice by the individual. One individual or congregation was not to wait for another to act, for the command of the Lord was in the imperative mood. The man who favored Christian unity might encounter "furious opposition." He must be willing to give up all "worldly gain or wealth" for the sake of truth. He might not only face an unfriendly world, but his helpless family might face poverty, disgrace, and persecution. Stone took the customary role of offering to be a persecuted minority for the sake of truth. "The love of money and the shame of poverty—the love of honor and the fear of contempt—the love of ease and the dread of persecution, stand as mountains in the way of union."⁶⁸

This crusader saw the unity of Christians as a great spiritual weapon God would use for the conversion of mankind. The "unity of believers" was the means God had ordained to bring the whole world to belief. He exclaimed:

And shall believers nullify the divinely appointed means by living in disunion! Shall they thus be instrumental in plunging the world into eternal ruin! Shall they thus live in sin, and sing the syren song: all is well! Shall they deride and mock those servants of the Most High, who plead for Christian Union, and urge it as the command of God, and the salvation of the world!⁶⁹

Stone compared church disunity to the disaster America might have faced had she been politically divided when invaded by enemies. The churches were like factions which turned against themselves rather than against the common enemy. The command of the King was that all unite in "one body" against the common enemy.

Stone urged that fathers and mothers devote their last days to the "good cause of Christian union" and die "recommending" it with the last breath. Young people were looked upon as being the real hope for unity.⁷⁰ But he called upon all men and women to sense the expectancy of the times and realize what could be done in cooperation. He wrote,

Shall we not abandon our un-christian warfare against each other? Shall we not abandon all things that divide God's children, and that blow the

⁶⁸ *CM*, II (1828), 50 f.

⁶⁹ *CM*, XI (1841), 331.

⁷⁰ *CM*, X (1836), 20.

fires of discord, and as the children of one common Father rally around the blood-stained banner of the cross, with our feet planted upon the divine foundation laid in Zion? ⁷¹

However, Stone believed that essentially there could never be unity unless there was the spirit of unity in man himself. The battle for unity must be fought and resolved in the individual. As long as warfare existed in the individual Christian, there could be no peace in the Christian community. Stone was uncertain about the way God might work to bring about unity. Near the end of his life he felt that the prospect was gloomy; yet he hoped that perhaps some unexpected work in providence "may drive or draw them [the churches] together." "Popery" might drive the alarmed churches together or God might even restore "the gifts of the Spirit" long ceased; but

We must pray God to effect the union, and leave the means with himself, he can do it. This should satisfy us. We must not only pray, but do. We must be co-workers with God; every one should be engaged; and as large bodies move slowly, let each one begin in himself, and correct his own errors.⁷²

Christian unity is the result of the activity of both God and man. Man must be a co-worker with God in the achievement of the goal. This is the sentiment Stone had expressed earlier:

Let every Christian begin the work of union in himself. Wait upon God, and pray for the promise of the Spirit. Rest not till you are filled with the Spirit. Then, and not till then, will you love your God and Saviour—then and not till then will you love the brethren, who bear the image of the heavenly—then you will have the spirit of Jesus to love the fallen world. . . . Every one in this spirit would flow together and strive together to save the world. The secret is this, the want of this Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus is the grand cause of division among Christians: consequently, this spirit restored will be the grand cause of union. Let us, dear brethren, try this plan; it will injure no one. God is faithful who has promised—has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. With this spirit, partyism will die—without it anti-partyism in profession only, will become as rank partyism as any other, and more intolerant.⁷³

Interestingly enough, Stone, while impatient of the progress being made toward Christian unity, noted that great advances had been made

⁷¹ *CM*, XIV (1844), 5 f.

⁷² *CM*, XIV (1844), 40 f.

⁷³ *CM*, XI (1841), 334.

between 1800 and the late 1830's. At the beginning of the century, he observed Christian union as being "very far off" through a dark cloud. Many believed that it would "never be" while men were free to think. Now a change had arisen in the climate of opinion, so that it seems to be "indispensable to the conversion of the world by all parties—all are engaged to have it effected yet all "are tardy to act."⁷⁴

In 1841, Stone revealed in an imaginary convention of all denominations in the United States "on the most important subject that ever engaged the attention of man—the subject of Christian union."⁷⁵ Stone was born one hundred years too early! And yet Stone and others helped in those early days to clear the way to make modern ecumenical movements possible. Was it easy to bear this witness in those days when so few had caught the vision of unity? Let Stone be heard in 1835:

For 32 years of my ministry I have kept in view the unity of Christians as my polar star. For this I have labored, for this suffered reproach, persecution and privation of ease, the loss of friendship, wealth and honor from men.⁷⁶

Obviously, Barton W. Stone did not have insight into all of the causes of disunity. The cultural forces contributing to division were beyond his ken. His primary stress was on the doctrinal differences as the cause of disunity, though he saw clearly the pull of familial and economic forces in causing inertia once disunion had taken place. His primary contribution is the understanding that doctrinal interpretations cannot be the sole basis of union. Stone went to the Bible to discover the foundation of unity, but his central conviction was that apart from Christian love and trust there can be no union of believers in the Christian community. Many of his followers and many of the Reformers of Alexander Campbell failed to grasp this insight and consequently conceived Christian unity in terms of a hard and fast biblical pattern.

For three generations this "biblical primitivism" has been the theme of the Disciples of Christ Communion. One division after another has invaded the body. A new attitude toward the Bible and a new understanding of the structure of New Testament churches, has enabled large numbers of the Disciples to discover the spiritual foundations of unity. The remarkable thing about Stone is that he saw this

⁷⁴ *CM*, X (1836), 183.

⁷⁵ *CM*, XII (1841), 57 f.

⁷⁶ *CM*, IX (1835), 285.

long before the new biblical learning was accepted in this country. Had the Disciples of Christ or Christian churches followed his emphasis, it is highly probable that they would not have divided into three major wings and some twenty-three other groups,⁷⁷ each stressing one or more divisive issues. It is almost equally certain that they would have been closer to the main bodies of Protestantism and more influential in the American religious scene.

⁷⁷ See *Christian Standard*, March 18, 1939, p. 246 ff. The majority of the Disciples are in a central major tradition of cooperation; it is all too true that a number of small groups have caused minor discussions which have engendered bitterness and disharmony.

CHAPTER VIII

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL OF THE REFORMERS AND STONE OF THE CHRISTIANS

STONE FOUND an opportunity to put into practice his program of unity based on trust and love when his followers came into contact with a group of the Reforming Baptists whose acknowledged leader was Alexander Campbell. Stone and Campbell themselves did not meet until 1824 in Kentucky. Between the two men there was considerable divergence in the emphasis placed on doctrinal issues. Campbell put more stress on a restoration of New Testament doctrine; Stone placed his primary emphasis on New Testament love. Stone entered wholeheartedly into the discussions on unity and worked in the conferences which resulted in the union. Campbell was still in a controversial mood at the time of the union, in 1832, and voiced little enthusiasm when he learned that representatives of the two groups had decided to coalesce.

The followers of Campbell and Stone actually differed over a number of theological emphases; they united in spite of their differences. The points of conflict flared up for discussion after the union, and were successfully ironed out only several years after the formal amalgamation.

The cultural and social differences which marked the two leaders were dramatic. Campbell was born in Scotland and received his formal education from the University of Glasgow. Stone was the only one of the four main leaders of the Disciples of Christ who was born in the United States of America,¹ and received his education in frontier schools in Virginia and North Carolina. Campbell had done extensive reading in source materials of philosophers and theologians, including

¹ Walter Scott was born in Scotland; Thomas Campbell in Ireland.

the church fathers; Stone relied mainly on compilations of such materials. Campbell had considerable leisure time for reading and writing; Stone complained, on the other hand, that he did not have time to study as he wished because of the arduous work of farming and teaching. In 1829, Campbell had a small brick study built outside his home, where he spent long hours; Stone often carried intellectual materials to the fields, where he took time for occasional study. Stone emphasized far more than Campbell the role of poverty and self-denial of worldly goods in the practice of Christianity. Campbell's break with Calvinism came over such questions as baptism, communion, conversion, and ministerial calling. Stone's break came with Calvinism over great doctrinal issues of predestination, foreordination, total depravity, the Trinity, and the nature and work of Christ.

Both Campbell and Stone were editors of religious magazines. Campbell edited the *Christian Baptist* from 1823 until 1830, and the *Millennial Harbinger* from 1850 until 1864. Stone edited the *Christian Messenger* at intervals from 1826 until 1844. Campbell was easily the more sophisticated writer, expressing himself far more prolifically than Stone and in full, well-rounded periods. His style was polished and sometimes grandiloquent. Stone wrote, as one opponent stated, "as though he meant to be understood," in a style direct and usually unadorned. The simple prose of the frontier and the plain logic of a backwoodsman were reflected in most of his writing. Campbell's writing betrayed a markedly bitter spirit toward the established clergy and churches, especially in his early years. It has been pointed out that in his revolt against the clergy he used many of the arguments and much of the spirit of the skeptics against ecclesiastical institutions.² Stone, however, despite the fact that he lived in a day of bitter religious controversies, remained remarkably free from the spirit of antagonism. Finally, Campbell exulted in religious debates; Stone distrusted the ill will so frequently manifested in these exhibitions.

Campbell had ample financial resources to run his periodicals.³ Stone

² Robert Frederick West, "Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion" (Ph.D. dissertation Yale University, 1943).

³ Campbell's father-in-law provided him with a farm near Bethany, Virginia, which he shrewdly managed. When Stone sold his farm in Kentucky, to move to Tennessee, he discovered that his mother-in-law went back on her promise to give a farm to him. On his return to Kentucky, inflationary prices prevented him

always struggled to eke out a living. Campbell's various publishing, farming, and teaching activities provided him a good income. He rarely ever appealed to subscribers to pay subscriptions, and it is doubtful that he had much sympathy with Stone's struggles to keep the *Christian Messenger* going. He probably regarded the *Christian Messenger* as a "poor relation" in the field. If W. C. Howells, the father of the American novelist, William Dean Howells, gave an accurate picture of Campbell, the feeling Campbell had for Stone is apparent. Howells, who worked in Campbell's printing office, wrote:

Whatever the opinion the people with whom Mr. Campbell came in contact away from home may have had of him, at home and among his neighbors, he was regarded as greatly disposed to lord it over his poor and dependent friends. . . . [He] had little natural sympathy with those who had not or could not acquire a worldly competence . . . his manner was amiable and socially he was always accessible to the man who understood the conversational art of listening, especially if that man liked to hear Mr. Campbell talked of.⁴

Stone's tribulations as an editor were great in comparison to Campbell's. Stone's agents frequently neglected to make collections; many subscribers never paid; the postal system broke down; good paper was difficult to secure, and sometimes the staff was forced to finance the *Christian Messenger* out of personal incomes. Stone frequently said that this enterprise had worked a great hardship on his family.⁵ In contrast,

from repurchasing his old farm. Campbell was his own printer and as postmaster of Buffalo Creek, Virginia, enjoyed franking privileges which gave him a great advantage.

⁴ W. C. Howells, *Recollections of Life in Ohio from 1813 to 1840* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1895), p. 165.

⁵ Here Stone combined the love of poverty and the emphasis on suffering for the sake of the truth which was characteristic of some left-wing Protestantism. Stone had a strong aversion to display and the fashions of the times. He believed that men who used gold finger rings, earrings, gold watch chains, and breast pins spent the Lord's goods upon trifles, when they should use these goods to feed the poor, to clothe the naked, and to send missionaries to a lost world. Stone had a horror of debts and opposed the practice of "usury." He did not believe as did many of the communistic religious sects of his time in the abolition of private property, but he did stress plainness in dress. He had something of the small-sect attitude towards poverty and apparently believed that it was a pre-requisite for his followers who were to unite Christian believers. He combined a simple "Sermon on the Mount" attitude toward wealth, with the frontiersman's dislike of display.

Alexander Campbell had few comparable difficulties and may have had Stone as well as the editor of the *Christian Index* in mind when he wrote that he had had few discontinuances of the *Harbinger*.

Our experience for a number of years authorizes us to say, that in proportion as our readers become enamoured with the ancient gospel, they become more punctual in the discharge of their pecuniary obligations, and less disposed to be in debt; and that the believers in physical operations stand most in need of legal operations to make them feel the obligations of common justice.⁶

Fortunately for the Disciples of Christ, they did not follow Barton W. Stone's emphasis on freedom to the lengths wherein he denied that Christians should participate in political life. Stone, unlike Alexander Campbell, felt that the logical extension of the position of his brethren who overthrew human creeds and laws in the church would lead to non-participation in civil government. He did not preach disobedience to the laws of civil government; he agreed with Paul that the powers that be ought to be supported as long as they do not oppose the laws of God. But he came to feel that it was wrong for Christians to seek and hold offices in "worldly governments." The reason for such a radical position was two-fold: political offices have "deleterious effects" on Christians; and to hold such offices usurps the rightful authority of Christ to rule as King and Lawgiver of the earth. He went even a step further. He denied to Christians not only the right to become legislators, but even the privilege to vote for legislators.⁷

Barton W. Stone agreed with Alexander Campbell's position opposing the clergy's attempt to establish or overthrow religion by law.⁸ Stone objected to paying chaplains out of public funds.⁹ Both men had a "high respect" for all worthy gentlemen of the bar, but were certain that only a few were worthy gentlemen, for many of them defended their causes whether right or wrong.¹⁰

⁶ The *Millennial Harbinger*, II (1831), 107. (This periodical was edited and published in Bethany Va., by Alexander Campbell, 1830-1864; by W. K. Pendleton, 1865-1870.) Hereafter the *Millennial Harbinger* will be referred to by the symbol *MH*.

⁷ *CM*, XII (1842), 202.

⁸ *CM*, IV (1830), 141.

⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *CM*, IV (1830), 137. For Campbell's views, see R. F. West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion*.

Both Stone and Campbell believed in a theocratic or Christocratic form of government. All should submit to the government, peace, and love of Christ. Campbell agreed with Stone that Christ is King over men and that eventually all discord of man-made governments will be stilled, when Christ puts all rivals down. Yet, Alexander Campbell did not go so far as Stone in opposing the role of politics in redeeming society. Campbell himself was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia in 1829-1830. He never stated as did Stone that Congress and State Legislatures "are schools of corruption and demoralization" and "nurseries of vice and irreligion."¹¹ Stone's dislike of authority and his emphasis on the perfectionistic ethics of the Sermon on the Mount carried him to the extreme of political theory.

The doctrinal differences between Stone and Campbell may be clearly defined. The cultural differences between the men must be inferred from small quantities of evidence; though they are not a central concern of this study, evidently they played a part in the relationships of the two groups of followers. A close examination of the *Millennial Harbinger*, edited by Campbell, and the *Christian Messenger*, edited by Stone, reveals a startling lack of references to one another's work. Between the two men there was actually little meeting of minds. They never became warm personal friends. Alexander Campbell was the intellectual and the successful businessman: though agreeing with Stone in many areas, he nevertheless maintained a comfortable distance from him on most questions. Campbell was aggressive and possessed the champion's attitude of challenging all comers. Stone was a man of deep evangelistic passion and a comparative business failure: he was unwilling to take the initiative in meeting people. Conciliatory in temper, he avoided controversy as much as possible. Dominated by the perfectionistic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount more than was Alexander Campbell, he not only stressed the teachings of love, forbearance, patience, and humility, but longed for perfection in his early academic career, in his conversion experience, and in his practice of poverty and restraint; he looked forward, above all, to the coming of the perfect church united by the love of Christ.

¹¹ *CM*, XIII (1843), 123 f.

CHAPTER IX

THE FORCES OF STONE AND ALEXANDER CAMPBELL UNITE

STONE HAD BEEN a leader in small-scale movements for Christian unity before Alexander and Thomas Campbell undertook their work in this direction. A full year before the latter were immersed, and received into the Red Stone Baptist Association, Barton W. Stone had been successful in uniting some of his followers with other religious groups. In 1811, he had gone to Meigs County in southern Ohio to baptize a Presbyterian preacher named William Caldwell. This baptismal service helped to draw the Christians together with the Separate Baptists who were having their annual meeting. Stone, invited to speak to the Baptists on a difficult issue involving church government, by-passed the issue to speak on the necessity of abandoning creeds and uniting. The result was that the Baptist Association voted to unite with the Christians.¹

Before the Christians united with the Reformers of Alexander Campbell, the Christians and the Baptists cemented another movement for unity, in southern Indiana in July, 1828. Groups of Christians here united with Free Will Baptists, Separate Baptists, Regular Baptists, and German or Dunkard Baptists.

Between 1811 and 1828, Stone stated that nothing very significant happened with respect to union, except in 1824, when Alexander Campbell appeared in Kentucky and stirred up "great excitement" on the subject of religion. He heard Campbell speak often and was pleased with his "manner and matter." The doctrines the two preached were similar except for Campbell's stress on "baptism for the remission of sins." Even this doctrine Stone had formerly preached, but he had

¹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 72 f.

"strangely let it go" from his mind until Campbell revived it again. The Christians claimed that long before Campbell entered into the picture in Kentucky, they had preached the same doctrines. Stone wrote,

These truths we had proclaimed and reiterated through the length and breadth of the land, from the press and from the pulpit, many years before A. Campbell and his associates came upon the stage as aids of the good cause. Their aid gave a new impetus to the Reformation which was in progress.²

Alexander Campbell had not accused the Kentucky Christians directly of setting up a claim to priority in preaching the "reformation" before he did, but wrote, "In appearance it squints that way."³

The first overture on the subject of unity was made by Stone in 1826.⁴ He praised Campbell's strength in uprooting the foundations of "partyism" and "human authoritative creeds." He viewed Campbell's "Samson-like" efforts as creating a diversion in favor of the Christians. He made it clear that he did not regard Campbell as being infallible, but felt that he was "deserving of the esteem of the Christian world."⁵ "We have often," he wrote, "and constantly disowned A. Campbell as our master and leader; yet we rejoice in being called *his* brethren; because we view him with all his real or supposed human imperfections, as a holy brother in the Lord."⁶

Alexander Campbell called Barton W. Stone our "beloved and venerable brother in the Lord," but apparently did not reciprocate Stone's feeling of warmth in friendship. Despite the fact that the two men led their forces to coalesce, they never seemed to be on intimate terms. Campbell maintained a notable silence on Stone in the pages of the *Christian Baptist* and the *Millennial Harbinger*. Stone usually took the initiative in correspondence and once chided Campbell for his failure to write, though he realized that Campbell had "so many more interesting correspondents."⁷ On another occasion, Campbell made a feeble apology for failing to list the *Christian Messenger* in his magazine.⁸

² Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 390.

⁴ *CM*, I (1827), 204.

⁵ *CM*, XI (1840), 131 f.

⁶ *CM*, XI (1841), 242.

⁷ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 21.

⁸ *MH*, I (Third Series; 1844), 416.

When Stone died at Hannibal, Missouri, November 9, 1844, Campbell took almost no notice of his death.⁹ He then published only a scanty reference to his contemporary co-leader in the union of the Reformers and Christians, confessing that other material had shortened even this brief notation concerning him!

The evidence suggests that had the overtures on unity been left to Alexander Campbell the merger of the two groups would not have taken place. It is doubtful that Campbell at this time could have written the letter Stone wrote in favor of conciliation and future unity. Stone furnished the emotional drive propelling the Reformers and the Christians toward unity. Campbell preferred to discuss the doctrinal issues involved.

Campbell and Stone first met in 1824 and saw each other only occasionally until 1830. The former was at the beginning of his iconoclastic "Christian Baptist" days. His was neither the spirit nor the temper at this time to bring groups together. Campbell was gradually reaching the terminal point in his relationship with the Baptists. The Baptists warned Campbell constantly to have no dealings with the "New Lights or Arians," with whom they exchanged "no acts of fellowship."¹⁰ Spencer Clack, a Baptist leader, admonished Campbell of the danger of being ensnared by Stone and his group. He voiced the cry the Presbyterians had earlier raised regarding the "Arians of the West." He informed Campbell that they denied the doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, and the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion.¹¹ Campbell and Stone had disagreement on these points, though it was Campbell, rather than Stone, who rejected the operation of the Spirit independent of the Word of God.

Nevertheless, Campbell did not favor immediate union with the Christians. He questioned Stone's doctrinal orthodoxy and was afraid that he intended to set up a "new sect." In 1828 he stated that their fraternal relationship was based on the fact that Stone had once told him that "he could conscientiously and devoutly pray to the Lord Jesus Christ as though there was no other God in the universe than

⁹ *MH*, I (1844), 622.

¹⁰ Quoted from *The Baptist Recorder* in *CM*, II (1827), 28. Stone expressed fear that Campbell would incur the displeasure of the Baptists by associating with them.

¹¹ *CM*, II (1827), 28.

he."¹² He paid an indirect compliment to Stone by referring to the high regard Stone's enemies had for his moral character. Yet, he felt that in running out of Babylon, Stone ran "past Jerusalem"; he thereupon vigorously attacked Stone's Trinitarian views.

Their limited "relationship," Stone felt, had been based on the belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that Christians are those "who were willingly obedient to his commands." Stone wrote,

This we thought was the only term of fellowship on which you insisted with so much zeal and sound argument. Have we misunderstood you or have you changed your mind, and are you now determined to call no man brother, unless he can conscientiously pray to the Lord Jesus as the only God of the universe, and can worship him *supremely*?¹³

Stone and Campbell also differed on the name by which the followers of Christ should be known. All of the differences between the two men were clearly outlined before the union began between the two groups in 1832, but actual resolution of the points of conflict did not come until after the union of the two groups had been strongly cemented. Stone and Campbell were clearly aware of their fundamental cleavages. On the eve of the union there was strong feeling between the two men. Had Stone's temperament been basically argumentative, their two groups would probably have remained separate. Campbell not only failed to take the initiative in the overtures on union, but continually stressed the differences between the groups.

Stone was always the bolder of the two in keeping alive the possibility of the union. Discussing the matter of unity between the Reformed Baptists and the Christians in 1828, Stone recognized that the Reformers were afraid that their influences would be injured by union with the Christians, whom many regarded as intolerable heretics. To permit opinions on the doctrine of the Trinity to stand in the way, he felt, contradicted the Reformer's own position of religious freedom. He urged his own followers to be reformed in "heart and life" so that they would be willing to unite in fellowship "with all holy, obedient believers in Jesus, without regard to their opinions."¹⁴ For the principles of unity, "we have long toiled, labored and suffered; and for

¹² Quoted in *CM*, II (1827), 6.

¹³ *CM*, II (1827), 11.

¹⁴ *CM*, IV (1830), 202.

them we feel determined still to labor and suffer as long as we live."¹⁵

A definite change in Alexander Campbell's life occurred in 1830, when he published the first issue of the *Millennial Harbinger*.¹⁶ He gave no indication, however, that unity between the Christians and Reformers entered into his plans or program of the Millennium. The magazine was introduced for the purpose of destroying sectarianism, infidelity, and anti-Christian doctrine and practice, in hope of the establishment of "that political and religious order of society called *The Millennium*." Campbell's marriage with the Baptists had ended on the rocks. The *Christian Baptist* had been discontinued and Campbell had embarked on a new course. His silence then, on the subject of unity between the Reformers and the Christians, indicated that he had no enthusiasm for the merger which had already been discussed.

On July 5, 1830, Campbell, however, remembered that the last issue of the *Christian Baptist* had carried an article by an Irish correspondent who had made some remarks against Barton W. Stone. "Nothing but forgetfulness," he assured his readers, had prevented his taking exception to the remarks which had appeared the year before, during his absence from home. He had intended earlier to protest the use of epithets against the "intelligent and virtuous editor of the *Christian Messenger*." Even his opponents were constrained to applaud Stone's good conduct. Campbell implied that the man Stone was better than his system. He recognized that he himself would probably be called a Unitarian for even defending Stone's character.¹⁷ This seemed to be as far as Campbell was willing to go!

In the fifth volume of the *Christian Messenger*, Stone dealt directly with the question of unity between the Christians and the Reformers. He noted that it was a question "going the round of society." Stone's answer was that

In spirit we are united, and that no reason existed on our side to prevent the union in form. It is well known to those brethren, and to the world,

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶ The cumulative evidence indicating this change may be found in two doctoral dissertations: Dr. D. Ray Lindley, "The Structure and Function of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1947) R. Frederick West, "Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion." Both are in the Sterling Library of Yale University.

¹⁷ *MH*, I (1830), 334.

that we have always from the beginning declared our willingness, and desire to be united with the whole family of God on earth, irrespective of the diversity of opinion among them.¹⁸

After stating that the "Reformed Baptists" had received the doctrine taught by the Christians "thirty years ago," Stone listed the points of similarity between the two bodies:

1. For thirty years the Christians have taught that Sectarianism is anti-Christian. The Reformers "teach the same."
2. For thirty years the Christians have taught that all Christians should be united in one body of Christ. The Reformers "teach the same."
3. For thirty years the Christians have taught that authoritative creeds and confessions are "strong props" of sectarianism and should be abandoned. The Reformers "teach the same."
4. For thirty years the Christians have preached the gospel to every creature on the basis that its own testimony can produce faith and obedience in the rational creature. The Reformers "teach the same."
5. For thirty years the Christians have taught that through faith "the Holy Spirit of promise" and every other promise of the New Covenant is given to the renewed sinner. The Reformers "teach the same."
6. Years ago many of the Christians preached baptism, as a means, in connection with faith and repentance, for the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Reformers "preach the same" and "extend it farther" than the Christians.
7. For thirty years the Christians have rejected all names, but Christian. The Reformers acknowledge this name as proper, but "seem to prefer another!"

Stone declared that there was a difference of opinion between the Reformers and Christians on some other points. He stated that the Christians did not object to the opinions of the Reformers as barring unity, but that the Reformers "seriously and honestly" objected to some held by the Christians as making unity impossible. He listed two of these opinions to which the Reformers objected:

1. The Christians have fellowship and communion with unimmersed persons. The Reformers declare that only the immersed have their sins forgiven and one cannot commune with the unpardoned.
2. The Christians take only the name Christian. The Reformers acknowledge it as proper, but prefer the term Disciple because they feel that

¹⁸ *CM*, V (1831), 180.

Christian is "disgraced" by those who wear it and because people of Unitarian beliefs frequently use it.

Campbell betrayed little enthusiasm for the merger in his reply to Stone. He observed that much deception was involved in discussions on unity by the "lack of precision" in the use of terms. He wished to know what the "worthy editor" of the *Christian Messenger* meant by "union in form." Did Stone have "articles of confederation" in mind? If so, how were they to be administered? Was a general convention of "messengers" from both "Christians" and "Disciples" contemplated, or did he suggest a general assembly of the whole aggregate of both peoples? Campbell could not recall another instance in ecclesiastical history of one people uniting with "another whole people" without a formal confederation of articles. Or did Stone expect a union in form

without any form effecting it? If he does not, then it is out of order to complain of the want of a formal union until a proposition made to that effect shall have been submitted by the complainant, and rejected by the defendant. But such a proposition has not, as we have heard, been tendered; nor have we heard of any general meeting among the Christians to deliberate upon the terms and conditions.¹⁹

Campbell mentioned the opposition to a "wholesale" union between the "two societies," but what troubled him most was the fact that the genius of his "movement" was not fully grasped by the Christians. He discovered a "squinting at some sort of precedence or priority in the claims" of the Christians in having discovered the principles of "the Reformation" before his own followers had appeared on the American religious scene. He assured Stone that the men who dissolved the Springfield Presbytery did not plead the same cause as the Reformers were then advocating. The fact that they opposed "authoritative creeds" and "some other articles in them" as bonds of unity did not put them in the same group. Many persons in America, and some even before Luther's time, "inveighed" against councils, creeds, and dogmas. But Campbell stated that they were only pioneers "cleaning the forests, girdling the trees, and burning brush."²⁰

Obviously, Campbell did not want Stone or any other group to di-

¹⁹ *MH*, II (1831), 389.

²⁰ *MH*, II (1831), 390.

minish his stature as the initiator of a completely "new Reformation." He would not consent to play the role of a John the Baptist; rather he wished to relegate this role to Stone and others. He portrayed his "Reformation" as being superior to any other because it not only was anti-creedal, but also unveiled the light on the "ancient gospel and the ancient order of things."

Campbell believed that the American "sectarians" were correct in understanding the Campbellian reformation as something new in ecclesiastical history. The very fact that "the Christians" were respectable in the eyes of those who opposed "the Disciples" indicated to Campbell that they had gone past Jerusalem after departing from Babylon. He reminded Stone that he himself had stated "last winter" that his brethren "were considered by the orthodox" as degrading themselves in associating with the Reformers. Campbell recognized that he would be honored by a merger with the "large" and "respectable" Christian denomination, but he would refuse if it meant submerging "the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things."²¹ He stated that if mere union had been their object, they could have had "honorable alliances with honorable sectaries, many years since." Campbell closed with the observation that he could in good conscience unite with many in Stone's group in "all acts of social worship." He did not have immediate unity in mind, for he requested "free and further correspondence" on the subject.

Stone believed that the time for union had already arrived. He saw no need for discussion since in most essential things they already stood on the same ground. Of the enemies to Christian unity enumerated by an old Baptist minister, the world, the flesh, the devil, and the clergy, Stone felt that the clergy were the most formidable. The "propensity to make a great name" as did the builders of ancient Babylon was the greatest obstacle to unity. This pride of spirit must decrease before Jesus could increase and usher in "the happy period" of unity. Though Stone did not name Campbell, the latter felt that these words were aimed at him. Stone probably directed them at the clergy in general, but hoped that Campbell would feel their force. He assured Campbell that he had no unscriptural associations or confederations in mind, but only a simple merger of the Christians and Reformers, since their paucity

²¹ *MH*, II (1831), 391.

of numbers precluded their forming "two respectable congregations."²² He had understood from the Reformers themselves that there were only "light shades of difference between us."²³

Campbell did not believe that they were ready for a merger. Too many issues still remained to be clarified. On the other hand, Stone believed that both groups had received their faith and practice not from one another, but from a common source, the Bible. He discerned something more "expressive than squinting" in Campbell, a

plain denial of *our claims* to teaching the gospel before him. For such claims, we will not contend a moment; nor do we boast in them. If the gospel be preached, we will rejoice, without regard to persons or times. The truth of God and not the glory of man, I hope, is our aim and object.²⁴

Stone noted Campbell's "concession" that the Christians opposed authoritative creeds, but could not understand his denial that the Christians have the "ancient gospel." He could not see any "distinguishing traits" in Campbell's presentation of the gospel except that they attach greater importance to baptism and not so much "virtue to the direct operations of the Spirit in obedient believers as we do." Stone was mystified by Campbell's "high pretensions" of preaching a reformation different from every other proclaimed on this continent, or in Europe, since the apostasy.²⁵ Stone viewed Campbell's remarks on the "respectability" of the Christians as exhibiting a type of sarcasm for which he had no talent. Stone saw no necessity for engaging in a contest as to which group was the most despised by the orthodox. The "odium theologium" proved one neither right nor wrong.²⁶ He defended his position on communion with the unimmersed and then apparently addressed his remarks to the Reformers over Campbell's head.

Campbell was doubtless surprised that a kind and mild-mannered

²² *CM*, V (1831), 249. Stone evidently had in mind such communities as Georgetown, Kentucky, where John T. Johnson had recently given up the practice of law to minister to a church of ten "Reformer" converts. See *MH*, II (1831), 179.

²³ *CM*, V (1831), 250.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵ *CM*, V (1831), 249 f.

²⁶ *CM*, V (1831), 251 f.

man could be so pointed in his writing.²⁷ Although the December number of the *Millennial Harbinger* had been largely set up before Campbell read Stone's letter, he found room for a brief reply. Campbell left no doubt that he felt that the article was aimed in his direction. He thought Stone had "a little of the *man* as well as the Christian about him." The "unkind *insinuations*" and the "uncandid remarks" weakened his regard for the writer. He confronted Stone with this ultimatum:

Until he [Stone] explain, in a satisfactory manner, the reasons why he insinuates that I am, or was, in my remarks influenced by the propensity to make for myself a *great name*; and actuated by "a proud spirit," I can make no reply to the piece before me. . . . If a satisfactory explanation of this matter *can* be offered, if it can be shown that every man who demurs at the claims of another, just or unjust—that every man who defends himself against any charge, candid or uncandid—is liable to such imputations; then I may be satisfied to proceed to show that the matters on which I wrote are just as I left them on the 396th page of this volume.²⁸

Campbell stated that he had expected better treatment from the Christians. He had requested free and candid correspondence on the points of difference, but in asking "for bread" he had not expected "a *stone*." He informed the Christians that he had treated "their sectarian peculiarities" delicately for years and rejoiced to see many of the western Christians advancing in the knowledge of the Scriptures. But in the East he regretted to see the name Christian attached to that most "unhallowed of all metaphysics about the *modus* of the divine existence." When Campbell then said that the New England Christians were "pretty much" as the Christians were in Kentucky twenty years ago, he revealed still further that he did not think the earlier movement as advanced as his "reformation."

Campbell longed to see all "immersed" disciples of the Son of God united. He offered to unite in religious worship with any sect of Bap-

²⁷ Ware and other Disciple historians have not realized that "the correspondent" who vexed Campbell was Stone himself. See C. C. Ware, *Barton Warren Stone*, p. 228. The article appears unsigned in the *Millennial Harbinger*, II (1831), 557; but the authorship is easily traceable to Stone in an identical article of *CM*, V (1831), 241-258. Thus historians have missed an important clue to the intense personal feeling existing between Campbell and Stone on the eve of the celebrated union between the Christians and the Reformers.

²⁸ *MH*, II (1831), 557.

tists in America, not as a sect, but as followers of Jesus Christ, regardless of their speculations, only if their Christian behavior is "compatible with the gospel." He rejoiced in the success of his bitterest Baptist opponents who break down the Anti-Christian rite of infant sprinkling which separated the followers of Jesus. "It is faith," he concluded,

and not opinion—character, and not profession, which will unite the enlightened of all denominations. *If, however, my uniting with any one sect would shut me out from all others which hold the Christian institutions ever so imperfectly, I would choose rather to stand aloof from that sect than from all others.*²⁹

Campbell was hurt by Stone's references to the pride of the clergy who kept the followers of Christ apart by claiming priority in preaching the reformation. He refused to discuss Stone's overtures on unity any longer until he received some explanation. But he "by-passed" Stone to appeal to the remnant of the "Christians" who were sound in faith. He made it plain that the Christians in the East were outside the true circle, but that many of the Christians in the West were beginning to open their eyes to the light which he himself had long seen. He likewise made a gesture of good will to even his enemies among the Baptists. In his last paragraph, however, he closed the door on union with any one sect which would shut him out from all others that hold "the Christian institutions ever so imperfectly." He would rather stand "aloof from that sect than from all others." This passage at the end of his statement to Stone was obviously intended as a direct reply to Stone's overtures on union. He invited them, the Christians, to join his Reformers, but he betrayed no further enthusiasm for union.

Historians have not realized how narrowly the Christians and Reformers escaped coming together. Campbell doubtless would hereafter have remained adamant in his attitude, thus closing the door permanently. Other leaders, however, believed that immediate unity was desirable and Stone's practical interest in unity led him to participate in conferences on unity before controversial questions were settled. Even while Campbell was closing the door, plans were being made for meetings between the Reformers and the Christians in Lexington and Georgetown, Kentucky. Union between the two groups had already

²⁹ *MH*, II (1831), 558.

taken place in Millersburg, Kentucky, as we have seen. Barton Stone, John Smith (1784-1868), J. T. Johnson (1788-1856), and John Rogers (1800-1867), planned meetings from December 23-26, 1831, in Georgetown, and from December 30-January 2, in Lexington.

No minutes were kept of these meetings, but a few reports have survived concerning the final meeting held in the Christian Church on Hill Street in Lexington. John Smith spoke for the Disciples and Barton W. Stone for the Christians. Smith is reported to have called attention to the fact that all professing Christians were meant to be one on the basis of the Scripture.

God has but one people on the earth. He has given to them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commands them to be one family. A union, such as we plead for—a union of God's people on that one Book—must, then be practicable.

Every Christian desires to stand complete in the whole will of God. The prayer of the Saviour, and the whole tenor of his teaching, clearly show that it is God's will that his children should be united.³⁰

Smith then proceeded to say that union could not exist on opinions regarding abstruse, or speculative matters such as the mode of *Divine Existence*, or the *Nature of the Atonement*. His caution was that even in private conversation, or "social discussion" on such subjects, one should speak of them "in the words of the Scriptures."³¹ His concluding exhortation was: "Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites, or Stoneites, New Lights, or Old Lights, or any other kind of *lights*, but let us all come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the Light we need."³²

The ground had been well laid for Stone. He was near the culmination of a great dream and he did not let the opportunity slip. The reporter said that after speaking for a time "in a strain of irresistible tenderness," Stone agreed that the controversies of the church prove that the basis of unity cannot be on speculative subjects. He continued, after we had given up all creeds and taken the Bible, and the Bible alone, as our rule of faith and practice, we met with so much opposition, that by force of circumstances, I was led to deliver some speculative discourses upon

³⁰ John Augustus Williams, *Life of Elder John Smith; with some account of the Rise and Progress of the Current Reformation*. (Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll and Co., 1870), p. 452.

³¹ Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 452 f.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 454.

those subjects. But I never preached a sermon of that kind that once feasted my heart; I always felt a barrenness of soul afterwards. I perfectly accord with Brother Smith that those speculations should never be taken into the pulpit; but that when compelled to speak of them at all, we should do so in the words of inspiration.³³

The climax came when Stone declared: "I have not one objection to the ground laid down by him [Smith] as the true scriptural basis of union among the people of God; and I am willing to give him, now and here, my hand."³⁴ The atmosphere was charged with emotional feeling as Stone is said to have offered to Smith his hand of "brotherly love, and it was grasped by a hand full of the honest pledges of fellowship, and the union was virtually accomplished!"³⁵ Hands were joined, a song arose, and the union was confirmed. On Sunday, the two bodies joined in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Elders, or ministers, were present to administer the communion on that day. But a little later, they discovered that the two Lexington congregations could not unite because the Christians believed that only the clergy should administer the ordinance. Union in many places took place immediately; in Lexington, it was not to be consummated until July, 1835.

To implement the union movement, John T. Johnson of the Reformers agreed to edit the *Christian Messenger* jointly with its founder, Stone. Johnson was admired by Campbell and it was probably thought that his appointment would favorably impress "the Sage of Bethany."³⁶ The *Christian Messenger* announced that in order to consolidate the union and

to convince all of our sincerity, we, the Elders and brethren, have separated two Elders, John Smith and John Rogers, the first known *formerly* by the name of Reformer, the latter by the name of Christian.³⁷ These brethren

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 454 f.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ When Johnson (whose brother, Richard M. Johnson (1780-1850), was the ninth vice-president of the United States) deserted the bar for the ministry, Campbell quoted the words of Rowland Hill to a legislator who entered the ministry: "Sir, in *descending* from the forum and the legislative hall to proclaim a crucified Saviour, you have *ascended* far above all earthly crowns in the estimation of all good men on earth, and of all angels in heaven. . . ." See *MH*, II (1831), 179.

³⁷ It is significant that Smith was *formerly* known as a Reformer, but that Rogers is still known as a Christian. See *CM*, VI (1832), 7.

are to ride together through all the churches, and to be equally supported by the united contributions of the churches of both descriptions. . . .³⁸

Editors Stone and Johnson announced the union enthusiastically

We are happy to announce to our brethren, and the world, the union of Christians in fact in our country. A few months ago, the Reforming Baptists, known invidiously by the name Campbellites, and the Christians, in Georgetown and the neighborhood, agreed to meet and worship together. We soon found that we were indeed in the same spirit, on the same foundation the New Testament, and wore the same name, Christian. We saw no reason why we should not be the same family. The Lord confirmed this union by his presence; for a good number was soon added to the church.³⁹

The addition of new members was hailed as a New Testament sign of divine favor. Regarding differences of opinion, the editors asserted,

We have never asked them what were their opinions, nor have they asked us. If they have opinions different from ours, they are welcome to have them, provided, they do not endeavor to impose them on us, as articles of faith. They say the same of us. We hear each other preach; and are mutually pleased and edified.⁴⁰

The spirit of union, they felt, was spreading like fire in "dry stubble." From Elder John Longley they learned that the Reformers and Christians were uniting in Indiana. However, they warned of their own firm convictions:

But should all other states and sections act inconsistently with their profession, we are determined to do what we are convinced is right in the sight of God. Nothing can move us from this purpose, unless we should make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. From which, may our merciful God preserve us.⁴¹

Stone had used the phrase "spreading like fire in dry stubble" to describe the revival of the 1800's, and the movement for unity was for him a more glorious cause. To Alexander Campbell, who had closed the last issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* on a sour note, the news of the union apparently came as a shock. He had doubtless hoped to continue discussion with Stone. But in the meantime, Stone had gone to work to bring the two groups together. Campbell published a statement

³⁸ *CM*, VI (1832), 7.

³⁹ *CM*, VI (1832), 6.

⁴⁰ *CM*, VI (1832), 7.

⁴¹ *Loc. cit.*

from Johnson and part of the statement made by Stone and Johnson in the *Messenger*. He left out the body of the statement, but commented on John Smith, who had "immersed hundreds," and John Rogers, who had brought many into the fold of God. He bade them Godspeed with the instructively fatherlike words:

these brethren need not be told that to convert persons is not merely to baptize them, *to loose them and let them go*; nor to give them the *name* Christian, and to induce them to protest against human leaders, against human creeds, and to extol the sufficiency of the inspired writings; but "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified"—*to teach them to observe and do* all that the Lord has commanded.⁴²

Here Campbell is reiterating his argument against Stone's claim of priority in preaching the fuller or "ancient gospel." Campbell was not very specific in describing the light Stone lacked, or in noting wherein he failed to observe all that had been commanded by the Lord. Campbell admitted that Smith and Rogers differed "only in some speculative opinions"⁴³ and he rejoiced that they had given up "the sublimities of trinitarian Calvinism" and of "unitarian arminianism," to plead the "ancient order of things."⁴⁴ Campbell understood Smith and Rogers to be going on a mission

not to preach the necessity of *union* amongst *professors*, nor to baptize persons and let them fall into the desolating order of things which has so long obtained in the sects to which they formerly belonged:—It is to bring *the Christians indeed to do the things* the Lord has commanded.⁴⁵

Campbell did not say anything in favor of the union as such, but his primary interest seemed to be that the "Christians" were being brought to the full truth. The phrase "necessity of union amongst professors" had been used by Stone; its use here is evidently intended as a direct hit at those who preach unity, but who do not have "the ancient gospel." What pleased Campbell was not the fact of union, but the report of numerous letters from Kentucky announcing

⁴² *MH*, III (1832), 138.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ *MH*, III (1832), 139.

⁴⁵ *Loc. cit.*

that brethren Smith, Stone, Rogers, and others, at a public meeting in Lexington, Ky., on New Year's day, renounced their former speculations, declaring that they were not conscious of having effected good, but rather evil, in their debates, preachings, writings, etc., about trinity, Calvinism, arminianism, unitarianism, etc., and that they now go for the apostolic institutions. I say, then, from the present aspect of things, we have reason to thank God and take courage, and to bid these brethren God speed.⁴⁶

Campbell took courage because those who had been in error were at last stepping in the light. Two months later, Campbell published a letter from H. C. Coan, who described the failure of the Christians and the Reformers in Lexington to unite as they had done in Georgetown. He described it as "an unfortunate blow-up" because the Christians would not consent to having the communion administered by an unordained minister.

Campbell had no room for comment in that issue of the magazine, but the following month made it the subject of his first editorial. He not only condemned the attitude of the Christians in refusing to partake of communion administered by a layman, but vigorously attacked their oratory and camp-meetings. Campbell was doing little to promote the movement for unity!

The flame of union, nevertheless, burned brightly. It could be seen in Kentucky, Indiana, and Tennessee.⁴⁷ In its light, Christians and Reformers walked together along the same path.

It was not until 1839, however, that Stone and Campbell renewed the argument which Campbell had wanted to settle before the "union meetings" at Lexington and Georgetown. They discussed the proper name for the followers of the reformation, and in 1840 they engaged further in a series of letters on the atonement. Although Campbell was in his prime and Stone admitted that he was a tired man, the letters reveal that neither had given up many convictions on the disputed points of religious doctrine. Their central points of difference warrant close examination.

⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁷ *CM*, VII (1833), 30.

CHAPTER X

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

A. THE NAME

In 1804, Stone and his followers had settled on the name "Christian" as being the proper designation for the followers of Christ. They claimed to have received the suggestion from Rice Haggard,¹ though Henry Pattillo, the liberal Presbyterian who helped to license Stone in North Carolina, also favored the use of the name.² Stone was firmly convinced that the use of any sectarian name only strengthened the atomistic division in Christianity. To use the name Christian would, he felt, remove one important source of strife.

Stone had noted in 1831 that one reason for the failure of the Christians and the Reformers to merge was that they had taken different names. The Reformers preferred the name "Disciple" because the "Christians" in the East were Unitarians.³ Stone indicated his willingness to unite with others who obey the Saviour according to their best understanding of his will, but added,

We cannot conscientiously give up the name Christian, acknowledged by our brethren most appropriate, for any other (as Disciple) less appropriate, and received to avoid the disgrace of being suspected to be a Unitarian or Trinitarian. We cannot thus temporize with divine truth.⁴

¹ See the recently discovered pamphlet written by Rice Haggard, *An Address to the Different Religious Societies on the Sacred Import of The Christian Name* (Lexington, Ky.: Printed by Joseph Charless, 1804). The dramatic story of finding this document, which is on deposit in the archives of The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, cannot be told here. However, the pamphlet is not only a defense of the exclusive use of the name Christian, but also is a plea against the pride of denominationalism, and for the restoration of primitive Christianity, a return to the Bible as the standard of faith and practice, and to Christian unity founded upon universal charity.

² Pattillo, *Sermons*, p. 128.

³ *CM*, V (1831), 181.

⁴ *CM*, V (1831), 182.

The use of the name "Christian" was preferred by Stone to the end. It was one of the few times he seemed ever to have become dogmatic. Stone was convinced that Dr. Philip Doddridge's translation of Acts 11:26 was correct: "And the disciples were by divine appointment first named Christians at Antioch." He felt that if this were a correct translation, the matter should be forever put to rest.⁵ He placed confidence in Dr. Adam Clarke, whose opinion on the translation of Acts 11:26 coincided with that of Dr. Doddridge. Stone also quoted such texts as Acts 26:26, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and Peter 4:15, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." His belief that the Scriptures commanded that the name be used led him to think that it would "supersede" all denominational names and "be a means of uniting the scattered flock."⁶

Campbell, on the other hand, felt that the controversy over the name the followers of Christ were to be called was "one of subordinate importance." He did not seem to oppose the name Christian in the early stages of the discussion, until he felt that Stone, Walter Scott, and Thomas Campbell were trying to fasten the name "Christian" on him. He did not believe that the opinion of Dr. Doddridge could be substituted for the "literal import of the word 'Chrematizō.'" Since there are no words in Greek corresponding to "divine appointment," he concluded that there is no more authority for concluding that the word "Christian" comes from God "than from Antiochus Ephiphanes!"⁷

Campbell rejected the name "Christian"⁸ because in New England and elsewhere it was a name appropriated by a party which boasted "that they are unitarians—disbelieve in baptism for the remission of sins—and refuse to celebrate the Lord's death as often as they celebrate his resurrection, etc."⁹

Campbell chose the designation "Disciples of Christ" for four reasons:

1. It is more ancient. The disciples were called disciples in Judea, Galilee,

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶ *CM*, V (1831), 183.

⁷ *MH*, II (1831), 394.

⁸ Campbell adopted the name "The Christian" for his first magazine, but dropped it when he discovered it was already used by the "Unitarians."

⁹ *MH*, III (New Series; 1839), 338 f., and *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 21.

Samaria, and among the Gentiles before they were called Christians at Antioch.

2. It is more descriptive. A person may be named after a country or political leader and feel it "an insult to be called the pupils or disciples of the person whose name they bear." A stranger might imagine that *Christian*, like *American* or *Roman* had some reference to a country, rather than to scholarship. Disciples of Christ is a more accurate designation than Christian.

3. It is more scriptural. In the Acts the term "Disciple" is used thirty times and "Christian" but twice.

4. It is more unappropriated. Unitarians and Arians use "Christian" but no other people use the title "Disciples of Christ."¹⁰

Stone insisted that "Disciples" is a common, not a proper noun, and not even a "patronymic," while "Christian" is a proper and patronymic name because it is derived from Christ the founder. Campbell replied that Christian is not a patronymic because Christ is not a proper name. Jesus would be a proper name whose patronymic is Jesuit. Christ is the name of an office, equal to King or Priest. The argument only proves that "Jesuits" or "Disciples of Christ" are the alternatives. Campbell wrote

I am glad this subject is before us, I have heard much said in behalf of the name Christian for thirty years; and I am only more and more persuaded that the Apostles had better reasons for not assuming it, than any living man can give for now wearing it.¹¹

Thomas Campbell, the father of Alexander Campbell, joined in this controversy against his son. He favored the use of the name "Christian" for two reasons: 1) "Christian signified a radical relationship to Christ which comprehends and covers all other appellatives describing the relationship between Christ and his followers," 2) its use was consistent with the purpose of the reformation to restore pure, primitive, apostolic Christianity in letter and spirit.¹²

Barton Stone opposed the use of "Disciple" not only for biblical reasons, but also because he felt that its use alienated the "Christians" in the East. Campbell called them Unitarians, but Stone still hoped to win them to the movement for unity. He appealed to Campbell to soften the "hard objectionable features" of his articles on the name.

¹⁰ *MH*, III (New Series; 1839), 402.

¹¹ *MH*, III (New Series; 1839), 478.

¹² *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 19 f.

My dear brother, I write freely [sic] to you. The brethren in Missouri are grieved with myself at these things. I do hope they have misapprehended you—that you do not design to establish another sectarian [sic] party—that you do not design to co-operate with Trinitarians against Unitarians—that you do not design unchristianizing those who cordially embrace the Apostles' Creed; especially those who take the Bible alone for their rule of faith and practice—that you do not make the opinion of a pious believer, differing from your opinion, a bar to fellowship. Do, my brother, inform me.¹³

Campbell apparently did not mind alienating the Christians in the East, but he did temper his course considerably. He stated that he did not object to "Fathers Stone and Campbell," but he was aroused because others printed uncharitable remarks about his "power."

The crux of the question for Campbell was whether or not there was divine authority for being called Christians at all. He came ultimately to believe that he had originally conceded too much on the name Christian. As a result of the long discussion, he came to a fifth proposition: we have divine authority for the use of "Disciple" and other names, but none for Christian. He was not ashamed of the name Christian since martyrs suffered under it, but it was a "human designation."

Many felt that a prolonged discussion would cause schism. Campbell agreed to terminate the discussion after a six months' period. He made it clear that he did not wish "to fasten" a specific name on the brethren, but he did not wish any fastened on him under the pretension of divine warrant.¹⁴ He called on his brethren to recognize two facts:

1. That Christendom will never call them "Christians except in a spirit of satire, or irony, or insincerity because it would otherwise disparage themselves.
2. That the name has no denominational or national meaning, but is vague. The use of the term Christian is really made to distinguish "a real follower of Christ from a pretended one."¹⁵

Campbell consented to abandon the discussion "since no principle is involved" but he ended by sounding a threat that he would not "stand

¹³ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 22.

¹⁴ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 27.

¹⁵ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 363.

by in silence" and watch others sow seeds of discord by "arrogating to their opinions 'infallible authority.'" ¹⁶

Campbell never convinced Stone that the name "Christian" was not given by divine authority. Stone protested against the tendency to avoid the use of the name "Christian" so that "Disciple" would be fastened on the "whole body."¹⁷ In the last volume of the *Christian Messenger*, Stone acknowledged that the name had not been decided upon. He continued to express a "decided preference" for the name "Christian," believing that it had been given by divine authority as the designation for the "disciples of Christ." He agreed that he had been in error in using unbiblical terms such as "reformation," but exhorted his correspondents to call the family of God on earth by the name "Christian."¹⁸ His dogmatism on the name, however, had faded.

The inconclusive manner in which the controversy terminated is reflected in the present dual designation of the denomination. Campbell's "Disciples of Christ" had achieved official sanction,¹⁹ but Stone's use of "Christian" is more common as the everyday term for the churches and members of the denomination.

B. THE NATURE AND WORK OF CHRIST

Alexander Campbell²⁰ regarded the question of name as of minor importance; he felt, however, that the differences between Stone and himself on Christology were significant. Stone opened the subject in his first letter of overture to Campbell in 1826. Campbell attempted to engage him in controversy prior to negotiations for unity in 1832, but it was not until 1839 and 1840 that Stone, near the end of his career, consented to enter into a discussion on Christology.

In his first letter on the subject, Stone accused Campbell of assuming a superior attitude in viewing the Christological parties as immeasurably below him. Campbell had pictured the Calvinist on a mountain,

¹⁶ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 474.

¹⁷ *CM*, XII (1841), 41.

¹⁸ *CM*, XIV (1844), 24.

¹⁹ See Yearbook of the Disciples of Christ. However, the last two issues of the Yearbook also use the designation "Christian Churches" in parentheses.

²⁰ Alexander Campbell will be designated in this chapter by his name or simply the name Campbell. His father, Thomas Campbell, will always be designated as "Thomas Campbell."

the Arian on a hill, and the Socinian on a hillock. He located the Calvinist midway between himself and the Arian. "The ground you occupy" wrote Stone,

is too high for common minds to tread. I should be afraid to venture, lest giddiness should be the consequence. I would advise my dear brother not to soar too high on fancy's wings above the humble ground of the gospel, lest others adventuring, may be precipitated to ruin. Not that I should advise you to settle on Calvin's mount, on the hill of Arius, or on the hillock of Socinus (these are all far too low), but on the holy mount of God, revealed in his word. This, though high as the heavens, is safe for all to tread.²¹

Campbell's rejection of Calvinistic views of the Trinity and of Jesus as the eternal Son of God, for reasons the Christians had long since held, gratified Stone. Yet Stone could see no real difference between Campbell's views and those held by the Calvinists. He believed that Campbell had only substituted "the Word" for what Calvinists called the eternal Son of God. Both believed the Word of God and the Son of God "to be the one self-existent, and eternal God himself."²² Stone used arguments from the early church fathers and scriptural quotations from *Hebrews* and the *Gospel of St. John* to prove that the "Word" by whom all things were made was not the First Cause, or the only true God, but was the means of instrumental cause, existing before creation, but not from eternity. Campbell regretted that Stone had written so much on subjects no "man living can fully understand." He wrote, ". . . you do not like my comment on John Ch. 1 Ver. 1st. Well, then, just say so, and let it alone. I said in presenting it, I was not about to contend for it, nor to maintain any theory upon the subject."²³

Campbell noted that all writers on the subject of the Trinity have much to say about the "rationale" of the doctrine. The parties alternate between reason and revelation, or revelation and reason, depending upon how hard they are pressed. He laid down three presuppositions to be considered in discussing the problem of the Trinity:

1. The pretensions of the Bible to divine authority are to be decided by reason alone.

²¹ *CM* I (1827), 205.

²² *Loc. cit.*

²³ *CM*, II (1827), 7.

2. When reason decides this question, the truths of the Bible are to be received as first principles not to be tested by reason, but from which man is to reason.

3. Terms in the Bible are to be understood as reason suggests their meaning, but the things taught are to be received, not because they have been proved by reason, but because God has revealed them.

Campbell then attempted to defend the Trinitarian viewpoint against those who had attacked it as unreasonable in that it maintained that three persons can be one God and yet that "each of these three is the Supreme God." Campbell stated that it is not more unreasonable than that there can be a God at all, or an Eternal First Cause

because in all the dominions of reason there is nothing could suggest the idea; and *because* it is contrary to all the facts before us in the whole world that any cause can be the cause of itself, or not the effect of some other cause. No man from analogy, can reason farther than every cause is the effect of another, *ad infinitum*. Here reason shuts the door. Here analogy puts down her rule, and shuts her case of instruments.²⁴

Campbell stated that there was no reason for warfare since the doctrine is a "revelation" doctrine and there is as much reason on one side as on the other. He would fight for neither the Unitarian nor the Trinitarian system, lest he end in the graveyards of the schools, digging up the bones of "obsolete systems."²⁵ But there was controversy because Campbell so obviously leaned toward the Trinitarian side. However, his suggestion that Bible terms alone be used without attempting to interpret them had been adopted by the Christians and the Reformers in 1832.²⁶

Though Stone refused to agree that the strongest argument against the Trinitarians was based on logical contradiction, Alexander Campbell and he did not pursue the discussion of the nature of Christ further. Stone believed that the Trinitarian position could be disproved by revelation, but other questions, such as the design of baptism and the use of the name "Christian," consumed their attention.

The subject of the atonement, or the work of Christ, was discussed in letters between Thomas Campbell and Stone in 1833 and between

²⁴ *CM*, II (1827), 8.

²⁵ *CM*, II (1827), 9.

²⁶ Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 453 ff.

Alexander Campbell and Stone in 1839 and 1840. The exchange between Stone and the elder Campbell began after the latter's review of Noah Worcester's work on the atonement. Worcester held that all sacrificial blood "has been shed in vain" and exerted only a moral influence, producing repentance and love in the sinner.²⁷ Stone believed that Thomas Campbell interpreted the Scriptures in their literal emphasis on the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, thus making God the "direct or indirect agency in either the persecution or death of his Son." Stone objected to Thomas Campbell's doctrine because he did not believe that the blood of Christ actually changed God's disposition to forgive repenting sinners.²⁸

Thomas Campbell believed that Stone degraded the mediation of Jesus Christ into a mere moral argument to produce repentance.²⁹ Stone had argued that God's government is a perfect model for all governments on earth, and that, therefore, civil governments ought to adopt the principle of the innocent suffering for the guilty. Thomas Campbell's reply was that the death of Christ was a unique event in history and could not be a common example for human governments. He believed that Worcester made the death of Christ "a mere test of sincerity" and an "example of persevering steadfastness," whereas He actually died as a "substitute" for man.³⁰ Some of the brethren on both sides, fearful that the exchange between Thomas Campbell and Stone would injure the "reformation movement," successfully prevailed on them to terminate their debate.

Discussion on this subject arose between Alexander Campbell and Stone in 1840, following Stone's protest against Campbell's designation of the eastern Christians as Unitarians. Stone felt that the eastern Christians would merge with them if a convention were called to iron out their differences. Alexander Campbell seized this opportunity to ask Stone to write a series of articles on the atonement to which he would reply. He was certain that it could be carried on with "perfect Christian feeling and obliging good manners." He assured Stone that he rejected the "barbarous diction" of the Trinitarians and Unitarians, which

²⁷ *CM*, IV (1830), 256 f.

²⁸ *CM*, VI (1832), 206.

²⁹ *MH*, IV (1833), 442.

³⁰ *MH*, IV (1833), 552 f.

denied both the divine nature of Christ and his death as a "sin-offering" for remission of sins.

Stone entered reluctantly into the discussion because he feared that it would cause disunity and because he sensed that his age had taken from him much of the vigor of mind he "once possessed." Stone had attacked the principle in the Methodist Discipline that the death of Christ reconciled God to man; in Campbell's Christian System he felt there was an even more extreme doctrine in the statement that sacrifice "propitiates God and reconciles man" and that the death of Christ "soothes and delights the wounded love of our kind and benignant heavenly Father."³¹

In his reply, Alexander Campbell agreed to Stone's rejection of such terms as "expiation," "pacified," and "propitiate." But he reminded Stone that he himself used unscriptural terms, such as "victim" and "ceremonial defilement."³² Campbell quoted Parkhurst, Greenfield, and Robertson to prove that "expiate" is a scriptural term, unless it was assumed that all other renderings than those of King James were unscriptural. Campbell explained Stone's hypercriticism by the "violence of men of the hard-mouthed age which refused bit and bridle, and curb." Men of strong prejudices were determined to drive with a wooden wedge and mallet the barbarous scholastic jargon of old Nicene trinitarianism "down your throat."³³ He believed, however, that Stone was overly-horrified by such expressions about Christ's reconciling God to man. No intelligent Christian "imagines that God was incorrigible, cruel, antagonistic, full of vengeance, and inimical to fallen man."³⁴ His central objection was that Stone made atonement "only equivalent to reconciliation." He wrote,

I, like you, have all my life, divided the word *atonement* into three syllables, —*at-one-ment*. But I do not on that account exactly understand you when you make it simply *reconciliation*. *At-one-ment* is the making, or that which makes at one, those who were not one; and *reconciliation* is *made one*. . . .³⁵

³¹ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 245.

³² *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 393.

³³ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 297.

³⁴ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 298.

³⁵ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 295.

The main difference between Stone and Alexander Campbell on the question of the atonement was whether or not the death of Christ reconciled God to man. Stone believed fundamentally in the moral influence theory of the atonement. The work of Christ may change man, but it does not change God. He excluded the old terminology which described the death of Christ as propitiating God. Campbell rejected the orthodox idea of propitiation, which had been interpreted by some persons in offensive terms. Stone never understood how God could be pacified, if he were not wrathful. Campbell denied the harsher aspects of the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, but retained enough of the idea to disturb Stone. For example, he described Christ's sacrifice as "a sweet smelling savor—pleasing, propitiating, reconciling God to man."³⁶ "I know that he [Stone] repudiates the idea," wrote Campbell, "of effecting a change in God—of changing him from an enemy to a friend. So do I. But still I say God *repents*, is *propitiated*, and pacified, and even reconciled to us."³⁷

The fact that Campbell did not hold to some of the cruder presentations of the substitutionary atonement had brought him relatively close to Stone. In the end, Campbell concurred with Stone in most of his views, though not with all his "explanations." He felt that Stone did not go far enough, for he omitted the greatest design of the death of Christ, namely, "to expiate sin."³⁸ The controversy terminated with the two men in substantial agreement except on this point. The agreement between the two forces at Lexington, Kentucky, in 1832, to use biblical language and to abandon speculation, was adhered to so closely that this problem never became serious.

C. BAPTISM

A third question which divided the followers of Stone and Campbell into two groups was Christian baptism. Barton Stone recognized this difference in his first letter to Campbell on Christian unity. Stone was immersed in 1804; Campbell in 1811. The primary difference between the two was not over the form of baptism; it was over immersion as a test of Christian fellowship and communion. Stone wrote,

³⁶ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 297.

³⁷ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 296.

³⁸ *MH*. IV (New Series; 1840), 472 f.

They [the Reformers] contend, (so we understand them) that according to the New Institution, none but the immersed have their sins remitted; and therefore they cannot commune with the unimmersed. On this point we cannot agree with them, and the reason of our disagreement, is, that this sentiment, in our view, will exclude millions of the fairest characters, for many centuries back, from heaven. For if the immersed only, receive the remission of sins, all those millions that have died, being unimmersed, have died in their sins, or unwashed from their sins.³⁹

Such a doctrine was too legalistic for Stone. Not even an earthly king could be loved who would put to death a subject for ignorance of a certain law. Certainly Christians should not entertain a lower view of the character of the "King of Saints." He opposed the practice of excluding the unimmersed from communion and fellowship because it reflected on the character of God.

Stone was not impressed by the apology that the unimmersed are not excluded from heaven, but only from the body of the elect on earth. This seemed to him to be only a weak subterfuge which blindly refused to see the logical consequences of the doctrine. His position was that if baptism binds on earth it binds in heaven; if it excludes on earth, it excludes in heaven. God does not have one doctrine of baptism for his kingdom on earth and another entirely different doctrine of baptism for his kingdom in heaven. Stone faced the realistic consequences of excluding the unimmersed from fellowship on earth and urged the Reformers to do so. He believed that "baptism is ordained by the King," but was not the *sine qua non* of Christianity. He urged "patience and forbearance towards such pious persons as cannot be convinced" of the truth of baptism by immersion.

The Disciples or Reformers regarded Stone's position as too latitudinarian. They asked Stone how he could grant the privileges "of the kingdom to such as have not been immersed, when it is plain that by immersion only they are born, or made members of the kingdom? How can you commune with such at the Lord's table?"⁴⁰ Alexander Campbell admitted that they were agreed on the form and the meaning of baptism for the remission of sins. But the barrier in the way of unity was the practice of the "Christians" who "make immersion of non-effect by receiving persons into the kingdom of Jesus, so-called,

³⁹ *CM*, V (1831), 180.

⁴⁰ *CM*, V (1831), 184.

irrespective of their being legitimately born; or, in brief, regardless of the command, 'Be baptized every one of you!'

Thus, we see the accent of Campbell's emphasis on immersion as an integral part of birth into the kingdom of God. Stone objected to this absolutism. Stone, in sum, accepted Campbell's positive teaching on baptism, but rejected his tendency to dogmatize on the status of the unimmersed. Campbell softened his stand on the "unimmersed" in the famous Lunenburg letter⁴¹ of 1837; Stone consistently held a position on baptism that he did not need to soften. And Campbell was forced to admit, several years after the first merger between the Reformers and Christians, what Stone had freely proclaimed all of his life.

Once Stone lamented the fate of a "poor Pedobaptist" who protested his unjust fate in hell with the words: "In the humble spirit of obedience I submitted to be sprinkled." Campbell replied that a crying babe in his father's arms did not "submit to be sprinkled." From Campbell's position, both unimmersed infants and adults entered the "kingdom of Jesus" illegitimately. On Stone's plea of the sincerity of "Pedobaptists," Campbell protested that every sincere Musselman, Pagan, Infidel, Jew, Deist, Atheist, under Heaven, may convert Hell into a Purgatory.⁴² Campbell stated that "this free and open communion system" was "one of the weakest and most vulnerable causes ever plead."⁴³ Campbell ruled out the possibility that man's sincerity in opinion or belief would have any weight in the final judgment, and warned Stone not to temporize with divine ordinances "by substituting sincere sprinkling for sincere obedience, or for immersion." Man must obey God in immersion and

when we are assured that the Lord has commanded every man to confess him, or to profess the faith and be immersed into his name, we can never justify ourselves before God, or man in presuming in our "judgment of

⁴¹ The famous "Lunenburg letter" (See *MH*, Sept. 1837) and the comments made by Campbell regarding it in the *MH* reveal that he does not make immersion essential "to a Christian," but he still believed that an unimmersed person can never as fully enjoy "present salvation" or assurance of future "justification" as the immersed. Though Stone tried to persuade the Christian Connection group, cf. *post*, Chapter XI, that "baptism for the remission of sins" was correct in the face of their strong opposition to the doctrine, he never became legalistic on baptism.

⁴² *MH*, II (1831), 392.

⁴³ *MH*, II (1831), 393.

Charity" to set aside his commandment, and in accepting for it a human substitute.⁴⁴

Among the Christians were some who were inclined to take a Quakerlike position" on baptism and among the Reformers were some who overstressed baptism by immersion to the last degree of legalism. Stone attempted to strike a position midway between the extreme Reformers who preached on baptism as though it were an end in itself and the extreme Christians who felt that it was a mere act without any significance. He was not clear as to the precise importance of the ordinance, but he seemed to think it lay somewhere between the magic of baptismal regenerationists and the neglect of the Quakers. He pointed out that all churches except the Quakers taught that baptism was a door into the church.

Stone opposed the warm and endless debates caused by the advocates of immersion. If you think your brother in error, labor in love "to convince him."⁴⁵ Stone accepted immersion as baptism, but saw no reason why questions of its purpose should create disorder in the church. "All believe that immersion is baptism—why should they who submit to the one baptism contend and separate because they do not exactly view every design of it alike."⁴⁶

This controversy occurred in days when sectarian groups debated the "plan of salvation." The popularity of Walter Scott's five finger exercise, faith, repentance, baptism, the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, was widespread among the Reformers. Stone objected to any among both groups who tended to make one emphasis alone. He insisted upon all of these "steps" as being necessary to salvation.⁴⁷ However, Stone differed from the Reformers in that he taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit may come to man prior to immersion as it came to Cornelius and Saul of Tarsus. Men are not authorized to say that God will not give "his Holy Spirit to none but such as are immersed. Many, charity hopes, and experience proves, have received this Spirit without immersion." "If ever," wrote Stone,

⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁵ *CM*, VII (1833), 212.

⁴⁶ *CM*, VI (1832), 264 ff.

⁴⁷ Stone maintained that God's plan of salvation may vary. He differed from Scott and the Reformers in that he included "prayer" in the plan which usually was inserted before baptism. See *CM*, III (1829), 221.

I received the Spirit, it was through faith, repentance, and prayer without immersion. If I did not then receive it, I have been always deceived, and if I now should be convinced of this fact, I with thousands of others, should sink into skeptical despair. I find none among us, however, rigid in their doctrine of receiving the Spirit through Baptism, but acknowledge this. Yet, too many wish to conceal this acknowledgment, fearing it may be taken as a plea for disobedience.⁴⁸

Stone rejected the doctrine that "non-elect infants" would be damned for the sin of Adam. He opposed the teaching that they must be baptized because they are morally polluted. Such a doctrine denied the character of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁹

At the very inception of the movement of the Reformers and Christians, some held that men who are not consciously at the moment baptized "for the remission of sins" must be re-baptized or immersed. Stone rejected this teaching as narrow in the words

To assert that none but such as have been immersed for the remission of sins, are members of the Church of Christ, is to assert that Christ has had no church on earth for many centuries back: for but a few years ago had the old apostolic doctrine of baptism for remission been received.⁵⁰

The Christians and Reformers, because of their stress on baptism, were often called "water-dogs" and "water magicians." Stone wrote that the water had no magic in it to save.⁵¹ The quality of obedience in the believer is what makes the act efficacious. Baptism saves men in the same way that the waters of Jordan washed away Naaman's leprosy. "None are so ignorant as to think that the literal water washed away his leprosy; but that it was Naaman's obedience to the divine order." The "Grace and power of God" worked through this act of obedience.⁵²

Stone struggled to maintain a moderate position on baptism both before and after the merger of the Christians and Reformers. Many of those who engaged in debates and who preached sermons on the subject, heightened the importance of "immersion" by frequent condemnation of the unimmersed. Such legalists tried Stone's patience. When

⁴⁸ *CM*, VIII (1834), 214.

⁴⁹ *CM*, III (1829), 208.

⁵⁰ *CM*, VIII (1834), 28.

⁵¹ *CM*, II (1828), 152 f.

⁵² *CM*, III (1828), 14. See also *CM*, VIII (1834), 266.

correspondents stated that only the immersed are saved, Stone asserted that multitudes will be saved who have not been immersed. In his own experience he observed that immersion had given him nothing new in experimental religion except the satisfaction that he had done "his duty." If millions of the unimmersed are not saved he unhesitatingly declared,

I, with the millions of the fairest Christian characters on earth, would be doomed to hell forever; why? Because we had not been immersed; and this we had not done, because we were ignorant of it as a duty! Had I such views of God's character, I could not serve him with cordial love.⁵³

When Stone was accused of being inconsistent in practicing immersion and yet admitting the unimmersed "to the blessing of the Kingdom," Stone admitted that he could not find divine authority for such procedure which fully satisfied his mind.⁵⁴ He proposed the alternative: if the unimmersed are not Christian, then the immersed must exhibit a religion of superior holiness and glowing piety.⁵⁵ This he confessed he did not observe in the immersed.⁵⁶ He observed that Christ taught his disciples to pray, to break bread, and to have fellowship with one another before they were ever immersed in his name.⁵⁷ He did not believe that the mercy of God should be limited only to those who know and perform every command required by God. This principle would have condemned the apostles, who neglected many things because they did not understand Jesus' teachings immediately. They were told to preach to the Gentiles, but neglected for a long time to fulfill this command.⁵⁸

Stone loved peace and disliked to see the antagonism aroused by legalistic views of baptism. Those who condemned the unimmersed, awakened opposition from the people who most needed to hear the great truth of "unity" proclaimed. Inexperienced preachers especially seemed to "concentrate religion in immersion and weekly communion," thus ignoring the weight of Christian experience which is the scriptural

⁵³ *CM*, IX (1835), 222. See also *CM*, VI (1832), 265.

⁵⁴ *CM*, V (1831), 58.

⁵⁵ *CM*, V (1831), 59; see also *CM*, V (1831), 21.

⁵⁶ *CM*, IX (1835), 223.

⁵⁷ *CM*, V (1831), 184.

⁵⁸ *CM*, IX (1835), 222.

test of true religion.⁵⁹ Rather, Stone believed that "multitudes have been changed, are pious and will ultimately be saved with an everlasting salvation who have not been immersed."⁶⁰

Over and over again Stone expressed this sentiment; his position is relatively clear and uniform on baptism. Alexander Campbell expressed a view close to that of Stone, in the Lunenburg Letter⁶¹ of 1837. The dogmatism of much of Campbell's other views, unfortunately, became the inheritance of the second and third generation "Disciples." The controversial literature and debates engaged in by Disciples between 1865 and 1925 were largely over baptism and related questions.

So much effort has been expended by Disciples on baptism and it so continues to be a live question in all of their efforts to achieve an ecumenical attitude with their religious neighbors, that an examination of the positions of Stone and Campbell on baptism *at the time of the union* seems relevant. The views of the two men may be outlined as follows:

Campbell:

1. Campbell believed that baptism is for the remission of sins.
2. Campbell held that the only baptism is immersion into water.
3. Campbell taught that fellowship and communion with the unimmersed should not be practiced.
4. Campbell felt that the fate of the unimmersed is in the hands of God and the immersed on earth must keep themselves apart as far as Christian fellowship is concerned.
5. Campbell believed that the unimmersed could be Christians but could not have full Christian assurance or justification (later ca 1837) though the implication is that God may save the pious unimmersed.

Stone:

1. Stone believed that baptism is for the remission of sins.
2. Stone believed that immersion is biblical baptism, but never insisted on using the term immersion for baptism as did Campbell.
3. Stone favored fellowship and communion with the unimmersed on the grounds:

⁵⁹ *CM*, IX (1835), 223.

⁶⁰ *CM*, VI (1832), 265.

⁶¹ See the *Lunenburg Letter with Attendant Comments* "Footnotes to Disciple History," Number Two. The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee, 1953.

a. That breaking of bread and prayer were activities engaged in by the disciples of Christ before the New Institution or Covenant was begun.

b. That he and others entered into the experience of salvation before they were ever immersed.

c. That salvation begins in the present time, and that it creates an untenable dichotomy between the present and the future to say that the unimmersed are not saved in time, but rather may be saved in eternity.

d. That the mercy of God is not limited to those only who know and perform every command perfectly. To condemn such people is to condemn even the apostles who failed at both points.

e. That the immersed in their actual living do not exemplify a better spirit, humility, or self-denial than the unimmersed. The practical test of Christianity is not immersion, but valid Christian experience manifested in activity.

Stone's emphasis was entirely different from Campbell's, at this time. He accepted immersion and practiced it for the "remission of sins," but he could never bring himself to place it above stress on Christian character. He could not believe that Jesus made an arbitrary physical act a condition of salvation. To do this he felt would be equivalent to stating that in the Great Commission, Jesus contradicted the teaching of his entire ministry.

D. REVIVALS AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The subject of revivals and church government created differences of opinion between the Christians and the Reformers, but did not lead to serious controversy between the two groups. The references to these subjects, in contrast to the voluminous treatment of the issues regarding the use of the name, the nature of Christ and his work, and baptism, are meager and fugitive. Controversy over revivals and church government, like the difference of opinion over priority in preaching the doctrines of the reformation, remained in the background. It did not emerge into direct clashing of forensic cymbals, but was sounded in overtones.

Alexander Campbell and the Reformers were generally opposed to revivals. Usually Campbell even steered clear of using the word, whereas it had for many years appeared in Stone's writings. When Campbell announced that John T. Johnson, an eloquent lawyer in Georgetown, Kentucky, had come over to the Reformers, he enthu-

siastically headlined the announcement in the *Millennial Harbinger* "Revival in Georgetown, Kentucky."⁶² But he felt called on at the conclusion of the article to defend the use of the word "revival." Obviously, he wished to disassociate himself from emotional religious meetings.

In calling this "a revival," I speak in some sense after the manner of modern men. The "revival of literature," and the "revival of religion," are phrases specifically the same; and when used in this acceptation, may be harmless. Literature had been dead and buried for ages before the Reformation. It was then resuscitated. In reference to Georgetown, Ky., since the crusade against reform commenced, the above incidents deserve to be called *a revival*.⁶³

Campbell revealed his distaste for emotionalism when he learned that Sidney Rigdon had renounced the "ancient gospel" to join the Mormonites:

Fits of melancholy succeeded by fits of enthusiasm accompanied by some kind of nervous spasms and swoonings which he has, since his defection, interpreted into the agency of the Holy Spirit, or the recovery of spiritual gifts, produced a versatility in his genius and deportment which has been increasing for some time.⁶⁴

Campbell printed as well a news account of a revival in Rochester, New York, which was held in February, 1831. He described the proceedings as a series of "deeds of violence" against reason, revelation, and the Holy Spirit, and concluded,

We must occasionally notice the fanaticism of this age on the subject of *mystic impulses*; for, in our humble opinion, the constant proclamation of "the Holy Ghost" of the schoolmen, and all its influences, is the greatest delusion of this our age, and one of the most prolific causes of the infidelity, immorality, and irreligion of our contemporaries.⁶⁵

Campbell felt that in the New Testament no man was represented as having been converted by the internal operation of the Holy Spirit upon his mind. Unconverted men were not candidates for the Holy Spirit.

⁶² *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 179.

⁶³ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 180.

⁶⁴ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 100.

⁶⁵ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 215.

But in the rage for sectarian proselytism, "the Holy Ghost" is an admirable contrivance. Every qualm of conscience, every new motion of the heart, every strange feeling or thrill,—all doubts, fears, despondencies—horrors, remorse, etc., etc., are the work of this Holy Ghost.⁶⁶

The essential difficulty for Campbell was not only biblical; it involved also a question of metaphysics. He believed that there were two sorts of power—physical and moral. To put matter in motion, men use physical power; to put minds in motion, men use motives, or arguments. God uses motives or arguments to reach the minds of men. Revivals which stress physical motion are not addressed to the reason of man.⁶⁷ Campbell exalted the tongue of the orator and the pen of the writer not because of their physical power, but because they are to the mind "as the arms are to the body."⁶⁸ But he deprecated the misuse of the tongue by the seductive orators of the revivalistic movement. He especially condemned the Christians who took such pains "to gratify this Athenian itch."⁶⁹

Eight years later, Alexander Campbell, in an article on religious excitement, spoke out against a religion

which is the mere offspring of excited feeling, of sympathy with tones, and attitudes, and gestures—of the noise, and tumult, and shoutings of enthusiasm—of the machinery of the mourning bench, the boisterous interlocutory prayers, intercessions, and exhortations to "get religion on the spot," etc., etc., with which all are conversant who frequent revival meetings in seasons of great excitement!⁷⁰

He objected to revivals because they were "animal and imaginative" and resulted in frequent apostasies and public scandals. In the long run, he thought they had probably been more harmful than good to "true and vital religion."⁷¹ He recalled that a lawyer near Wellsburg, Virginia, had kept a record of nearby revivals and discovered that in ten years or so, the number of converts equalled the entire population, but that the actual number of communicants was only about one-tenth of the total population of the town and of the converts.⁷² Campbell

⁶⁶ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 212.

⁶⁷ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 293 ff.

⁶⁸ *MH*, II (First Series; 1831), 294.

⁶⁹ *MH*, III (First Series; 1832), 194.

⁷⁰ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 167.

⁷¹ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 167 f.

⁷² *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 168.

believed that some good came from these "revival" efforts, but that more was lost than gained. He observed that those who believed "in these great movements of flesh and blood possess them, while no showers of this sort of grace fall upon Episcopalians, Romanists, Quakers, Covenanters, and the true, long-lived, old, and uncontaminated Puritans."⁷³

Still, Campbell was favorable to "protracted meetings."

To fix the mind for a long time on the subject of religion, to abandon the business, and care, and perplexity, and pleasures of this life for some days in succession, and to turn all our thoughts to religious truth, to things unseen, and eternal, is in my judgment, sound wisdom and discretion. But on such occasions the people must be fed with the bread and water of life.⁷⁴

His conclusion, which was heartily endorsed by J. T. Johnson,⁷⁵ was this:

The machinery of modern revivals is not divine, but human. It is certainly delusive. They are undoubtedly deceived who repose the slightest confidence in it. The spirit of the Crusades is in it—the spirit of fanaticism is in it—the spirit of delusion is in it. The Spirit of God is not in it, else he was not in the Apostles, for he taught them no such schemes—no such means of catching men. This is a bait which was never put by Christ's fisherman on the evangelical hook.⁷⁶

By contrast, Stone found much of value in revivalism, despite his condemnation of excesses.

While there was no extensive debate between the Reformers and the Christians over church government, it has been noted that disagreement over the place of the clergy in the administration of the sacraments kept the two groups apart in Lexington, Kentucky, for three years. The Christians maintained that no person but an ordained minister could administer the sacraments. The Reformers argued that this was the prerogative of any member of the church.

Campbell denounced the "Christians" in Lexington who refused to acknowledge the priesthood of all believers to the extent of receiving communion from any member of the church. He wrote,

⁷³ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 277.

⁷⁶ *MH*, IV (New Series; 1840), 170.

They could not think of the *weekly* meeting for Christian worship, nor of receiving the emblems and memorials of the great sacrifice, unless consecrated and presented by the hands of one ordained by men to minister at the altar, even though he should be called from a distant church, or have the presidency of a plurality of congregations. The New Testament, indeed, could not be a bond of union to those thus traditionized; for it knows no such usages.⁷⁷

He described the condition of the church which likes a revival orator who not only orates but also

superadds to his eloquence the charms of his being called and sent by divine authority "to preach to Christians" and "to administer ordinances," so that his authority is irresistible and his presence indispensable to Christian worship. When he is absent the church can do nothing. Like a widow forlorn and desolate, she is solitary and silent. But the presence of this oratorical Pastor is like the meeting of the bridegroom and the bride.⁷⁸

Campbell believed that "all Christians are preachers, in some department of society, and that if ever this is lost sight of, there is an end of reformation." He was certain that there is need for "public preachers."⁷⁹ But the differences over revivals and church government were not so serious that they could not be resolved.

Stone and Johnson further urged unity in discouraging all tendencies for the Reformers and the Christians to boast on questions of predominance. They wrote,

It is common for the Christians to say, the Reformers have joined us—and no less common is it for the Reformers to say, the Christians have joined us. One will say, the Christians have given up all their former opinions of many doctrines, and have received ours—another will say, the Reformers have relinquished their views on many points and embraced ours. These things are doing mischief to the cause of Christian union and well calculated to excite jealousy. . . . Neither the Christians nor Reformers professed to give up any sentiments, or opinions previous to our union, nor were any required to be given up in order to effect it.⁸⁰

They thought that what happened with the Christians and Reformers might be seen in an analogy of several persons who start separately from Philadelphia for the West:

⁷⁷ *MH*, III (1832), 194.

⁷⁸ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁹ *MH*, III (1832), 249.

⁸⁰ *CM*, VI (1832), 110.

They all meet together on the great highway—They learn each others destination, and agree to travel together; just so, the Christians and the Reformers (formerly so called) met together in the great highway to Heaven, and agreed to walk together there, and assist each other in their journey. They walk together because they are agreed to walk together. . . .⁸¹

Yet, even the leaders of the group were not always in agreement. Some of the doctrinal issues remained, and even personal animosities survived as long as Stone lived. In the debate with N. L. Rice in 1843, Alexander Campbell gave the impression that he had saved Barton W. Stone from error. Stone's friends protested vigorously against Campbell's inference: twelve elders and evangelists addressed a protest to Campbell, July 15, 1844:

Permit us to say, in all candor and affection, that we regretted to see that some of your remarks . . . are calculated to make a wrong impression, in reference to those (now your brethren in Kentucky), who were once slanderously styled New-Lights, Arians, Stonites, etc. . . . Now as we understand this matter here, where the union between the Reformers and the Christians . . . first commenced, you were not regarded as *saving* brother Stone, and his associates, or they as *saving* you, or yours; neither esteemed the speculations of the other as of a damning character. It was rather an equal, a mutual and a noble resolve, for the sake of the gospel truth and union, to meet on common, on holy ground—the Bible; to abstain from teaching speculations or opinions; to hold such as private property, and to preach the gospel—to preach the word of God. . . .⁸²

John T. Johnson, writing about the same time, reminded Campbell that the

union was not a surrender of the one, or the other; but it was a union of those who recognized each other as Christians. This union was based upon the Bible . . . with the express understanding, that opinions and speculations were private property—no part of the faith delivered to the saints—and that such matters should never be debated to the annoyance and to the disturbance of the peace and harmony of the brotherhood.⁸³

Stone realized that union could never take place between the Christians and the Reformers while one side or the other held that it alone

⁸¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁸² *MH*, I (Third Series; 1844), 414-416.

⁸³ *Loc. cit.*

was absolutely right. He, for the sake of unity, attempted to see the defects and the good in each group.

In 1834, when he moved to Jacksonville, Illinois, he found two churches, a Christian Church and a Church of the Reformers. Stone wrote,

They worshipped in separate places. I refused to unite with either until they united together, and labored to effect it. It was effected. I never suffered myself to be so blinded by prejudices in favor of, or against any, that I could not see their excellencies or defects. I have seen wrongs in the Reformers, and in the old Christians; and in candor have protested against them. This has exposed me to the darts of both sides. I have patiently suffered from both.⁸⁴

Barton W. Stone began his crusade in the belief that Christian union did not have to be postponed until the denominations assembled in heaven. He felt that it could be achieved on earth and set this goal before him, making every attempt to bring the Reformers and the Christians together. He received little or no practical help from Alexander Campbell, who constantly raised objections and placed obstacles in the path of unity. Nevertheless, Stone held to his goal, undaunted by the failure to make concessions and to cooperate actively in the movement for unity. With Alexander Campbell, Christian unity would be the culmination of a primitive gospel plan in history which would find its epic expression in the introduction of the Millennium; with Barton W. Stone, Christian unity would be the fulfillment of Christian trust, love, and concession, based on a Sermon-on-the-Mount type of primitive Gospel which is actually expressed in every present moment of time. With Campbell,⁸⁵ certain doctrines of the apostolic church could be arranged, in what today may be termed "jig-saw puzzle" fashion, to form the basis of unity. For Stone, the spirit of love manifested by Jesus and his early disciples must underlie any attempts to lay foundations for the unity of the Christian community.

⁸⁴ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁸⁵ This is not to hold that Campbell did not stress love as necessary to Christian unity; it is to state that the emphasis and overtones in the two men were different.

CHAPTER XI

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTION¹ AND THE REFORMERS OF CAMPBELL

WHEN THE CHRISTIANS and the Reformers united in Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1832, Stone and John T. Johnson, new co-editors of the *Christian Messenger*, announced that the spirit of union was spreading "like fire in dry stubble." They hoped that union between the two groups would spread to other sections of the country. But all other parts of the country were not "dry stubble" for the advancing fire of unity. A number of Christian churches in the West and the majority of those in the East failed to catch the spirit of union. Some felt that Stone deserted the true principles of the Christian churches when he united with the Reformers. One subscriber in 1833 even asked that his subscription to *The Messenger* be discontinued on the ground that Stone in joining the Reformers had betrayed the original principles of the movement.²

Stone, in reply, stated that the proponents of the Christian churches movement agreed to take the New Testament alone, rather than human creeds, as the rule of faith and practice. The founders also had agreed to use the name "Christian" and to labor for the unity of Christians, thus destroying sectarianism in the world. He said that he had stood firm when McNemar, Dunlavy, and Houston turned away to the

¹ The Christian Connection or Christian denomination was composed of three streams originating independently of one another. In New England there was reaction against the "Calvinistic Baptists," in the South against the "Authoritarian Methodists," and in the West against the "Calvinistic Presbyterians." These bodies soon became known to each other and they organized conferences for mutual friendship which were not to disturb "the independency of the churches." The Christian Denomination in the East was often referred to as the Christian Connection, even in their own literature.

² *CM*, VII (1833), 3.

fables of the Shakers, and Marshall and Thompson returned to the orthodox fold. He was conscious now of practicing only the "principles of unity and harmony." He admitted preaching the doctrine of "baptism for the remission of sins," but pointed out that he and many others preached the same doctrine "twenty years ago."³ He declared that the Christian churches in practicing immersion denied by this very act that "rantism or aspersion" signified baptism. But he denied that the Christians debarred unimmersed persons from the Lord's table. Stone never wavered from his central convictions. But, in his attempt to make peace between Campbell and the Christians who held aloof from the union, he tended to sympathize with the position of the group under attack. In his role as a peacemaker, he leaned a bit toward Campbell when he was attacked by the Christians and in the direction of the Christians when Campbell attacked them.

Alexander Campbell distrusted the eastern Christians because he regarded them as being Unitarians. The Christians for their part had little love for Campbell. They considered him to be a trouble-maker because of his unbending insistence on an "original" New Testament pattern of faith and practice. Their opposition was expressed primarily in the pages of the *Christian Palladium*, founded in 1830 by Joseph Badger (1792-1852).

A New York correspondent writing to the *Palladium* in December, 1833, described Campbell's visit to Philadelphia. The writer appreciated Campbell's strong mind and felt that he was an "original genius" who was especially effective against infidelity. But he felt that Campbell's central interest was in the "divine original of Christianity" and the "doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins."

The editorial policy of the *Palladium* toward Campbell was summed up in Volume Four by one of the editors. He warned that the theory of Mr. Campbell was "fatal error" which generated a "cold and blighting atmosphere." Those who embraced his system were denounced as backsliders who would finally land in "the gulf of infidelity."⁴ The

³ *CM*, VII (1833), 5.

⁴ Joseph Badger, et al (ed), *Christian Palladium* (This periodical was published West Mendon, N. Y., May, 1832—April, 1834; Union Mills, N. Y., May, 1834—March, 1847; Albany, N. Y., April, 1848—April, 1853; and Irvington, N. J., March, 1855—December, 1859) IV (1836), 297. Hereafter, the *Christian Palladium* will be designated by the symbol *CP*.

writer noted that Campbell included Stone's magazine in his list of "reformation periodicals," but left out the *Palladium*.⁵ Joseph Badger made it clear that the *Christian Palladium* was the only hope of sustaining the cause of the Christian Connection against the "overwhelming scourge" of Mr. Campbell's doctrine.⁶

A correspondent in Laurel Hill, New Jersey, wrote of the attempted penetration by the "Campbellites" in his locality. He described the invaders as those who tried to turn others away from the faith of the gospel to the "spiritless, prayerless, lifeless, cold-water system of A. Campbell."⁷

Feeling ran high between the non-uniting Christians and the Reformers. On one occasion it flared into violence. A minister in the Christian Church complained of being attacked by an exponent of the Campbellian "physical religion." "I have preached," he wrote,

for near twenty years, and no man's hands were ever laid on me to prevent my preaching till a few days since. A *deacon* of Mr. Campbell's party came to my appointment and after some talk, he placed himself in the aisle where I was to go out. As I was passing, this *deacon* first struck me, and then clenched his hand hard and fast into my collar. From his hold, he was not disposed to let me go, altho' requested by my friends for several times. Several persons were for giving him *Lynch law*; but it was finally concluded that the mild laws of Ohio, made and provided, were sufficient.⁸

Joseph Badger editorially prayed to be delivered from the power of such a religion of works. Later, he criticized people who "strain at a gnat and swallow Alexander Campbell."⁹

The discord between the two groups extended as far north as Canada. Elder A. C. Morrison, of the Christian Connection group, reported on a town in upper Canada to which he traveled for six hundred miles by land and water. He saw many "weeping mourners," but in some sections found marked apathy traceable to many causes; the greatest cause was "the prevalence of Campbell's system of reform."¹⁰

Some members of the Christian Connection in New York broke

⁵ *CP*, IV (1836), 298.

⁶ *CP*, IV (1836), 333.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁸ *CP*, IV (1835), 138.

⁹ *CP*, IV (1836), 271.

¹⁰ *CP*, VI (1837), 242.

with the leaders of the *Palladium* whom they termed "would-be Popes." The *Christian Palladium* in reply showed how far apart the two groups were. The quotation reveals

what an unkind, uncharitable, and unchristian spirit those dear *Disciples* of Mr. Campbell possess. We know of no Christian sect who have arisen in modern times, who have such an unreasonable degree of vanity, egotism, pride, malice, war, and persecution as is found among them. From Maine to Missouri, wherever they can be found, there may be witnessed contention and a careless infidel spirit; "by their fruits ye shall know them." Every man who dares dissent from their theory may expect every means will be tried to tarnish his honest fame. The above is a sample of the cruelty and wickedness of those *Disciples* of slander.¹¹

The editor of the *Palladium*, Joseph Badger, was a rugged foe of Roman Catholicism, but was quick to print reports that Alexander Campbell had failed to sustain his case in the debate with Bishop Purcell at Cincinnati in 1836. He called Campbell "a laborious architect of his own fame" whose laurels had been shorn from him. Later reports caused him to revise his opinion of Campbell's success in the debate,¹² but not of the debater himself. Badger regarded Campbell as a "Calvinist, a Trinitarian and what better is his system of remission of sins than the Catholics?"

The greatest battle between the Reformers and the Christian Connection occurred in southern Ohio, where many churches were torn by dissension. One of Campbell's opponents in this sector was Matthew Gardner (1790-1873), who wrote a pamphlet against Campbell, entitled *Twelve Year's Examination of Mr. Alexander Campbell's Theory, Practice, etc.* The *Christian Palladium* took note of Campbell's reply, stating that he had abandoned argument to resort to the cowardly practice of smutting the hard earned reputation of Elder Gardner. Gardner himself noted that when he announced that he was writing the pamphlet, the periodicals of the Reformers were leveled against

¹¹ *CP*, VI (1837), 25.

¹² *CP*, VI (1838), 362 f. For Badger the definitive analysis of the debate appeared in a Unitarian periodical, the *Western Messenger*, published in Louisville, Kentucky. The March, 1837, issue called Purcell the better declaimer, but Campbell the better arguer. It pointed out that Campbell was outmaneuvered in assenting to propositions which required him to prove too much and in permitting Bishop Purcell to draw him aside in discussing minor points instead of two or three main issues.

him. He stated that J. T. Johnson and Walter Scott used "personal abuse" and "hard things" against him. Gardner's answer to Alexander Campbell's attack on his character was to invite him to make inquiries among those with whom he had lived; secondly, to have disinterested men count the number of hearers in Gardner's and Campbell's respective congregations; and, finally, to make charges before Gardner's conference. He cited his native frontier Americanism to sustain him in the contest against Campbell. When Campbell's

father was in Europe nursed by kings, and flattered by monarchs; under the influence of an established religion—mine was born on the blood-stained field of the American revolution. And while Mr. C[ampbell] in the early part of his life was put by his father into the theological schools on the other side of the Atlantic—mine, in the year 1800, emigrated from the state of New York to the Northwest territory; now the state of Ohio; and settled in the wilderness; where the Indian warhoop [sic] could still be heard. . . .¹⁸

Gardner also opposed the Reformers because they denied the value of "experimental religion." He believed that the Reformers were too rationalistic and that they ridiculed the influence of the spirit both in conversation and in the call of men to the ministry.

The major points of difference between the Christian Connection and the Reformers of Campbell lay in three areas: (1) the influence of the spirit of God, (2) baptism, and (3) the Trinity and related matters.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The Christians in the East opposed Campbell because they believed that he limited the work of the Holy Spirit to the Word. One writer in the *Christian Palladium* asserted that Campbell denied all activity of the spirit in the "present day," except that which is exerted through the written word. He quoted from the *Christian Baptist* to show that Campbell believed that the gifts of the spirit ceased with the apostolic age and that the spirit of God operated on the minds of sinners only by the Word. But, objected the writer, if God communicated to Christians only by his word, all spiritual experience would cease and a "spiritless system" would reign.

¹⁸ CP, IV (1836), 371.

Barton W. Stone at times seemed to believe in the influence of the Spirit apart from the Word and tried several times to defend Campbell as holding a similar view. He was unsuccessful in convincing the eastern Christians that Campbell was more than a "Bible-worshipper."¹⁴

A lengthy debate on the influence of the Spirit was carried in the *Christian Palladium* until some of its readers protested against it as "unprofitable." The general position of the Christian Connection was summed up by one writer: "God has sent the Holy Spirit into the world, which now operates as a reprovcr of the wicked, and a comforter of the good, which holy influence will continue until the coming of the Son of God to judge the world."¹⁵ The opposition, represented by Kay, one of Campbell's followers, believed that the influence of the Holy Spirit ceased when miraculous gifts were withdrawn from the New Testament church. Kay believed that the only influence exerted on man is "a moral influence" which proceeds from God.

Joseph Marsh (1802-1863), who succeeded Joseph Badger as editor of the *Palladium*, held that Campbell's system was "cold delusion in the extreme, which has a direct tendency to destroy all spiritual enjoyment and humble devotion."¹⁶ Another writer maintained that the Gospel is different from Campbell's "absurd notion that a prayerless sinner resolves to live a new life, goes into the water, has all his sins washed away, is brought into the kingdom of heaven, and yet has never prayed in all his life."¹⁷ Campbell's "spiritless gospel, spiritless experience, and spiritless religion" sapped the roots of God's revelation to men.

Writing of the Christians in Lexington, Kentucky, during the discussion of union with the Reformers, Campbell had implied that the Christians had more veneration for fine oratory and boisterous declamation than for Jesus Christ and his Apostles.¹⁸ The feeling of the Christians in regard to revivals, on the other hand, was summed up in the statement of one of its early leaders, Elder Abner Jones (1772-1841):

¹⁴ *CP*, VI (1838), 353.

¹⁵ *CP*, III (1835), 319.

¹⁶ *CP*, III (1834), 139.

¹⁷ *CP*, III (1835), 319.

¹⁸ *MH*, III (1832), 194.

Nearly every Christian Church in New England are [sic] the fruits [sic] of special Revivals. Among all our faithful and successful preachers, where is one, who is not the fruit of some revival. Portland, Portsmouth, and many neighboring churches; Haverhill, Salem, Boston, New Bedford, and many flourishing churches in that region are all and every one of them the fruits of Revivals. When we no longer have *Revivals*, we no longer have prosperity.¹⁹

The Christian Connection Churches were convinced that Alexander Campbell's doctrine that the Spirit operated only through the Word of God was opposed to "experimental religion." The majority of the Christian Connection opposed Campbell because they believed that his doctrine would kill revivalism out of whose matrix the Christian churches were born.

2. BAPTISM

The Christian Connectionists were convinced that the reason Alexander Campbell denied the influence of the Holy Spirit independent of the Word in conversion, was to make room for his doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins. One of them wrote,

His [Campbell's] whole theory must bend to his darling notion of remitting sins through water baptism. So long as he regards water baptism as the gospel instituted medium through which the sinner is directed to look for the remission of his sins, why direct him to pray to God to forgive his sins?²⁰

He continued that the Reformers teach that one can go direct into the water and come out "a child of God." He thought this a superficial manner of "preparing people for church membership." Though esteeming "Father Stone," he hoped that he would write "no more apologies for Mr. Campbell's theory which caused spiritual death."²¹

The place of baptism as a barrier to unity between the Reformers and the Christian Connectionists is seen vividly in a story Joseph Marsh wrote for the *Palladium*. He related what happened when a believer in water regeneration confronted a dying young man who inquired concerning the way of salvation. The "Campbellite" minister told the youth to reform, but

¹⁹ *CP*, V (1837), 375.

²⁰ *CP*, VI (1838), 354.

²¹ *CP*, VII (1838), 95.

he could say no more. He could not present to the dying man his favorite doctrine of water regeneration, for the man was too sick to be baptized! He could not tell him to pray for the saving influences of the Spirit; for the preacher did not believe it right for the sinner to pray, nor that the Spirit would be given before baptism! The preacher could not pray for the dying youth himself, because he would consider it solemn mockery to ask God to forgive sins in any other act than immersion! Hence, he left the dying man to his fate, just as every believer in Mr. Campbell's sentiments must leave the dying sinner, to find his own way to Heaven, or to perish in his sins!! Awful thought!²²

Evidence in the *Christian Palladium* suggests that the form of baptism was important for the Christian Connectionists, but that its design was not. Poetic descriptions of baptism by immersion recur.²³ The descriptions of "crystal torrents" along banks lined with hemlock, pine, spruce, and fir would lead one to be prepared for a doctrine of baptismal regeneration. But the writers indicate after these rhapsodic descriptions that the sins of candidates have been forgiven prior to baptism. The writing of Badger discloses that baptism was administered because the person was already saved. Jesus set the example, and candidates needed only to seal the "covenant with God."²⁴

Though Barton Stone endeavored to soften the opposition of the Christian Connectionists to Campbell's doctrine on baptism, they continued to doubt that Campbell had ever modified his position. As early as 1831, they described Campbell's position as the "soul chilling doctrine of water baptism."²⁵ In 1835, O. E. Morrill reported wide interest in a debate he and Joseph Thomas (1791-1835), the "White Pilgrim," had at Weedsport, New York, with the followers of Alexander Campbell.²⁶ Matthew Gardner in 1838 revealed that the opposition to Campbell's doctrine of baptism had not changed.²⁷

3. THE TRINITY AND RELATED MATTERS

Another of the primary disputes between the Reformers and the Christian Connection group concerned the Trinity. The disagreement

²² *CP*, VII (1838), 120.

²³ *CP*, III (1834), 259; *CP*, I (1832), 12.

²⁴ *CP*, III (1834), 260.

²⁵ *CP*, I (1832), 17.

²⁶ *CP*, III (1835), 327.

²⁷ *CP*, VIII (1839), 20.

was not so great on this issue, however, as it was with reference to the doctrines of the influence of the Spirit, and the design of baptism. Actually, the groups bitterly attacked one another, in the columns of periodicals, but never met in a head-on discussion of this or any other doctrine. Alexander Campbell was certain that the Christians in the East were Unitarians, and the Christians in the East were just as certain that Campbell was a Trinitarian and a Calvinist.

Badger, in 1834, appealed to the readers of the *Palladium* to avoid the "old garlics of Egypt" which Campbell had studied in Calvinistic schools on the other side of the Atlantic. "Our brethren have tried for a long time," he wrote in 1834

to draw out Mr. C[ampbell] on Calvinism, and the Trinity, but his answers have, on all occasions, been equivocating and evasive, and his real sentiments have not been understood. We will close . . . by two short extracts from his last paper, which clearly show his partiality to Calvinism and the Trinitarian theory. Are our brethren, who have been favorable to the plans of Mr. C[ampbell], prepared to say the Scriptures teach nothing definite relative to the character of mediator? Are they prepared to go back into the wilderness under the splendid banner of "Reformation" and "Ancient Order" and subscribe to the *Ancient* and *honorable* doctrines of Calvinism and the Trinity? ²⁸

Badger's belief that Campbell had feasted on the "old garlics of Egypt" on the other side of the Atlantic was confirmed by the latter's attack on anti-Trinitarianism and his admission that "there would be more of John Calvin than James Arminius" in his "Moral philosophy." ²⁹ Again, the Christians in the East were convinced that Alexander Campbell was a Trinitarian, just as he was certain that they were Unitarians. It has already been noted that one of Campbell's primary reasons for rejecting the use of the name Christian was that the Unitarians in the East had already appropriated that name. Barton W. Stone himself admitted in 1827 that the "Christians in the East, we are sorry to say, have admitted the name Unitarian. This has caused much sorrow to some of us in the West. . . ." ³⁰

²⁸ *CP*, IV (1836), 298.

²⁹ *Loc. cit.*

³⁰ *CM*, II (1827), 13.

Indeed, the Christians in the East³¹ gave many evidences of kinship with the Unitarians. In a letter³² to the General Baptists of England their position was clarified as the desire to restore Christian piety as a test of church membership and the "inalienable right of private judgment" in matters of doctrine. The name Christian was taken to the exclusion "of all sectarian names." Barton W. Stone found himself in accord with these emphases. Alexander Campbell was concerned about the absence of the New Testament pattern of "complete reformation."³³ He was more troubled with the avowals of Unitarianism by the eastern Christians.

Further evidence of the similarity between the eastern Christians and the Unitarians in Simon Clough's doctrinal statement to the English Baptists is as follows: "It will be seen by this short statement of our faith, that we are strictly Unitarian in our sentiments." The statement emphasized the unity of God; stressed the sonship of Christ; and noted the "free" forgiveness of sins on the basis of "the rich unpurchased mercy of God which has been revealed in Christ." Clough, however, stated that two things distinguished them from the Unitarians. One was that they rejected the name Unitarian, and the other that the Christians were revival-conscious whereas the Unitarians frowned on emotionalism in religion. Though rejecting the name Unitarian, Clough wrote:

We are evangelical Unitarians, and are frequently denominated the Evangelical Unitarians, to distinguish us from the Unitarians in this country and England. It is this mode of preaching and applying the Unitarian

³¹ The *Christian Messenger*, edited by Stone, was listed by the Christians in 1827 as being one of their periodicals along with *The Christian Herald*, edited by R. Foster of New Hampshire, and the *Gospel Luminary*, edited by D. Millard in New York.

³² The United States General Christian Conferences which met at Windham, Connecticut, in 1826, representing the Christian churches, appointed Joseph Badger, Abner Jones of Salem, Massachusetts, and Simon Clough [Simon Clough, *An Account of the Christian Denominations in the United States in a Letter to the Corresponding Secretary of the General Baptist Assembly of England* (Boston: Isaac R. Butts, 1827), p. 4.] to correspond with the General Baptists of England.

³³ When Stone asked Campbell to define this expression, Campbell could suggest the addition of only one element, "baptism for the remission of sins." The stress on this "mission plank" naturally led many to the conclusion that he favored a "cold-water system" of religion.

doctrine, which has crowned our labors with such a rich harvest; it is this which gives us access to the common people, who constitute the greatest part of our churches and congregations. . . .⁸⁴

Methodists and Baptists opposed the Christological doctrines of the Christians because they believed them to be Unitarian.⁸⁵ One of the Christians denounced Trinitarianism as "burdensome trash" and derogatory to the character of God. He pleaded for a spiritual doctrine of the atonement which would reject the doctrine of "purchase and pay," or "imputed righteousness." "If Christ be the Eternal God," he stated, "God purchased salvation of Himself. . . . He paid a debt to Himself! . . . He imputed the guilt of man to Himself . . . and bore his *own wrath*, and *died* to reconcile Himself to man!!!"⁸⁶

Gideon Hall, writing in the *Christian Palladium* on the Trinity, used the same kind of arguments which Barton W. Stone had used. For example, he wrote,

Now it is impossible that the begotten can be as old as him who begot: Christ no where says that he is eternal, or that he knows as much as the Father, or had as much power as the Father. But it is said that he and his Father are one, and every one that had seen him had seen the Father also—that in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; does not this prove that Christ and the Father are the same person? So then Christ is the Eternal God.⁸⁷

It is not generally known that while Editor Joseph Badger of the *Palladium* was rejecting unity with the "Campbellites," he sought a merger with the Unitarians. He sought to enter into rapprochement with the distinguished Unitarian leader, William Ellery Channing, of Boston. Badger had called Channing a "great and good man" after he visited him at his summer residence, "an earthly paradise." "He [Channing] manifested a deep sympathy with us in the misfortune that some of our brethren in the West have fallen a prey to Mr. Campbell's theory."⁸⁸

In 1835, Badger wrote to Channing, informing him of the admiration Christians held for the Boston Unitarian and their desire for closer re-

⁸⁴ *CP*, III (1834), 114.

⁸⁵ *CP*, II (1833), 26.

⁸⁶ *CP*, II (1833), 24.

⁸⁷ *CP*, IV (1835), 50.

⁸⁸ *CP*, IV (1836), 289.

lationship. In his frank reply Channing mentioned not only their likenesses, but the differences which would make the union impossible.

He was impressed with the spirit of freedom allowed on theological questions in the Christian churches. He also liked the Christians' rejection of formulated human creeds. Christian truth was infinite, he believed, and could not be shut up in a few lines of an abstract creed. "Creeds," he wrote, are

skeletons, freezing abstractions, metaphysical expressions of unintelligible dogmas, and these I am to regard as the expositions of the fresh, living, infinite truth which came from Jesus. . . .³⁹

Channing then, however, went on to mention three weaknesses of the Christian denomination which precluded cooperation with the Unitarians. He felt that the greatest defect lay in their failure to promote a "better educated ministry" in "an age of so much light." He thought that they also overstressed the "consequences of sin" to neglect in preaching the doctrine of salvation. Channing also objected to their undue attachment to emotional religion which is not "rooted in reality." Proof of the sentimental approach, Channing found in Boston where many Christians, employed as female domestics, neglected their work to attend religious meetings. He would not have opposed their attendance at revival meetings if it had moved them to work more assiduously in their vocations.⁴⁰

Badger liked the way the "enlightened Dr. Channing" "put down creeds" and defended the Gospel. His clear and lucid language and arguments, were excellent models for "young preachers." But Badger felt that when he described the defects of the Christian churches, Channing was misinformed. Badger denied that Christians were "noisy, terrifying, senseless ranters," though some converts brought "noisy habits" with them from "other" churches. He admitted that they described sin in its odious features, but for that reason did not place less emphasis on the love of God. He assured Channing that they were not opposed to education, but only to "sectarian" theological schools which were "sources of corruption and division."

But the bid for union with the Unitarians failed. Alike in many doctrines, they were still far apart. Culturally they were further separated,

³⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ *CP*, IV (1836), 309.

and Channing knew it. The only hope the Christian denomination had to escape isolation, was to attempt further cooperation with the Christians in the West who had joined with the Reformers. Though Barton W. Stone was to work for this goal with devotion and great passion, all efforts to cement the union failed.

CHAPTER XII

STONE'S FAILURE TO RECONCILE THE CHRISTIANS IN THE EAST WITH THE REFORMERS IN THE WEST

MEANWHILE, not all persons in the Christian Connection were opposing Alexander Campbell and the Reformers. For this reason, Stone had hope of bringing the two groups together. He labored, as indicated, long and continuously to reconcile the differences between the two groups.¹ One of the Christians wrote to Joseph Badger from North Carolina, August 20, 1836, expressing his pleasure that the "Christian society" in Boston had been liberal enough to let Alexander Campbell preach in its Chapel. Badger approved "Christian liberality," but stated that "we cannot be Catholics, Mormons, nor Campbellites, though we should be judged illiberal by some of our brethren."² Nothing could have roused

¹ Ware, contemporary biographer of Stone, relying apparently on Rogers, an earlier writer, states that Stone left Georgetown, Kentucky, for Jacksonville, Illinois, because of his opposition to slavery. (See Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 296. Also see Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 293.) Stone had freed some slaves and possessed others he wished to free. By removing to a free state, he could leave them in Kentucky where "by common consent they might be considered as free." Doubtless this was a factor in Stone's decision to locate his magazine in Illinois, but he also hoped that a great revival might take hold in that area as it had in Kentucky a quarter of a century previously. He foresaw a "glorious ingathering of souls in that country" if a few spiritual evangelists entered. (See *CM*, VI (1833), 347.) However, the most important factor guiding his decision was probably his desire to represent the Christians in this part of the West. At their annual meeting in Indiana, the Christian denomination had passed a resolution inviting Barton W. Stone to come to Indiana to begin the "republication" of the *Christian Messenger*. A periodical was generally desired in this region and the Christian Connectionists doubtless reasoned that Stone could be weaned away from the Reformer influence in Kentucky. He probably looked to new fields, certain that the union in Kentucky could be cemented since John T. Johnson, his editorial colleague, would remain there.

² *CP*, V (1836), 153.

the ire of Campbell and the Reformers more than to be classed with the Mormons and the Roman Catholics! Badger assured his correspondent that no Christian Chapel in New York or New England would be closed against "a minister in good standing," but he enjoined separateness from those who followed error and superstition. He further commented that "no living man" would be greeted with "greater joy" in New England than Barton W. Stone, but "he is a very different man from Mr. Campbell. His life, his sentiments, his writings, his *spirit*, all are different, *vastly different*."³

L. D. Fleming of Philadelphia, on the other hand, was among those Christians who longed for rapprochement with Alexander Campbell. He felt that Campbell's preaching was "a great intellectual treat" and spoke highly of the defense of revealed religion which Campbell made against Robert Owen and the other skeptics. He believed that Campbell had been much misrepresented and that there was little difference between him and the Christian Connection.

Though there were not many who were sympathetic to Campbell, nearly all of the Christians were friendly to Stone. Only a few wondered if Stone had apostasized in going to the "Campbellites." One correspondent asked Stone, "Have the Christians given up the old ground, or that on which they first came out in doctrine and practice, thirty years ago?" Stone replied,

No, they have not. The ground on which we then stood, was the Bible alone, as the only rule of faith and practice. This ground, we yet occupy. . . . But we have learned that controversy, and speculation on trinity, divine unity and many kindred doctrines, bewilder rather than edify; deaden rather than enliven; and please, rather than profit any.⁴

Stone sought to soften the opposition to the Reformers. He longed to defend them through heavy correspondence in the East, but lack of money that prevented his visiting the East, likewise, kept him from meeting "the heavy tax of postage."⁵ Stone lamented that the eastern Christians seemed more "engaged to destroy Campbellites than to save sinners."⁶ He "blushed for the Sectarian spirit" of the Christian Conference in Franklin County, Ohio, for excluding all favorable to the

³ *CP*, V (1836), 154.

⁴ *CM*, IX (1835), 41 f.

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

"views of A. Campbell."⁷ He hoped that Mr. Campbell would not condemn the whole body of Christians for the improper action of one conference. But Stone was to encounter mounting tension and widening cleavage between the Reformers and the non-cooperating Christians.

The Christians in the East continually boasted that they had no creed but the Bible, but their actions, to Stone, seemed inconsistent with this position. The word of God should not break the "peace of Christians and cause divisions." The Christians in substituting their opinions of Bible-truth "for the truth itself" destroyed unity.

Stone admitted that some of the Disciples or Reformers thundered against creeds when they themselves formed an unwritten "theory of notions" which was used as a yardstick to measure "the religion of others." Yet Stone could not understand why the eastern Christians did not campaign against the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, since such denominations were further away from beliefs of the Christians than the "Campbellites." He answered his own question by stating that history shows that "the persecuted become persecutors." He decried the harsh spirit of warfare among these two groups. "You entreat me to try to make peace," he wrote. "This I have labored to do, and will still labor while there remains any hope. But it is hard to convince men of error, who are determined to abide in it."⁸

Barton W. Stone's repeated attempts to mollify quibbling members of the Christian Connection are illustrated with the story of *The Disciples' Hymn-Book*. A Thomas Carr objected to the title *The Disciples' Hymn-Book*, which bore the names of B. W. Stone, A. Campbell, Walter Scott, and J. T. Johnson. He felt that Campbell was affixing the name "Disciple" to the western Christians with Stone's consent.⁹ Stone's answer went into details which historians have ignored. It had been agreed to issue a hymnal to consolidate "the union." The above-named four men were to meet at some central point to prepare the book. But while Stone and J. T. Johnson were waiting to be informed when and where to meet, Walter Scott went to Virginia, met Campbell, and made with him alone the selection of the hymns, sending only the galley sheets to Kentucky to be proofread by Stone and Johnson. Stone wrote,

⁷ *CM*, IV (1830), 275.

⁸ *CM*, IX (1835), 227.

⁹ *CM*, IX (1835), 225.

The first form was sent, having the title, *The Disciples' Hymn Book*, with all our names affixed. As soon as Bro. Johnson and myself saw the title of the book, and the prefaces, we determined to have nothing to do with it, and immediately wrote to Brother Campbell our determination. We received from him an answer that the first form of 6,000 sheets were printed off, and that it could not be easily altered. Brother Johnson and myself prevailed on Brother Fleming to go to Brother Campbell's in Virginia, and to bear our instructions to him, that if he would erase the title and substitute another, and if he would remove the prefaces, and insert certain hymns in our former Hymn book, our names might stand. Brother Campbell said it would spoil the book to remove the prefaces, but that he would alter the title.¹⁰

The prefaces were not changed and some hymns that Stone favored were not included, but Campbell did alter the title. However, some had already been sent to Scott, who issued them without altering the title. Scott later changed the title of the hymnals he published, but never gave a reason for refusing to alter the title of the first numbers he issued.¹¹ Lesser men than Johnson and Stone would have ceased to cooperate with Walter Scott and Alexander Campbell for such high-handed conduct.

Stone's most diligent labor to bring together the Reformers and the Christians in the East, centered in the attempt to change the stand of the *Christian Palladium*. Both Joseph Badger and Joseph Marsh, who succeeded Badger as editor of the *Palladium*, used "poison pens" against Alexander Campbell and the Reformers. Stone tried desperately to alter their attitude. An example of Stone's approach is found in his first letter to Badger written from Jacksonville, Illinois, May, 1835:

Brother Badger:—From the *Christian Palladium*, edited at Union Mills, Montgomery County, N. Y., I find you have unsheathed the sword in war against Campbellism. May God speed your efforts in cutting down and destroying every ism, not recognized in the scriptures. But would it not be well to be guarded, lest while you root up the tares, you root up the wheat also. Your thoughts on combatting popery well apply to the combat in which you are now engaged, and it is hoped will correct any aberration from right. Take the sword of the Spirit.¹²

¹⁰ *CM*, IX (1835), 226.

¹¹ Stone said that he never had any pecuniary interest in the hymnal because he had no money to bear his "part of the expense."

¹² *CM*, IX (1835), 106.

Stone recognized that there are three groups of men who disturb society. He described the narrow-minded exclusionists, the infallible oracles, and those who have more zeal than knowledge. Such men had made life miserable for Stone, but he did not find many of these among the Reformers. Stone regarded Campbell as not infallible, but assured Badger that he was a great and good man and a Christian. The fact that he did not agree with all of Campbell's opinions did not interfere with their Christian fellowship.

We ourselves agree not on every point with brother Campbell, and he in the same points, differs from us. What then? Shall we not fraternize? Shall we not unite as Christians? Shall we quarrel about our difference of opinion like the world before us? Shall we love each other less? No. We are determined that diversity of opinion shall not be a bar to Christian fellowship. I stand on the old ground, the Bible, to acknowledge everyone to be my brother, sister, and mother, who does the will of my Father, who is in Heaven. To do otherwise is antiscriptural and sectarian; from which may the Lord preserve us all.¹³

Stone wanted to place Christian fellowship on a broad basis. He admitted that some of Campbell's friends over-emphasized baptism, but did not think that any held that it is "the only instituted duty of God" for the unconverted man. As for himself he rejected the doctrine that there was not remission of sins without immersion. Stone assured Badger that he believed in the "operation of the spirit," but did not wish to contend about the mode of its operation. Stone concluded with a plea to cease wrangling and to contend for biblical religion, which is "love, peace and union." He assured the eastern Christians that they in the West were willing to extend their union "with Calvinists and Arminians, who believe in, obey, and love our Lord Jesus Christ, irrespective of their opinions."¹⁴

Stone here made it clear that, for the sake of union, he was willing to hold fellowship even with Calvinists, provided they did not make Calvinism a norm of Christian unity. He had reached the place where unity meant more to him than doctrines. Badger, in reply, stated that union was desirable, but that he thought there was better prospect for union with Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists¹⁵ than with Disci-

¹³ *CM*, IX (1835), 108 f.

¹⁴ *CM*, IX (1835), 111.

¹⁵ *CP*, VI (1838), 315.

ples who believe in "Baptismal regeneration."¹⁶ Badger admired the spirit of Stone, but thought that Campbell had opened the "floodgate of error" on revivals and baptism. He called on Campbell to renounce the Catholic and Episcopal views of regeneration, if his reform was to be more favorably considered.¹⁷

If the Disciples will come out and frankly disclaim baptism as the "sine qua non," or regeneration of the gospel; if they will place it where the Scriptures do, in the church, to be observed by Christians; if they will acknowledge the operations of the spirit of God upon the hearts of the wicked as a reprove, and upon the hearts of the saints as a comforter . . . if they will allow wicked men to pray, to ask for, pardon . . . they will occupy a very different place in Christendom. . . .¹⁸

Badger further sought to convince Stone that they would never compromise with Campbell's "base counterfeit reform" which spread "disorder, anarchy and ruin" in the churches.

Stone was disappointed that Badger had closed the door to union. He thought that Badger had misinterpreted his own position with regard to Campbell. He saw Campbell as "a great man and a pious Christian," but he was not prepared to go the whole length of Campbell's reform—nor of Luther's, nor of Wesley's, nor of any man's since the apostles. He denied that he accepted baptismal regeneration or believed that the Spirit operated independently of the Scriptures. The Spirit might come prior to baptism, but the promise of the Spirit according to the Word of God, came through faith in the Word, and obedience to it. Stone attempted to steer a middle course between the Calvinism which asserted that men must wait for the Spirit to act, and the "activism" of the extreme Reformers who taught that the Spirit is unnecessary. Stone enjoined Badger to join him in practicing "forbearance, brotherly love and unity." Badger did not reply, but gave his letter to a subordinate who expressed veneration for Stone. However, he felt that Campbell was returning to the "dark ages of dead formality" as a "grave-digger of vital piety and spirituality."

Badger and Campbell were usually content to attack one another indirectly, but once they met in direct collision. Campbell in the *Millennial Harbinger* of December, 1836, attacked Badger whom he called "a

¹⁶ CP, VI (1838), 344.

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁸ CP, VI (1838), 345.

redoubtable captain, who sails sometimes under this flag, and sometimes under that." He promised to give more attention to Badger, but the latter's stinging reply silenced him. Badger had touched a sensitive spot with regard to Campbell's unsuccessful invasion of New England. Badger had opposed it and now recalled the visit, which Campbell "probably" thought "was in a measure forgotten." "The report of his New England visit," wrote Badger, "is held in utter contempt by all with whom we have conversed on the subject, and we presume it weighs heavily on his [Campbell's] conscience."¹⁹

Stone's task of reconciling Badger and Campbell, two rugged and outspoken individualists, was not an easy one. It is hardly surprising that he failed to bring these two men and their followers together. Nor did Stone have any better success with Joseph Marsh, a later editor of the *Christian Palladium*.

The Christians launched a counter-attack against the defection of their churches to the "Campbell-Reformer" movement. By 1836, they rejoiced over the successful counter-reformation in most of the country except Kentucky. In New England it was noticed that the seeds of "Discipleism" had not taken root. The editor of the *Palladium* urged his readers in New York and New England to remain on guard against the "empty, spiritless theory" of Campbellism "though it may extol baptism to the heavens and break the loaf every first day of the week."²⁰

In Ohio, Elder Matthew Gardner had noted in 1834 that Campbell's movement was causing uncharitableness, spiritual death, and neglect of prayer. Two years later Gardner sent in fifty new subscriptions to the *Christian Palladium* which pledged him its support to "save the churches from the *anarchy, delusion, division, and death*, which Mr. Campbell's theory is promoting."²¹ Gardner, in reply, was happy to observe that "The clouds and fog of Mr. Campbell's theory have been scattering and breaking away in this country."²² Elder H. Barber, writing from Jacksonville, Ohio, in 1838 confirmed this report, stating that the "dark cloud" of Campbellism which had threatened western Ohio with certain death was "beginning to pass away."²³

¹⁹ CP, VII (1838), 89.

²⁰ CP, VI (1837), 190.

²¹ CP, V (1836), 46.

²² CP, V (1836), 61.

²³ CP, VII (1838), 111.

The battle had been fierce between the Reformers and the non-cooperating Christians in Ohio. One correspondent readily admitted this fact in 1839 when he wrote that the disorganizing influence of Mr. Campbell had "nearly proved our destruction as a people."²⁴ An assertion of the Reformers that more than two hundred members had withdrawn from the Christian Connection in Genesee County, New York, brought forth a denial from Badger, who called the Reformers there "Mr. Campbell's runners, proclaimers, pedlars, and apes."²⁵

In the light of all of this violent name-calling and confusion of charges and countercharges, it is remarkable that Stone still attempted to bring these two groups together in unity. Only a man of deep dimensions of faith and pioneering courage could have kept the "polar Star" of unity in view amid such disunity and crossfire.

The *Christian Palladium* noted that the successful effects of their counterattack against the Reformers irritated Alexander Campbell and S. E. Shepherd (1801-1877), who "stop at no slander which they can invent against us." The *Palladium* pointed out that the Reformers had seen their counterattack "reform" checked.

in Indiana and Illinois, nearly routed in Ohio, quite vanquished in Canada, trampled under foot in New York and hooted out of Massachusetts; and Mr. Shepherd appears nearly raving. In December, 1836, Mr. Campbell promised to give us what we deserved; or to bestow some attention on us next year; but he neglected us.²⁶

Only in Kentucky did the *Christian Palladium* see cause for pessimism. As late as 1834, David Millard had visited Stone in Georgetown, Kentucky, and reported large and growing Christian churches. He reported that the ministers were talented, and that in four surrounding counties the Christian churches had estimated having three thousand accessions in nine months. But in 1838, the *Christian Palladium* acknowledged that "Mr. Campbell's Reform," had prostrated their churches and conferences.²⁷

The fact that the counter-reformation of the non-cooperating Christians was successful, except in Kentucky, gave the *Christian Palladium*

²⁴ *CP*, VII (1839), 379.

²⁵ *CP*, VI (1837), 24 f.

²⁶ *CP*, VII (1838), 217.

²⁷ *CP*, IX (1841), 266.

increased confidence. Stone always maintained the respect of the Christians in the East, but they were saddened because he did not oppose "Campbellism" more vigorously. Matthew Gardner in 1838, wrote to Joseph Badger observing that Abner Jones and others in the East had not remained neutral, but had stood like faithful watchmen upon the walls of Zion. "O! that our dear old brother Stone had done so in the West. If he had, I believe that hundreds who are now divided would now be living in love and union, but perhaps it is all for the best."²⁸

By this time the counter-reformation had been so successful against Campbellism that the *Christian Palladium* doubted that Stone's influence would be significant any longer. The editor of the *Palladium* greeted Stone's announcement that he would renew publication of the *Christian Messenger* with doubt that it "will again be able to guide the destinies of the Christian Church, as it was once in its power to do." The *Palladium* hoped that Stone would continue to be a messenger for peace and union, but longed that his paper defend the Christians "against every encroachment which may threaten their order, spirit, doctrine, or name." The real difficulty was seen in the *Palladium's* statement:

Did not Elder Stone's fervent desire for Christian union, especially with the "Disciples," cause him to accede certain points, and leave others undefended, until many of our brethren, ministers, and Churches left their old ground and sought a union on the exclusive terms of the Disciples? Hence, Conferences have been dissolved, Churches disbanded, and the Christian name surrendered.²⁹

Though the *Christian Palladium* now doubted that Stone would be of much value to their cause, as late as 1839 Joseph Marsh, its new editor, wrote to Stone requesting him to finish the volume of sermons first requested for publication by Joseph Badger. Stone, in reply, stated that he was "a poor sermon writer," never having written "a half dozen" in his life. Though he had made considerable progress in the work, he left it unfinished because he "could not please" himself. Stone expressed his disappointment that unity between the Reformers and the Christians was growing less likely. "I am grieved, Brother Marsh," he wrote,

²⁸ CP, IX (1840), 20.

²⁹ CP, VIII (1840), 283.

at the course you and the Reformers (better known by you as Campbellites) have taken, one against the other. Blame equally attaches to both parties. Had you both cultivated more of forbearance, and charity, the wide gulph [sic] between you might have disappeared. Christian union is my polar star. Here I stand as unmoved as the Allegany [sic] mountains, nor can anything drive me hence.⁸⁰

Stone suggested a convention between the two groups to attempt reconciliation. "If we were to meet in a Christian spirit, I should not despair of union on the Bible." Stone called the Reformers a precious people, but recognized that they "have their failings like you [The Christians] and all." He felt that the Reformers were too "precise and dogmatic." Campbell's recent articles on "Our Name" were an example. On the other hand, he pointed out that Marsh and the eastern Christians were in danger of returning to the doctrines of Calvinism in their over-emphasis on the work of the Spirit in awakening the "dead sinner." Stone's attempt to introduce a mediating position between the Reformers and the Christians is seen in his comment that some make the Word of God "useless lumber" while others raise it so high as to "supersede the work of the Spirit entirely." Stone, of whom David Millard had written, "He needs only to be known to be beloved," sought to introduce unity on a different plane than the doctrinal.

Stone pressed Joseph Marsh to outline the objections he and the eastern brethren had to the Reformers as a people. Marsh was willing to open his columns to Stone if he did not furnish "disquisitions" on the peculiar doctrines of the "Disciples." Marsh alluded to a previous attempt to form a permanent union when the eastern brethren sent messengers to the West, but

our friendly visits were not returned; our conferences were opposed, and finally our offers for union were rejected; this was virtually, if not officially, the case. You have gone over to the Disciples; have become one with them; they are close communionists; hence we are debarred from their communion. You being one with them, we cannot of course unite with you, unless we leave our old ground, follow your steps, and become "Disciples," according to the rule laid down by Mr. Campbell. This we cannot do.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *CP*, VIII (1840), 286.

⁸¹ *CP*, X (1841), 9 f.

Stone assured Marsh that he did not wish to defend the "Disciples," but that the one "great object of his heart" was to unite the Christians in the East and West.

I do not only desire the union of the Christians of the East and West of the *same name*; but also with Christians of every name under heaven—the name *Christian* does not make a Christian in deed and in truth, if so, I would desire union with more who did not wear this name; but many are called Christians who are unworthy of the name; and many are called by party-names who are Christians indeed, and who are worthy of the name of their Lord.³²

Stone believed that Marsh, who had criticized the "Disciples" for legalism on the subject of baptism, had become legalistic on the question of the name church members should wear. He accused Marsh of making the name the *sine qua non* of Christian union. Though Stone felt that the name "Christian" had been given by divine authorization, he was unwilling to make it a barrier to Christian fellowship. Stone stated that unity transcends all names! He felt that they were harmoniously united with the Disciples in Christian love. Though he was grieved that "they have taken another name; yet this shall not dissolve our Christian union."³³

Stone denied that his followers left the Bible to unite with "close communionists." The Disciples neither "invite nor debar," but gave a general invitation to the Lord's people. The fact that there might be some close communionists among the Reformers was not sufficient reason for refusing to love and unite with them. Stone felt that his group had left no old ground, but that the Reformers had come to occupy the same biblical ground and that they had no right to push the "Reformers" off. He agreed that all should stand on the ground of "purity of heart and uprightness of character" as the norm of Christian unity, but felt that Marsh in refusing union with the Disciples judged them "as destitute of a pure heart, uprightness of character and of any evidence of God's having received them."³⁴

Marsh did not regard Stone's reply as adequate, especially in regard to the charge that they had gone over to the Reformers. Wearily, Stone

³² *CM*, XI (1841), 338.

³³ *CM*, XI (1841), 339.

³⁴ *CM*, XI (1841), 342.

again denied that in uniting with the Reformers they had capitulated to doctrines of the Christians. "Would you," he asked Marsh, "have stood aloof, and excluded them from Christian union and fellowship?"

Stone then took up the charge that the western Christians had failed to cooperate with messengers sent by the eastern Christians. Stone replied that "We were poor, and not able to bear the expense of so long a journey. Yet, our brethren, Kinkade, Lane, Thomas, and others did visit you and abode a long time with you."³⁵ Stone admitted that one eastern representative summoned a conference for all in the West to attend, but that none attended because none acknowledged his authority. Though the church was the "highest tribunal," the eastern Christians apparently placed more stress on conferences and conventions. Stone asked,

Did we reject offers of Christian Union—the union of which the Bible speaks? No; never. Is it to reject Christian union, because we cannot unite in your district conferences—your general conferences, etc.—and aid in drawing up many *Resolves*, what the churches must do, and what the preachers must do, etc. My brother, and such as think with him, may act as they see proper; but do not reject us because we cannot act in these things with you. . . .³⁶

Stone attempted to bring extremists among both the Reformers and the eastern Christians to common ground. He appealed to dogmatists in both camps to practice brotherly love. He tried to meet the objections of the eastern Christians to the merger, but the two groups had reached the point of repeating the same circle of arguments. Stone near the end of the bickering between strong individualistic personalities grew weary. His valedictory letter to Marsh indicated that the two groups could not unite on continuing argumentation.

I am grieved, brother Marsh, to see such an unchristian temper manifested by you, and others against the Christians of the West. While this temper exists, all hopes of Christian union vanish. . . . I bid all my Eastern Brethren farewell. I die, and shall see you no more, till we meet at the judgment seat. I leave you with love, and hope to meet you all in the same spirit in a better world, where partyism will forever cease. It is better for us to err

³⁵ *CM*, XI (1841), 420.

³⁶ *Loc. cit.*

on the side of charity. Take from your old brother a last word of advice. Little children, love one another and see that you fall not out by the way.⁸⁷

Essentially, Stone was different from both the Reformers and the Disciples, on the subject of Christian unity. They were never able to transcend doctrinal controversy. The fear that one group might impose its beliefs on the other, was always present. Personalities entered into the editorial columns of both the *Christian Palladium* and the *Millennial Harbinger*. Stone cast himself in the role of a peacemaker, who appealed to these groups to transcend their conflicts. But all his attempts to lift the level of discussion into the realm of faith and trust failed.

Interpreters of the Christian Connection group have had great affection for Stone. But some regarded him as a heretic who departed from the original ground of the reformation when he united with the Reformers. Others held that he never left the Christian churches because he never fully agreed with Campbell. Still another viewpoint, represented by W. A. Harper, maintained that Stone had a working agreement with the Reformers but later

withdrew from this "union" and returned to the fellowship of the Christian Church in which he died, having removed to the State of Illinois, where he continued to be a leader in the Christian Movement, founding many Christian Churches in that state.⁸⁸

J. F. Burnett, in 1921, wrote a pamphlet in which he discussed the question of Stone's church membership. The title of the booklet is, *Rev. B. W. Stone: Did He Join the Disciples of Christ?* Burnett maintained that the question of membership was important, since it involved "a fundamental principle of the two bodies of believers." Burnett held that Stone never "joined" the Disciples of Christ, but that the Christians and the Reformers united. His argument is based primarily on quotations taken from the *Christian Palladium* and the *Christian Messenger* which state that the two groups did not give up their identity, but united on a common basis.

Actually, the whole question cannot be solved on the basis of Stone's joining a church, or criticizing either group. He criticized all extremists who placed doctrinal uniformity above cooperation. When the union

⁸⁷ *CM*, XII (1842), 210 f.

⁸⁸ W. A. Harper, *The Genius of the Christian Church* (Elon, N. C.: Elon College, 1929), p. 40.

between the Christians and the Reformers took place, he was not conscious of either adding to his doctrinal beliefs or subtracting from them. Unity was more important to him than doctrinal discussion. He had learned to live in another atmosphere where forensics were unimportant. Often he pleaded with the people he attempted to unite

. . . let tenderness, brotherly love, and forbearance be exercised one towards the other—let piety, justice, and mercy be cultivated by us all. Then will be effected the union of Christians in the truth—then will be answered the prayers of all the saints.³⁹

A little later he stated

The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us will more effectively unite than all the wisdom of the world combined. Endeavor to walk in peace and love with all.⁴⁰

Stone felt that the two groups were on "the same foundation" and united as "one people." Neither group merged itself into the other group. The Christians did not become Reformers; the Reformers did not become Christians. They really needed only to formalize a unity which already existed, though many in their debates seemed not to be conscious of its existence.

From the moment the first union of local churches became an accomplished fact in Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1832, Stone hoped that all churches of the Christians and Reformers would follow in their train. He longed that union would spread like a prairie fire. When "hotheads," in both the Reformer and Christian camps, refused to be guided by his "polar star" of unity, Stone assumed the role of a peacemaker. He earnestly entreated both groups to forget their differences and become one united people. But he was never able to disperse all of the clouds, and consequently his dream of unity was dimmed in the last years of his life. He did not reach what may be termed a modern ecumenical point of view, but he placed the basis of unity on a high level, reaching ultimately the point of offering to hold fellowship with Arminians and Calvinists, Reformers and Christians, provided they did not make any doctrine an absolute test of fellowship. He urged that Christian love replace bitterness and strife. Stone believed to the end that Christian charity and trust should transcend doctrinal beliefs as the norm of Christian unity and fellowship.

³⁹ *CM*, V (1831), 20 f.

⁴⁰ *CM*, V (1831), 185.

CHAPTER XIII

BARTON W. STONE AS AN AMERICAN LEFT-WING PROTESTANT

A NUMBER OF REFERENCES have been made to Stone as a left-wing Protestant. The assumption is that he exemplified some of the main characteristics of "left-wing" Protestants who along with "right-wing" Protestants were transplanted to the American Colonies. The "left-wing" type in America took on characteristics which differentiated it from the same type which existed in Europe, and, in time, a distinctly American pattern of "left-wing" protestantism developed. Stone is part of this movement. His religious conflicts with the Presbyterians and his attempts to spread the idea of church unity were rooted in the western society which gave rise to his movement. Some of the doctrinal aspects of his movement stem back to left-wing sects of the Reformation, but they were conditioned by the cultural and political conditions existing in the frontier states such as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois.

Right-wing protestantism in Protestant Europe during the seventeenth century became more institutionalized than it did in Colonial America. Both wings of protestantism were transplanted to the American Colonies, and up to 1660 the majority of the religious bodies in the Colonies were obedient offshoots of the dominant religious bodies in Protestant Europe. After 1660, however, left-wing protestantism became stronger and by the end of the Colonial period American protestantism was thoroughly penetrated by the left-wing groups. The development of these groups was furthered by favorable conditions of freedom which permitted a large degree of self-determination. In America, it has been observed, "the left-wing of the Reformation came to its completion and fulfillment."¹

¹ William Warren Sweet, "Protestantism in American History," in *Protestantism*, ed. W. K. Anderson (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1944), p. 100.

Reference has already been made to the conflict between East and West which has so profoundly influenced the development of religious life in the United States. The established mercantile East came into conflict with the changing agricultural West. This conflict created not only different economic and social practices, but also a definite religious schism. In the West, a typical religious expression had its origin. The result was that many denominations arose, bearing definite "western" characteristics. And even the more settled denominations were changed somewhat by their advent in the West. On the other hand, religion in the East tended to follow the features of the right-wing pattern. Its policy was more conservative and its intellectual life more static, its ethics reflected the needs of a commercial society, and its ritual followed somewhat fixed patterns.

Religion in the West tended to reflect the character of a new, expansive, and freedom-loving society. Many of the features of religion found among the disinherited were discernible in the faith of western people.² The desire for companionship among the frontiersmen, the lack of formal education, and the hard, rough life necessary to sustain physical existence encouraged emotional revivals. The religion of the frontier expressed the desire for immediate religious experience. The new political and economic opportunities set in motion aspirations for similar freedom in religion. The westerner's dislike of control over his political and economic life made him favor preaching by lay men, or by men whose cultural attainments were not great. Furthermore, the voluntaristic character of the frontier church organizations conformed with the freedom of the social structures. Frontier life encouraged freedom from social restraints. Drinking, gambling, profanity, and violation of Sabbath observance abounded. Revivals under these circumstances were true rivals of "these inhibitions which had been only partly overcome in a generation or two of frontier life and which continued in their suppression to foster a sense of guilt beneath the brave front of carelessness."³ The influence of the frontier on doctrinal beliefs is not clear since the lines tend to criss-cross. On the whole, western freedom tended to support Arminianism rather than predestinarian Calvinism, though both types of doctrine seemed to flourish

² Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 141.

³ Niebuhr, *op. cit.* p. 143.

on the frontier. However, it would seem that in the long run the frontier definitely modified the emphasis of Calvinism, so that a man like Stone, thirty years after his initial protest against popular Calvinism, could find little in Presbyterian preaching to condemn.

A frequent observation is that all churches were at one time sects. Certainly all of the churches of America have lived at some time on the frontier and have been influenced by it. The established churches that moved from Europe to America "have tended to become sects," and with the passing of the frontier, the sects have tended to become institutionalized churches. The Protestant Episcopal Church, the Congregationalism of New England, and the Presbyterian Church have tended to resist the influence of the frontier. The Methodists and Baptists found the frontier excellent territory in which to expand. In fact the Methodists and the Baptists with the Disciples of Christ have been called "the outstanding examples of frontier religion."⁴

The Disciples of Christ, which owed their origin and early development more to Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell than to any other men, were indigenous to American pioneer soil. All of the movements which united to form the Disciples' stream originated in frontier or near-frontier communities in New England, the West, and the South. Like the Baptists and Methodists, the Disciples had leaders who used the methods of the revival, stressed immediacy in religious experience, used clergymen of meager intellectual training, and organized churches on the left-wing principle. They differed from the Methodists and Baptists in their attempt to overcome denominationalism by rejecting "human creeds" and seeking church unity on a biblical basis. The Methodists and Baptists started earlier than the Disciples, and experienced greater growth and aggressiveness. One reason for the relative lack of expansion is that the Disciple movement was "representative of a West which had passed the storm and stress period of social adolescence . . . without having lost the characteristic features the formative years had impressed upon it."⁵ Again, its emphasis on revivalism tended to decrease as the "Reformers" of Alexander Campbell gained leadership and frontier conditions passed. Furthermore, the stress on Christian unity tended to make it a "proselytizing sect" which

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

appealed to dissatisfied members of the other religious communions who either sincerely wished to see more unity among the churches, or longed for a combative group unafraid of challenging the pretensions of all other churches.

The early leaders of the Disciples were men who reflected "left-wing protestantism" which had been radically changed by the American frontier. This change embraced not only their methods of expansion, but some of their doctrinal emphases as well. The Disciples embraced people of many traditions who had been molded by the West. Both Stone and Campbell were Presbyterians from a church representative of much that entered into the Disciples' stream. Barton Stone was more of a child of the frontier than Alexander Campbell. As a "left-wing Protestant," he more accurately portrayed the way the frontier changed left-wing characteristics.

The nature of the transformation worked by Stone, the Disciples, and the American frontier, becomes clear on examination of the early sects.

Lines are not easily drawn, but "left-wing" Protestants of the sixteenth century, chronologically, have been specified in the following order: the Zwickau prophets who introduced individualistic norms of authority; Thomas Muentzer who combined mysticism, sectarianism, and social revolution; the Swiss Anabaptists who favored a moral quality of Christianity which led them to separate the church from the community as a whole; the Melchiorites who turned to "extravagant eschatology"; the Mennonites in the Netherlands who repudiated force; the Hutterites in Moravia, who favored religious communism; the Schwenckfelders, who sought "to recapture the piety of the early church," and the Socinians, who clung to "social, religious and intellectual radicalism."⁶

Professor Roland H. Bainton has enumerated four marks of these radical sects of the sixteenth century: (1) the ethical idea of a pure church, (2) Christian primitivism which sought to restore either biblical literalism or "the spirit of the Apostles," (3) a heightened sense of eschatology, (4) the demand for separation of church and state.⁷

⁶ Roland H. Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," in *The Journal of Religion*, XXI (April, 1941), 125 f.

⁷ Charles S. Braden has enumerated six distinctions between a sect and a

Barton W. Stone at some period in his life manifested all of these characteristics to some degree, although the characteristics of his left-wing protestantism did not always take the same form or emphasis which they assumed in Europeans of the sixteenth century.

In the first place, the ethical ideal of a pure church which was characteristic of left-wing protestantism was relatively strong in Stone. Long before him the left wing of the Protestant Reformation had accused the Lutheran Reformation of a primary moral defect. Some critics had laid the blame on doctrines. They had believed that the doctrine of justification by faith disparaged good works and that the doctrine of predestination severed the nerve of ethical action. Others among the left-wing group denied that these doctrines were responsible for moral failure. The difficulty, according to them, lay in the latitudinarian theory of the church which included all of the baptized. They felt that inner commitment and good works should be the norm of church membership.

Stone, further, was alarmed by lax moral conditions on the frontier. He protested against what he called "deism." He, like some of the early left-wing groups, believed that ethically bad moral conditions were caused by the doctrines of Calvinism which had been "hardened" by extremists. He believed that "predestination" was responsible for the religious inactivity he witnessed everywhere in his community. His reaction itself was conditioned by the freedom of a frontier society in America where men were suddenly freed from the restraints of settled communities as found in the East. Their pleasures were frequently coarse, and their general irresponsibility alarmed the frontier ministers. Stone laid much of the blame on the doctrine of predestination. He failed to understand that a belief in predestination frequently stimulated the good works of those who regarded themselves as the elect. He showed little understanding of the social causes which lay back of the moral excesses among the frontier people.

denomination. Sects are likely (1) to have specific points of emphasis, (2) to be small, (3) to be local or regional, (4) to have an untrained ministry, (5) to lack many educational or eleemosynary institutions, and (6) to be not very cooperative with the church as a whole. Here again, the lines criss-cross, so that this classification may hold in some cases and not in others. See Charles S. Braden, "The Sects" in *Organized Religion in the United States*, (The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 256, March, 1948).

Stone also rejected infant baptism and placed great stress on the response of the believer to the Gospel. In the long struggle between those who had thought of the church in terms of the leaven rather than the lump, the moral rather than the sacramental, the holy rather than the catholic, he favored the former. His concept of the church was what Troeltsch characterized as "sectarian" rather than "churchly."

"Religious apathy" is the term Stone frequently used to describe the irreligion in the Cane Ridge and Concord communities. He believed that the ethical failure of the people was caused by the presentation of a theology that was involved in logical contradiction. He did not sense that these particular doctrines simply did not meet the needs of frontier folk. A visit in recent times to Cane Ridge, for example, vividly reveals the physical isolation which made religious emotional stimulation desirable at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Stone's old teacher, Henry Patillo, had encouraged the young seminarians to break with the theologians across the "Atlantick" and to blaze new trails in theological thinking. He had little interest in the aberrations of the "New Testament literalists" of the left-wing groups. He did look for a restoration of baptism by immersion. Even so, he did not favor a legalistic pattern which had been required by some Anabaptists, and was adopted by many members of "Christians" and "Reformers" in Kentucky. He did not exclude the unimmersed from Christian fellowship.

As noted, the second of the characteristics of the radical sects of the sixteenth century we have seen to be "Christian primitivism which sought to restore either biblical literalism or 'the spirit of the Apostles.'"

The "restoration of primitive Christianity and the spiritual new birth were practically synonymous for the Anabaptists."⁸ Stone and his followers were called "New Lights." Immediately following the Great Revival, Stone seemed to put some stress on the "gift of the Spirit." Along with the men who formed the Springfield Presbytery, and in the tradition of the left-wing group, he stressed the inner light which helped men to interpret the Scriptures.

Later, Stone stressed reason as being sufficient to aid men in interpreting the Scriptures. Reason, however, may have corresponded to this "inner light." Stone was careful to state that the inner light is al-

⁸ Bainton, *op. cit.*

ready possessed by every man. Man needed no "miraculous intervention" to aid him to discover the truth in the Scriptures.

The primary work of the Spirit for Stone was not to give religious knowledge, but to work moral transformation in people. When the "Disciples," prompted by Walter Scott, a leading evangelist, used the five finger exercises, Stone adopted the plan.⁹ Stone believed that the gift of the Spirit frequently followed prayer, before men were baptized.

Stone's experience with the "Great Revival in the West" was too deeply rooted for him to ignore the work of the Spirit. Alexander Campbell and some of the Reformers had had little firsthand experience with revivals, but Stone had seen lives spiritually transformed in them. He could not accept a mechanical "plan of salvation" which seemed to be too literalistic. Primitivism, in the sense of finding a gospel in the New Testament which the sixteenth century Reformers had overlooked, was accepted by Stone. Yet, he was hesitant to make sweeping claims for the "new reformation." He never was able to claim that the Gospel had been hidden since the time of the apostles and had appeared again only with the nineteenth century movement.

The note of a "Sermon-on-the-Mount" primitivism was strong in Stone. He interpreted many of its precepts in a literal fashion, as some left-wing Protestants had previously done. In a day of violent religious controversy in a section of the country that debated public questions with considerable feeling, Stone preached humility and love. He embodied "good will" in his own personal life in such a way that even his severest critics seemed to acknowledge that he was something of a saint. These qualities of personal piety were rooted in a life-long desire to achieve perfection. Stone adopted a goal of discipline towards perfection through a strenuous "diet and study program" in school. He attempted to practice the virtues of humility, sacrifice, and patience all of his days. He loved harmony, and the goal of peaceful relations among men, especially Christians, encouraged him to reject controversy, bickering, and quarreling in the churches.

The third dominant note characteristic of many left-wing Protestants

⁹ The five steps used by both Stone and Scott were faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit. Confession, as a sixth step, was a later development in the Christian churches.

was "a heightened sense of eschatology." This note appears in Stone to some extent, but frontier life caused it to assume a form different from its appearance in early left-wing protestantism. The "millennial" movement did not assume large proportions until Stone's active career was nearly over. He never adapted it to fit into his plans as did Alexander Campbell.¹⁰ Nor did the literalists who used the books of Daniel and Revelation seem to have any importance for Stone. He did not think of an imminent divine event which would shatter the pattern of history. At times he believed that the signs of the age might lead to the conclusion that the end of things was near, but he refused to set dates or become involved in extensive speculation concerning it.

Stone sounded two notes in such a way that they did not encourage the old type of eschatology. One of these was the revival, which he believed in its early days would "sweep everything before it." When it had spent its force, he blamed the opposition of the Presbyterians for its decline. The revival had divine approval, but he opposed the belief that God sent revivals on some communities and withheld them from others who longed for them. If men had simply given up predestination and "human creeds" he believed that revivals would have reappeared on an extraordinary scale.

The other note was Stone's "Christian unity" emphasis which distinguished him from other left-wing groups in America. "Christian unity," like the revivals, was a goal to be achieved by the cooperation of man. All movements of moral reform, missionary expansion, and anti-papalism, to be truly effective, must wait on the "unity of Christian peoples." The movement for Christian unity must take precedence over all other emphases. The doctrine of "the coming kingdom" for Stone in the nineteenth century was the idea of unity among the followers of Christ. He believed that unity had to come before Christ could reign and before men could achieve their cherished reforms. The idea of unity of the church obviously was of gradual development, coming to fruition only after Stone was convinced that denominationism had ruined their revival efforts. Stone's idea of Christian unity, though advanced for his time, failed to approximate the modern ecumenical idea of church unity, because his stress was primarily on the

¹⁰ See Robert Frederick West, "Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion," Part III.

individual. He failed, therefore, to think of unity in terms of broad social groups. Certainly, the concept of institutional unity was not in his thinking.

Nowhere did frontier freedom affect the left-wing groups more than in the type of democratic religious organization they developed. The churches of both the Campbell and Stone persuasion tended to be "voluntaristic organizations." The episcopal and presbyterian types of organization were not regarded as "biblical." Frontier society was individualistic; many responded to the appeal for this kind of free religious organization.

Stone placed revelation ahead of reason and decried fine-spun theological reasoning. He claimed to have resorted to reasoning only against "unscriptural dogmas."¹¹ He himself became much involved in discussions on Christology and the atonement which were "heavy" for frontier people. Nevertheless he was willing to forego these "speculations" in favor of religious unity. The note of anti-intellectualism was clear in Stone's rejection of such doctrines as Trinitarianism and in frequent observations on educated "iceberg" preachers whose hearts were not warmed by the "spirit."

Though Stone favored revivals, he tended to reject "new birth theology" which required sudden invasions of the spirit. Rather there is more of the note of "mysticism" in his approach to conversion, which looked to the gradual fanning of the divine spark in man into full flame. Stone's theology did not look for upheaval, as much as a gradual springing up of new life and change in the individual man.

A fourth left-wing emphasis was stronger in Stone. He ultimately took an extreme position on the question of separation of church and state. Left-wing Protestants had tended to rule government out of the sphere of religion. They deplored persecution and heresy hunting. On the whole question Stone was as radical as many left-wing leaders. Martin Luther had said that the magistrate "is ordained of God and the Christian may be a magistrate."¹² The radicals of some left-wing groups recognized that the ruler is "ordained of God, but only among non-Christians. . . . The Christian must not participate in or avail

¹¹ This tendency also existed among some in the left-wing of the sixteenth century. See Bainton, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*

himself of the aids of government."¹⁸ Stone accepted the scriptural position that "the powers that be are ordained of God." He enjoined obedience to the civil authorities and the payment of taxes to the government. But he opposed participation on the part of Christians in government. He discouraged not only the holding of civil office by Christians, but also their voting for candidates in elections.

In the case of the early left-wing groups the reason for political non-participation was that "the church and the world do not mix." Christians must be as docile as sheep before wolves. Stone apparently had some of this attitude, but his position was obviously derived from his repugnance toward politicians on the frontier. Few lawyers were converted in the Great Revival at the turn of the century. Elections among the backwoodsmen were occasions for wild celebration and dissipation. McGready had violently denounced the colonels, soldiers, and members of Congress who used the Bible only to "make jests." Stone obviously agreed with this criticism. He made few references to governments and to political questions in the pages of the *Christian Messenger*, although some reference is made against participation in civil government.

Aside from the question of slavery Stone was almost silent on public questions. His stand against that institution was vigorous. His conscience was first stirred against it when he saw slaves horribly mistreated by their masters near Charleston, South Carolina. This was in 1798. His stand on slavery between this date and the publication of the *Christian Messenger* in 1826 is not known. The pages of the *Messenger*, however, were filled with quotations and brief statements against it, and he strongly favored the policy of the "colonization Society," whose program envisioned freedom for the Negroes and setting up colonies for them in Africa.

The political framework of the Jacksonian era, and the importance of the individual following the Revolutionary War, in the memory of Stone deeply influenced his stand for freedom. Tyranny anywhere in the world stirred him to denunciation. State control of religion was unthinkable. He feared that many sought to fasten the European system of "established religion" on Americans. His own position, as a member of a "despised" minority movement, made him suspicious of any majority, political or religious. Heresy hunting and heresy trials aroused

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

his opposition. Zeal for freedom of every kind was a part of his being.

The position of the new sect in the West, which drew members from all the other churches and whose "reformatory" pretensions undercut all other churches, aroused little sympathy. Concerted opposition developed against it. This opposition encouraged the rise of a "defensive" attitude on the part of Stone and his followers. Though he discouraged forensics, which Alexander Campbell favored, Stone adopted the attitude of the "heroic minority" which stood valiantly as did the early Christians "who were everywhere spoken against." Thus the left-wing attitude of standing as a "persecuted minority" before the elevated majority was present in Stone. He apparently pictured himself in the role of the "suffering leader" who had to endure hardship and discipline before his movement would succeed.

The sectarian note of "inner worldly asceticism" which applies in some measure to all Protestants was pronounced in Stone. It was intensified by his own struggle on the frontier to find an economic livelihood. His life was never easy. Perhaps this made him express some sympathy with the "disinherited."¹⁴ He never seemed to favor "religious communism," though he was reported to have had "brief sympathies" with Shakerism when it invaded frontier Kentucky, following the upheaval of "the Great Revival." Families who carpeted their homes in luxurious fashion, but who did not keep their Negro servants warm in the cold of winter, received his rebuke. In the *Biography of Stone* and in the *Christian Messenger* exist many references to the economic hardships under which Stone and his family labored. In these references one detects a note of complaint, but more of an overtone of joy in undergoing self-denial for the cause. The "cause" was always freedom and the unity of Christian people. Christian people ought to be willing to avoid luxury and to use their money for the evangelization of the world. All ought to practice self-denial for the sake of the "new reform."

Some of the old notes of left-wing groups which had appeared in the frontier Disciples' movement, modified by the particular environ-

¹⁴ This "social sympathy" seems to have been "individualistic" rather than social, which confirms an observation already made on the difference between the "moral ideals of the frontier and those of the religious poor." See Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 141 ff.

ment of the West, reappeared in other groups such as the Baptists and Methodists. Social forces in the West stamped a similar philosophy of individuality on these groups. The revival, the appeal to the emotions, the indifference to cultural background, the love of voluntary church organization, the reliance on immediacy in religious experience all represented the frontier spirit. In varying degrees the Methodists and Baptists, along with the followers of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell, combined these "frontier characteristics" with some of the primary marks of left-wing Protestant sects. The motifs: the ethical ideal of a pure church; Christian primitivism; heightened eschatology, and separation of church and state, introduced naturally by men who faced a different spirit and set of conditions than those confronted by left-wing Protestants in the sixteenth century.

One frontier tendency appeared in the movement of "the Christians and the Reformers" which did not arise in the Baptists and Methodists. This was the attempt to overcome the "divisions of denominationalism" by rejecting creeds and founding a united church on a biblical basis. Barton Stone in Kentucky in 1803, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell in 1809, apparently sought to remain in their respective Presbyterian churches. Doubtless this "native" American denomination would never have come into being had these men been granted more freedom by the over-rigid Presbyterian Church which failed to adjust itself to conditions brought about by the frontier. Confronted with the necessity of organizing a new religious movement in a new country, it is not surprising that the early leaders of the Disciples found a new idea to express in their program. Though the Baptists and Methodists were churches of the West, they did have prior European roots. The Disciples being "a true product of the West," had more opportunity for sounding a new note, apart from traditional expression of the Christian faith.

Alexander Campbell was, in his early days, more of a "sectarian" than in the later period of his life. His earlier sectarian tendencies began to pass over into "churchly" or denominational patterns. He soon began to favor not only the "distinctive traits" of the ancient gospel pattern, but also the organizational characteristics of a church. His idea of Christian cooperation seemingly broadened in that he openly ex-

pressed more charity toward other Christian people. His interest in political and social issues became more profound.

Stone, on the other hand, to the end maintained his left-wing tendencies in interpreting the Sermon on the Mount, and favoring radical and complete separation of church and state. His attitude toward the state was individualistic and not constructive. But his attitude toward the unity of the churches was never limited. He came ultimately to ask for a conference of all the American denominations to discuss unity. He rarely discussed unity from the standpoint of converting people to doctrinal positions, but rather believed that only the spiritual approach to unity would be the fruitful one. He was, finally, ready to let no doctrinal position divide the Christian community.

Perhaps the early experiences of Stone in hearing Methodists and Baptists preach in Virginia when they were persecuted, awakened his sympathies for people in other churches. Certainly working with many different denominations in the Great Revival at Cane Ridge gave him a practical interdenominational perspective different from that of Alexander Campbell, his colleague in the 1830's.

Left-wing protestantism in frontier America manifested a new spirit, emphasis, and method, differing, thus, radically from that in the Old World. Barton W. Stone was rooted firmly in this new left-wing protestantism. His emphases were similar in many ways to those of the frontier Methodists and Baptists, but differed at the point of seeking to overcome denominationalism by adopting a biblical basis of unity which ultimately transcended rigid doctrines to stress a spiritual basis of Christian unity. This was a new frontier tendency in a religious movement indigenous to the West.

CHAPTER XIV

STONE'S LAST DAYS; EVALUATION

BARTON WARREN STONE is a much neglected figure not only in the history of his own religious denomination, but also in the history of early American ecumenical beginnings.

The scarcity of materials makes it difficult to trace his life in chronological sequence. Large gaps in his story will doubtless always remain. In the beginning of this book, some of the biographical details of his early life were noted. Little is actually known of his personal life from 1810 to 1835. In 1810, his first wife died, leaving Stone with four children. He worked hard to eke out a livelihood which always seemed to be precarious. In 1811, he married his second wife, Celia Wilson Bowen. They lived two years near Nashville, Tennessee, before returning to Kentucky. In these intervening years there are only fragmentary glimpses of his home life. In Georgetown he published the *Christian Messenger* until 1832, the same year in which the Christians and Reformers met in Lexington, Kentucky. In that year, Stone visited in Jacksonville, Illinois. He was seeking a new home and a new territory for proclamation of his message. From 1830 to 1835 he bought lots in the town of Jacksonville and almost three hundred acres of land in the surrounding area.¹ Before leaving Kentucky in 1834, Stone was asked to give a valedictory message at the annual meeting of the Christian churches held at Leesburg. B. F. Hall, who reported Stone's address, gives a vivid picture of the parting of this leader from those who had labored so long with him. The "preaching brethren" who had profited by his instructions and example "embraced him and were loath to see him go." Hall wished that the sunset years of Stone's life might be as "serene and cloudless" as the morning had been "bright and useful."²

¹ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

² *CM*, VIII (1834), 295 f.

Jacksonville, to which Stone moved in September, 1834, was a frontier village on the "outskirts of civilized Illinois." However, it was a village containing "men of literary eminence and moral worth." Stephen A. Douglas began his residence in Jacksonville the same year as did Stone. Peter Cartwright, eminent Methodist circuit-rider, and Abraham Lincoln lived in near-by towns. To Jacksonville also came a number of young lawyers who were later to become prominent, including Herndon, the law partner of Abraham Lincoln.³

Though these were the years of marked physical decline, Stone continued his preaching, not only in Illinois, but also in Missouri, Indiana, and occasionally, in Ohio and Kentucky. The *Christian Messenger* was also moved from Georgetown, Kentucky, to Jacksonville, and though Stone apparently was unable to publish it regularly, he had a good subscription list in Jacksonville. In 1832 there were twenty-two subscribers taking the *Christian Messenger* from the Jacksonville post office in contrast to fifteen subscribers receiving Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger*.⁴

It is impossible to trace the later years of Stone's life, because the source materials are not available, but in addition to his preaching and editing of the *Christian Messenger*, it is known that his was an influential voice raised at the annual meetings of the Christian churches. For example, Stone gave five addresses at the annual meeting of Christian churches in Indiana held in Indianapolis, June 7-12, 1839. There were approximately one hundred and fifty churches represented at this meeting, with a membership of about ten thousand. On Sunday, the Methodist meetinghouse was filled to hear Stone preach. The convention unanimously adopted a resolution "requesting Elder Barton W. Stone to move to this state, should he find a location to please him; and promising all aid that the brethren present could afford, to sustain him in commencing here the re-publication of the *Christian Messenger*."⁵

During these years, Stone favored these meetings to worship, to strengthen the bonds of fellowship, to mark the growth of the move-

³ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

⁴ Frank J. Heintz, "Newspapers and Periodicals in the Lincoln-Douglas Country, 1831-1832." *Illinois State Historical Society journal*, Vol. XXIII, p. 371-438 (October 1930).

⁵ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

ment, to engage evangelists, and to make united efforts to spread this movement.

The last years of Stone's life were marked with a number of severe illnesses. However, he managed to continue his preaching and editing intermittently during the last eight years, maintaining his unflagging zeal for the unity of all of the followers of Christ. His mind was at times clouded, but when it was clear, his devotion to his lifelong passion, the unity of the Church, shone with the greater crystal clarity.

In the fall of 1836, he experienced a severe illness which continued for several weeks. At that time little hope was held for his recovery and he, himself, hoped that it would mark the end. He continued to attend annual meetings, though he became deaf and at times was absent-minded.⁶

In 1841 a paralytic stroke descended upon him, and Alexander Campbell, mentioning it in *The Millennial Harbinger* as the palsy, remarked it "is probable that ere now he has passed the Jordan and gone to rest."⁷ He recovered and lived for more than three years. Crippled in body, his mind regained its vigor. He resumed publishing the *Christian Messenger* with the assistance of David Pat Henderson in Jacksonville, Illinois.

Though he felt the pressure of his infirmities and desired to retire, in the spring of 1843 he wrote a brief autobiography. It takes less than one hundred pages, but as C. C. Ware has stated, the book reflects a "charming simplicity." This log of a frontier preacher has an "enduring vitality."⁸

In those fleeting sunset months, Stone took two tours, the last of which ended in his death. The first journey lasted for three months and brought him to Indiana and Ohio. In New Paris, Ohio, he exchanged reminiscences with David Purviance, one of the signers with Stone of the "Last Will of the Springfield Presbytery." Stone then visited Mrs. Mary Anne H. Moore, a daughter, who lived near Lexington, Kentucky. Twice he visited Cane Ridge, scene of the great revival stirrings at the turn of the century. Again he relived the sense of Christian fellowship at Cane Ridge, which enabled clergy and laity of many churches and beliefs to labor together in oneness of spirit. With these

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315 f.

⁷ *MH* (1841), 538.

⁸ Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

memories of some of the most dramatic days in the history of revivalism stirring in his mind, he left Kentucky for Jacksonville, Illinois.⁹

He wrote his will October 2, 1844 in Jacksonville, Illinois. He ended it praying for his children to "live in peace and assist each other in distress; above all that they prepare to meet their God." The day following the writing of his will, Stone left on his last journey. His pioneering spirit was still restless. To Missouri he went to attend an annual district meeting which was held October 8-21, 1844, three miles north of Columbia. Many ministers and friends gathered to hear him. Unable to remain for services on Sunday, he returned to preach on Monday. A listener wrote, "He can preach well yet. But he looks like time has marked him as a victim for eternity."¹⁰ A number of decisions came, following his last message. Returning to Jacksonville, Illinois, over the prairie sod through a drenching rain, Stone stopped at Hannibal, Missouri with another daughter, Amanda Bowen. Paralysis overcame him, but he lingered long enough to re-affirm his Christian faith. Amanda was in mourning for her sister, Tabitha, who had died a few months before, but Stone objected that the black was a mark of the heathen and Amanda changed to brighter garments. He took no drugs to ease his pain, but at four o'clock on Saturday morning, November 9, 1844, he was placed in an armchair. He called for his pipe and talked haltingly. Then his head reclined on his son's shoulder.¹¹

He had followed a trail like many another pioneer in America. But along the wilderness he had sowed not the seeds of commerce, trade, or politics, but the seeds of an ecumenical outlook, which came out of a tireless spirit, dedicated to the oneness of all of God's children. In his time, there were only a few such leaders; therefore, these seeds did not flower until another day came, when controversy had died down and men looked toward the one who had prayed that His followers might be one as He and "the Father were one."

A wagon carried his body to his farm near Jacksonville, Illinois, where it was buried. In 1846, his body was removed to the cemetery at Antioch Christian Church, seven miles east of Jacksonville. Then in the spring of 1847, Kentucky friends brought his dust back to Cane

⁹ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹¹ *MH* (Third Series; 1844), 621.

Ridge, where a monument was provided to do him honor.¹² The simple epitaph was erected in "affection and gratitude to Barton W. Stone, Minister of the Gospel of Christ and the distinguished reformer of the 19th century." So slowly had the ecumenical movement taken root by 1847 that not even his closest friends fully realized that his greatest contribution had been in the area of "ecumenicity" or Christian unity.

In the months immediately preceding Stone's death some of his followers protested that he had not received the recognition which he had deserved. Some of his friends complained that Alexander Campbell, his younger contemporary, had failed to give him sufficient notice in *The Millennial Harbinger*. They also pointed out, as has been noted in chapter ten, that some of Campbell's remarks in his debate with Rice were "calculated to produce a wrong impression with reference to those (now your brethren in Kentucky) who were once slanderously styled New-Lights, Arians, Stoneites, etc."¹³ It was felt that Campbell's remarks detracted from the "merit" of Stone and his followers.

Campbell was also criticized for omitting the name of the *Christian Messenger* from a list of periodicals he had printed in *The Millennial Harbinger*. They asked him to publish some correspondence between Stone and a correspondent regarding the remarks concerning the Stoneites in the Rice debate.¹⁴ Campbell in his reply asserted that the omission of the *Christian Messenger* from the list "of our periodicals was purely accidental." On discovering the error, he had handed his printers another list containing it and some others not named, but observed that it unfortunately had been "crowded out." Campbell was quite willing to publish the Kendrick letter relating to the criticism of Stone in the Rice debate, when he received another copy. He confessed that the *Christian Messenger* containing the letter could not be found.¹⁵ Interestingly enough, Campbell made no reference to the points Stone's friends raised regarding disparaging references to the Stoneites made by Rice in his debate with Campbell. This was passed by in silence.

¹²The author is greatly indebted to C. C. Ware's biography for some of these details of Stone's last days.

¹³*MH* (Third Series; 1844), 414 f.

¹⁴*Loc. cit.*

¹⁵*MH* (Third Series; 1844), 416.

The controversy over the relative importance of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone originated quite early in the discussion of unity between the Christians and the Reformers. The question of who had priority in discovering the "ancient gospel" began *ca.* 1828, and continues to this day. The important thing is that the question, while causing strained relations, did not mar the unity of the two groups. Both the Campbell and Stone groups in Kentucky were apparently of equal strength, but were so important to each other that the merger was not broken by controversial questions over who had priority in leadership. The question has come to the fore in our own time because Disciple historians had for many decades given attention to the work of the Campbells and neglected to study the influence of Stone, Scott, Haggard, and others.

Almost one hundred years after the original controversy, a writer denied that Stone and his followers were an addition to the movement originated by the Campbells. "This conception of Stone and his movement," stated Dr. E. E. Snoddy, a professor in the College of the Bible in 1932, "is wholly unwarranted by historical fact. To Stone belongs priority in time, priority in American experience, priority in the ideal of unity, priority in evangelism, priority in the independency of his movement, priority in the complete repudiation of the Calvinistic system of theology, and, finally, priority in sacrificial devotion to his cause. An unstinted recognition of Barton W. Stone as one of the originators of their movement and a larger incorporation of his spirit and ideals into their life, would bring incalculable benefit to the Disciples of Christ."

Gradually Stone is receiving increased recognition for his contributions to the Disciples of Christ. His work for Christian unity is now likewise being focused into the pre-ecumenical picture. When the facts concerning his remarkable life and sacrifice for the early beginnings of Christian unity come fully to the light, he will stand as a leader in his own right.

The objective historian does not need to build up one man by detracting from another. Campbell had great stature as a theologian, educator, preacher, administrator, and biblical scholar. He was a more versatile man than Stone and a better publicist. He was younger and more vigorous. Stone had no political theory and even went so far as

to deny the Christian participation in the political field. By contrast, Campbell had a well developed theory of politics, and himself took a constructive part in political life. Up until now, he has overshadowed Stone and undoubtedly will continue to do so. However, as Stone is better known, his contribution to his own communion will doubtless be better appreciated and as the ecumenical movement grows in strength, the significant part he played in sowing seeds of one phase of that movement in America, will be recognized.

Stone had a long, lonely, and more difficult road than either of the Campbells. He broke with the stern doctrines of a hardened type of Calvinism back in 1804. Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell, though severing relationship with the Presbyterian Church in 1809, seemed more at home with Calvinism than Stone. Looked upon as being more orthodox than Stone, they did not have the same difficulty in proving their religious respectability as did he. Stone and his followers had to make their own way in the struggle for a more free religious climate. The Campbells, by contrast, also had the support of the Baptists with whom they were associated until about 1830. Stone's struggle to break with orthodox popular Presbyterianism in Kentucky was difficult because at the same time he had to keep his movement within the framework of the Christian community. If his opponents had succeeded in identifying him with the Deists, Rationalists, and Unitarians it would have made the central emphasis of his life impossible. Many men who opposed the orthodox doctrines of predestination, total depravity, conversion, and Christology were never able to transcend a negative approach.

Stone not only broke through the theological maze; he used his freedom constructively. It enabled him to stress the immediacy of religious experience for many who had reached an impasse because of theological doctrines. Men who felt that they were so totally corrupt that they could not respond to God began to see themselves as needing only re-orientation in the direction of their Creator. Men who had heard preaching which gave them a picture of God as a tyrant who needed to be won to forgiveness now saw that God was in Christ seeking to reconcile men to himself. What he learned in the backwoods of Virginia about the great love of God for man never left Stone. When he broke through doctrines which tended to portray God as his enemy

and saw that God was his friend and the kinsman of his way, Stone enabled many others in Kentucky to find God as "love."

Others in the Kentucky of his day, not troubled with theological dogmas, were, however, wedded to a dominant secularism. They bowed before the idols of land, amusements, work, and pleasure. Stone labored to orient them to an idea of God greater than their earthly idols. He preached a simple evangelical type of religion. He placed a great emphasis on prayer, especially in conversion, believing that God's grace was available to men who forsook earthly idols and called upon God. Deploring many revivalistic excesses, he nevertheless believed in the driving power of the emotions in stirring men to Christian commitment.

Strong traces of perfectionism are traceable throughout Stone's life. Beginning with his ascetic program of diet and study in early school days, it continued in his conversion struggle, in his hatred of slavery, in his rejection of war, in his dislike of bitter theological controversy, and in his abhorrence of luxury and display. A Sermon-on-the-Mount type of ethics dominated the "days of his years."

Love reigned in his life. Forgiveness and humility were a part of his nature. Even his enemies acknowledged that he had subordinated pride so that he acquired in his lifetime something of a reputation for sainthood. He saw that pride was one of the basic causes of denominational exclusiveness and discord. He disliked religious division and felt that it was the greatest hindrance to the expansion of Christianity.

Stone successfully subordinated his many other emphases to the goal of Christian unity. He lived and breathed the atmosphere of unity. For him it was no mere abstraction or theory. He was willing to take criticism, ignore slights, and endure economic privation for this cause. The subject of the union of Christians declared Rogers, "was the dearest and nearest to the heart of the pious Stone. Most sincerely, most industriously, most consistently, and most successfully, did he advocate this doctrine, for forty years."¹⁶

Stone was not the only person who was disturbed in early nineteenth century America over the divided condition of the Christian world. Other men, James McGready, for example, deplored narrow sectarianism and disunity, but did not see unity as a practical earthly goal. A

¹⁶ Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

few other men, alarmed by the tragic dissipation of Protestant energy in bitter controversy, condemned division. But they felt that Christian unity, while desirable, was a goal to be experienced in the harmony of heaven. Stone, however, was convinced that it was a present possibility within the framework of man's earthly life. Therefore, he made this goal his "polar star,"¹⁷ to which his life was consistently oriented. Though Stone's ecumenicity was a primitive type and not to be compared with modern programs of ecumenical action, Stone may be regarded as one of the earliest and most significant forerunners of Christian unity in America. It is noteworthy that he called for a national convention of the American denominations to discuss the possibilities of cooperation and unity.

More important than his grappling with the tragic problem of disunity is the stress he placed on the spirit and frame of mind necessary to restore unity to the broken body of the church. Stone believed in the elements of a biblical primitive pattern, but he never held his views in a rigid way to exclude other Christian believers. His primary assumption was that the members of all communions are Christians and should be accepted as such. He believed that an underlying unity already existed among the followers of Christ which they needed only to recognize. This assumption was not only theoretical, but actual with Stone. In the early days when he was still attempting to maintain his orthodoxy, Stone made efforts to unite with isolated churches, as well as with the Reformers of Campbell.

The Disciples of Christ, as a result of following the legalistic elements in Alexander Campbell's thought, are known today primarily as a primitive Gospel immersionist group. The second and third generations of Disciples pushed to the extreme Campbell's custom of accepting challenges to debate over immersion and other doctrinal issues which tended to create ill will rather than the will to unity. Very few men before the fourth generation stressed the emphasis of Stone on love and trust as being necessary to cement the bonds of Christian unity. Though Stone has had his few followers, from the beginning his position on unity has been only vaguely known. His writings have not been preserved as extensively as Campbell's. Considerable travel and research are necessary to bring together the Stone materials. They

¹⁷ Stone often used this expression in the *Christian Messenger*.

reveal that Stone has until now been a much-neglected figure not only in the history of his own denomination, but in the history of the early beginnings of the American movement for Christian unity. His broad catholic spirit was rare in a day and a section of the country where religious debating was enjoyed as much as horse racing.

Among the Disciples of Christ today a vocal minority have hardened the "primitive gospel" pattern of Alexander Campbell and his followers into an even more narrow legalism than did he. The conservative right-wing of independents teach Christian unity only on a legalistic basis of the restoration of what is conceived to be the primitive Gospel pattern of organization and doctrine, with a strong stress on immersion for the remission of sins. This is coupled with a militant fundamentalism and sometimes a heresy-hunting spirit which is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Barton W. Stone. Others have approved of Stone's general attitude on Christian unity, but they generally have ignored Stone because of his revivalism. Some have dismissed him as a "Methodistic revivalist." No interpretation of Stone can distort his life and work more than this.

Stone threw himself into the work of promoting Christian unity with the zeal of a revivalist, but his dominant quest for unity was broad and catholic. All other emphases bowed before this concern for the unity of a divided church. The large middle group of Disciples of Christ are today beginning to adopt a spirit and attitude which is similar to his on Christian cooperation and unity.

Stone believed that the unity existing between the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, ought to suggest the kind of unity which should exist among the members of the churches. If Christian believers analyzed the unity of the Father and Son, which was based on love and redemptive work, they themselves would become mutual partakers of the divine spirit of love. Unity would come because the spirit of love in Christ would exist among the followers of the Lord. The emphasis of Stone was in a "Sermon-on-the-Mount" type of love as the basis of Christian unity. He constantly stressed the necessity for humility, forgiveness, and good will among Christians as prerequisites of unity. Only good will could draw men together. Only spiritual bonds could hold them together.

Near the end of his life, when his tired, wracked body could no

longer match his dynamic spirit, Stone still longed for a new kind of "revival," which would burn theological stubble, so that men of love, sowing the seeds of unity, might reap a harvest of Christian union. Much of American church history in Stone's day may be seen as a stirring nineteenth century drama of expansion. But far too much of it can be seen as tragic drama with the participants engaged in vain and profitless controversy. Against a background of religious sword-play in the early nineteenth century scene, Stone must be placed as a lover of concord and a devotee of the higher things of the spirit as a basis of unity. This is all the more remarkable considering the cultural and doctrinal differences which militated against unity on the frontier. Many others, in their struggle to win freedom from institutional theology, never advanced beyond the struggle for independence. Stone was conspicuous in rising above controversy and sheer ecclesiastical rebellion.

Stone was far ahead of his time; in his own day he had no congenial spiritual home for the major emphasis of his life. But he would have been very much at home at Edinburgh, Stockholm, Lausanne, Oxford, Amsterdam, and Evanston, where the present ecumenical movement began to flower. He truly belongs in the witness of men like John Dury, Hugo Grotius, Richard Baxter, Thomas Campbell, William Augustus Muhlenberg, George Calixtus, Charles Brent, S. S. Schmucker, Peter Ainslie, L. O. J. Soederblom, William Temple, and a host of others who have made ecumenicity a growing reality.

Perhaps future historians will include in such a list the name of a man of pioneering vision, that of an humble American frontiersman, Barton Warren Stone.

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