

*Cane Ridge
in Context:*

Perspectives on
Barton W. Stone and the Revival

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Foreword by
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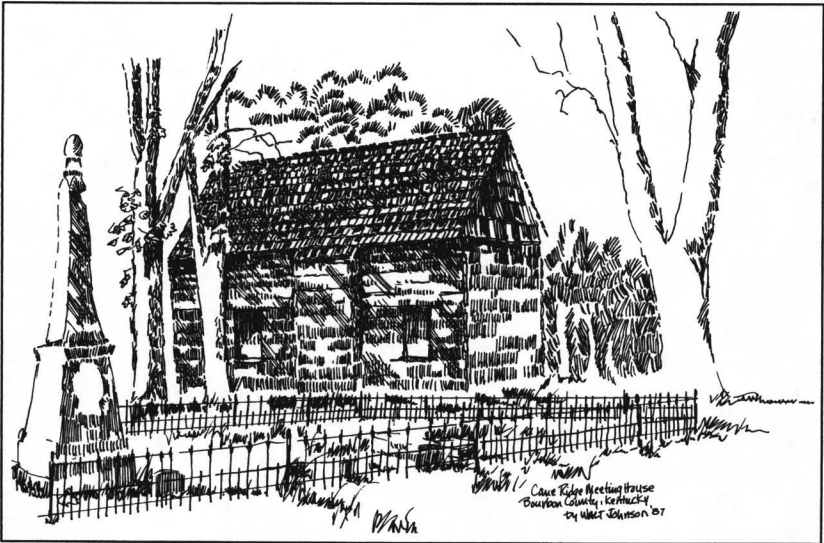
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BARTON W. STONE



CANE RIDGE MEETINGHOUSE

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FOREWORD

The Disciples of Christ Historical Society is happy to be the channel for bringing together the Cane Ridge Preservation Project, the Christian Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Kentucky, Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, Kentucky, and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society to share the spoken word in print. In this way it is hoped that many more people beyond the groups who heard the lectures or addresses may have access to this fresh and meaningful information about Barton Warren Stone and Cane Ridge.

Dr. Anthony Dunnivant, Professor of Church History at Lexington Theological Seminary, has edited the manuscript and written the Introduction. The nine chapters of the book introduce the reader to new insights in the place Barton Warren Stone has played in the life of the Stone-Campbell movement and the significance the Cane Ridge Revival and the Cane Ridge Congregation have had on our life as a people as a part of God's people.

The sharing of history is as important a part of the work of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society as preserving history. The goal of the Historical Society is to use every opportunity possible to help people learn about the history of the church. Consequently the Historical Society has published historical books in each of the last six years. It is the hope of the Society that every person who reads these pages will grow in understanding of the Stone-Campbell movement and the part it has played in the life of the whole church.

I wish to express sincere thanks to John A. Schiffman whose generous gift made possible the publication of this book. Mr. Schiffman is a layman from St. Louis, Missouri, who is deeply interested in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Thanks also go to Anthony Dunnivant for his work with the manuscript, to Walter Johnson of Lexington Theological Seminary for his work in designing the cover and handling other art work, to Charlotte Rose for her work in preparing the manuscript for publication, and to David McWhirter for his work on the index of the book. Rose and McWhirter are both on the staff of the Historical Society.

James M. Seale

INTRODUCTION

Nineteen ninety-one was the 200th anniversary year of the construction of the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse by a Presbyterian congregation in frontier Kentucky. That church building is now maintained as a shrine to Christian unity by the Cane Ridge Preservation Project, an organization largely supported by members of the Stone-Campbell movement churches—the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Churches of Christ, and the independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Cane Ridge is remembered as the setting of one of the most celebrated revivals in American church history. It is also seen as one of the generative sites of the ecumenical impulse in American Christianity and as the “home church” of the most celebrated Christian unity advocate among the founders of the Stone-Campbell communities, Barton Warren Stone.

In less than a decade the bicentennial of the great revival at Cane Ridge will be observed and three years thereafter the anniversary of the signing of “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery” will arrive. Therefore, the next twelve years will be the Cane Ridge bicentennial era for those who cherish the memory of that “sacred space” in the histories of the Stone-Campbell movement, American Christianity, revivalism, and ecumenism.

The bicentennial era of Cane Ridge has been opened with a number of special events which have included lectures and addresses on the legacy of Barton W. Stone as well as on the background and meaning of the revival. This volume brings together several of these lectures or addresses with work undertaken specifically for this book. The chapters are arranged to proceed from reflections upon the various ways Barton W. Stone has been remembered in the Stone-Campbell traditions (chapters one to three) to a contemporary assessment of his contribution (chapter four). Two chapters (five and six) consider Stone, his theology, and the events around the Cane Ridge revival in the context of Reformed Protestantism and Presbyterianism in the United States. The closing three chapters (seven, eight, and nine) broaden the focus to the social and religious background of Cane Ridge and trajectories out from this place.

The first three chapters in this book were originally prepared for the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse Bicentennial

Symposium at Lexington Theological Seminary on October 3 and 4, 1991. This event was suggested by Dean Michael Kinnamon. The theme of the symposium was "Barton W. Stone in the Historical Memory of the Stone-Campbell Traditions." President William O. Paulsell welcomed those present to hear the lectures, given by Paul M. Blowers, who spoke as a member of the independent Christian Churches; C. Leonard Allen, who spoke as a member of the Churches of Christ; and Anthony L. Dunnivant, who spoke as a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In the opening chapter Dunnivant traces the evolution of Stone's image in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from that of precursor of the movement to that of ecumenical "icon." Blowers' chapter then sketches the multiple images of Stone in independent Christian Church memory against the background of the relative lack of attention (nearly "Stone silence") that Stone receives in that historiography. Allen, in Chapter Three, portrays the pessimistic, Calvinistic, apocalyptic worldview of the Stone movement as standing in contrast to Campbellian optimism and thus contributing to the division between Churches of Christ and the remainder of the movement.

The fourth chapter, by Richard L. Harrison, Jr., follows these accounts of the memory of Barton W. Stone in the Stone-Campbell traditions with a number of suggestions as to the enduring legacy of this founding figure. While Harrison ultimately emphasizes Christian unity, he keeps Stone's own concept of this ideal clearly in view, sets that concept in the context of Stone's time, and places it alongside other features of Stone's contribution. This chapter is adapted from an address given at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society Dinner at the 1989 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

It is following Harrison's chapter that the focus of the book shifts to Barton Stone and the revival in the context of the Reformed tradition and Presbyterianism. In the fifth chapter, prepared especially for this volume, D. Newell Williams stresses the continuities in the relationship between Stone and the Reformed tradition. However, some of the irony and pain in the relationship of Stone and Cane Ridge to Presbyterianism is seen in Chapter Six, "Cane Ridge from a Presbyterian Point of View." Presbyterian minister and historian Ronald Byars presented this research at Cane Ridge

Day 1990. Cane Ridge Day is an annual event sponsored by the Christian Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Kentucky.

Although the first six chapters help to put the Cane Ridge Revival in context by focusing on its host pastor, Chapter Seven takes up that task in a still more concrete way. In this chapter Newton Fowler, Jr., identifies the precedents for the Cane Ridge revival in Scotland, particularly at Cambuslang, and reports on recent research that has documented the relationship between Cane Ridge and the earlier events. In Chapter Eight Samuel S. Hill identifies a number of the characteristics of the complex social and religious backdrop for the famous 1801 meeting. It was Cane Ridge Day 1991, combined with the Forrest F. Reed Lectures of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, that provided the setting for the original presentation of the seventh chapter. Professor Hill describes the Cane Ridge Revival as "a liminal event, on the threshold between frontier and town society," and suggests a number of "vectors" from Cane Ridge to the wider history of American Christianity.

The final chapter in this volume is a mature reflection upon Cane Ridge by one of the best known and beloved historians among the Disciples of Christ. The occasion for the original presentation of the last chapter was the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse Bicentennial Celebration on October 5, 1991. This day-long celebration included the address, by Howard E. Short, on "The Romance and Reality of Cane Ridge." This closing chapter combines an historical account of the meetinghouse, the revival, and the ministry of Barton Stone with observations about events among Stone's religious heirs. Many recollections are drawn from the writer's own rich and diverse ministry.

The support of curator Franklin McGuire and the Cane Ridge Preservation Project, the Christian Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Kentucky, the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, and Lexington Theological Seminary is gratefully acknowledged. This collection is offered in the hope that it may be a resource for those who will continue to celebrate and investigate the heritage of Cane Ridge and of Barton W. Stone, both in this bicentennial era and in the years to come.

Anthony L. Dunnavant

CHAPTER ONE

FROM PRECURSOR OF THE MOVEMENT TO ICON OF CHRISTIAN UNITY: BARTON W. STONE IN THE MEMORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

By Anthony L. Dunnivant

At the outset it is worth noting that historians outside of the Stone-Campbell traditions have pointed to the importance of Cane Ridge in American church history. They often emphasize the great revival of August 1801. Two decades ago John Boles called the Cane Ridge revival “the spark” that “ignited” revivals in “countless praying congregations in the South.”¹ Sydney Ahlstrom called it “a watershed in American Church history” because it became “both symbol and impetus for the century-long process by which the greater part of American evangelical Protestantism became ‘revivalized.’”² More recently, James White, the historian of Christian worship, has pointed to Cane Ridge and the ministry of Barton Stone and others as part of the emergence of what he calls the “frontier-revival” tradition of worship.³ Paul Conkin calls Cane Ridge “America’s Pentecost” in his 1990 book on the revival, though he emphasizes that the meeting stood near *the end* of a well rooted tradition of Scottish Presbyterian communion meetings.⁴ Nathan Hatch has suggested that Stone and his fellow Christians in the West represent part of the democratization of American Christianity in the early nineteenth century.⁵ In short, there is no lack of interest in Stone and especially in the Cane Ridge revival, among regional, general, liturgical, intellectual, and social historians of American Christianity.

Our focus for this essay, however, is on the memory of a religious community—the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The first thing I must do is to define that community of memory. Obviously, I cannot confine my observations to the post-Restructure church. Narrowly and technically speaking the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) begins with

the adoption of the "Design [once called Provisional] of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." To begin in the late 1960s would be to truncate the memory of this community and to lose most of the story that I wish to tell. None of the three communities that derive from Stone-Campbell roots understand themselves as having begun at the point of their distinctive, separate existence from the other branches of the common heritage. An examination of the historiography of each does demonstrate that each remembers the early roots in a distinctive way. Each begins with the common roots and comes forward to its particular story by following its own branch at points of division. I shall follow this time-honored method. Since I am trying to probe the memory of this particular body, my emphasis will be on literature that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) might continue to see as its own.

Stone-Campbell historical literature has included a number of genres. One of the most influential has been the comprehensive history. Formally and informally these massive volumes have been the textbooks and reference books of the movement's history. If there has been development, change, in the way Stone has been remembered, it should be reflected in these major books. This is where we shall begin. Other book literature will be considered along the way to inform any patterns that seem to emerge from a consideration of the comprehensive histories. Some general observations about popular periodical literature will be the last evidence considered in conjunction with some analysis.

The first comprehensive history we shall examine is Robert Richardson's *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. Some may wish to object that this does not belong in the genre. The title makes one expect autobiography; the name of the author makes one expect biography. It is biography, but it is much more. The subtitle tells us that the memoirs embrace "a view of the origin, progress and principles of the religious reformation which [Campbell] advocated." The first volume of the memoirs contains 537 pages and the second 680. First published in 1868 and 1870, Richardson's *Memoirs* is not only massive but it also functioned as a sourcebook. It codified many of the "sacred stories" of the movement's early years and significantly influenced subsequent histories.⁶

Not surprisingly, Richardson introduces Barton W. Stone at the point of Stone's first encounter with Alexander Campbell. Richardson claims that "the two laborers in the same great field formed at once a warm, personal attachment to each other, which continued through life." Richardson also noted Stone's "efforts to effect in Kentucky a religious reformation almost identical in its leading principles and aims with that in which Mr. Campbell was himself engaged."⁷

Most of the treatment of Stone and Stone's followers comes in a section of about twenty pages in which sketches of the Republican Methodists and the Christian movement of Abner Jones and Elias Smith set the context for a brief account of the Stone movement that leads up to contact with the Campbellite reformers. Richardson's treatment of the actual union between the Campbell Reformers and Stone's followers runs to an additional fifteen pages or so. Interestingly, these pages are largely made up of biographical sketches of figures such as Samuel Rogers, Thomas M. Allen, John Allen Gano, and John T. Johnson. These men were among the leaders who helped actualize the union between the two movements. To the degree that there was a pattern in these lives, they tended to be younger than Stone—closer to contemporaries of Alexander Campbell—and followers of Stone who had come under the influence of Campbell's teachings.

Richardson is forthright about differences between Campbell and Stone but emphasizes the close relationship between them. He gives special emphasis to the "strong personal attachment" and "affectionate remembrance" with which he claims Campbell remembered Stone.⁸

The cumulative impression left by Richardson's work is, of course, consistent with what is announced on the title page and presupposed in the subject and the structure of the work. Richardson's is the story of the Campbells and the reformation they advocated. Therefore, the approach to Stone and Stone's movement as a significant tributary, flowing into the stream of Campbellian reform rather late in the story, is not at all surprising. But it is significant. Richardson's conceptualization of the nineteenth-century reformation as the Campbell reformation led him to look for its roots in Scotland and Ireland, to the movements of Sandeman and of the Haldanes. In short, Richardson's way of conceiving the story locates the

roots of this reformation differently—biographically and, consequently, geographically, institutionally, and theologically. In essence, the Campbells are seen as bringing a complex preparation for reformation with them from Ireland. The fact that O’Kelly, Jones and Smith, and Stone were thinking along similar lines in the United States is basically taken as evidence of how ready the American soil was to receive the seed of the reform.

Forty years after the publication of the *Memoirs* the influence of a Richardson-like reading of the early history of the Stone-Campbell movement was easy to see. In the first place, 1909, the centennial year of the publication of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*, was taken as the centennial occasion for great celebration. This was marked not only by the great centennial convention in Pittsburgh, but also by the publication of two major histories. The smaller of the two, J. H. Garrison’s *The Story of a Century*, identifies Thomas Campbell as the “prime mover” of the Disciples reformation and Alexander Campbell as its “chief actor.” Twelve chapters and 124 pages into the volume, the reader finally encounters Barton W. Stone. The chapter is entitled “A Tributary Movement” and Stone’s followers are credited with being “the most important” of a number of early nineteenth-century “tributary movements”—the one “which has exerted the most permanent influence on the current Reformation.” Barton Stone is treated respectfully in this chapter and in two that follow on the Cane Ridge revival and the union between the Stoneites and the Campbellites. Again, however, the basic approach of the book as well as its explicit language consigns Stone and his followers to the position of a “tributary” rather than a main stream of the movement.⁹ Garrison’s volume clearly stands in the tradition of Richardson’s *Memoirs*. It is interesting to note that, in Archibald McLean’s introduction to Garrison’s work, the *Memoirs* are referred to as the “classic,” which “must be read by anyone who wishes to acquaint himself thoroughly with the origin and progress of the Current Reformation.”¹⁰

Even more in the genre—and certainly more on the scale—of the *Memoirs* is the other 1909 publication, W. T. Moore’s 830-page magnum opus, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ: Being an Account of a Century’s Efforts to Restore Primitive Christianity in its Faith, Doc-*

trine, and Life. Again, the occasion for the publication, the centennial of the *Declaration and Address*, and the subtitle's suggestion that this is "an account of a century's effort" already hints at Moore's view of the genesis of the Disciples of Christ. Indeed, the overall structure of the volume sustains the impression that Campbellian preeminence is assumed. Moore understood himself to be writing the history of "the Reformation of the nineteenth century, under the Campbells." Further, he understood this history to be divided into the creative period, the chaotic period, and the organic or reconstruction period. Moore wrote that the "distinct and definite Creation period" of the reformation "began with the issuance of the great 'Declaration and Address,' written by Thomas Campbell."¹¹

Therefore, after a long and incredibly wide-ranging introduction, Moore begins his story with the Campbells. However, unlike Garrison, Moore immediately signals his awareness of the Stone movement and his sensitivity to the fact that it predated the arrival of the Campbells in the United States. Moore notes that Thomas Campbell was not "the first in the United States to advocate many of the principles set forth in his 'Declaration and Address.' In this respect" Moore acknowledges that Thomas Campbell "had been antedated by Barton Warren Stone and others, associated with him in Kentucky." However, Moore insists that "the question of *time* is not the main question to be determined in a matter of this kind." Moore identifies Thomas Campbell as the inaugurator of the "Reformation of the Nineteenth Century."¹²

With Moore, then, in contrast to both Richardson and Garrison, Campbellian preeminence is asserted with a certain defensiveness and self-critical consciousness. Moore does not give Stone significantly more attention than did Richardson. In fact, the treatment is quite similar. Stone and the Stone movement are introduced well into the story—in time to set the stage for the union of the Stoneites and Campbellites. As in Richardson, the account of the union is followed by sketches of the leaders other than the Campbells and Stone who helped to bring it about and popularize it. Moore also follows Richardson in including an account of Stone's death and goes beyond Richardson by writing "Mr. Stone's influence on the Restoration movement has never

been fairly estimated. He was so overshadowed by the great men at Bethany that his real worth has not received the attention it deserves." However, as if to avoid the sting of his own accusation, Moore quickly adds, "It is true he was not a leader like Mr. Campbell was!"¹³

Moore's defensiveness in following the by-then traditional historiography of Campbellian preeminence indicates that the tradition was being challenged. One expression of this challenge is the brief volume by B. B. Tyler, *A History of the Disciples of Christ*, that had been published in 1894 by the Christian Literature Company of New York City. Tyler's approach might be characterized as the reversal of Richardson's. That is, Tyler begins with the American context, rather than the British, then moves to an account of the great revival (including Cane Ridge), and sketches the development of the Stone movement before turning to Europe and the background of the Campbells. Tyler's language in turning from the Stone movement to the context for the Campbells is telling: "In tracing the origin, aim, and progress of the Disciples, we must now cross the Atlantic and study the genesis and nature of an influence destined in time to affect very powerfully this movement in the United States."¹⁴ Tyler's suggestion, in essence, is that Stone's American religious movement was affected by the Campbell "tributary." The identification of "tributary" and "main stream" are the reverse of what Richardson, Garrison, and Moore suggest. Although Tyler's work had been published in 1894, his approach did not become the normative one overnight. It was an early indication of a coming paradigm shift. Fifteen years after Tyler's work Garrison and Moore still stood with Richardson—if somewhat uneasily in the case of Moore.

A generation after James Harvey Garrison, in every sense of the phrase, Winfred Ernest Garrison—J. H.'s son—brought a number of new insights to Disciples of Christ historiography. In 1931 W. E. Garrison's *Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ* announced by its very title an interest in the American context of the Disciples' story. Here was a "frontier thesis" for the explication of Disciples history. But, strangely enough, Garrison did not employ the Tyler approach of identifying the origins of the American reformation with the Stone movement—even though this would have been highly convenient to his

American—frontier thesis. Rather, W. E. Garrison begins with an account of the European heritage, discusses Stone briefly in connection with other “prophets among the pioneers” that are discussed in a part of the volume entitled “backgrounds,” and begins the “pioneer period” with the Campbells.¹⁵ Basically, this book still stands in the tradition of Robert Richardson and, not accidentally, of James H. Garrison, with the additional overlay of a “frontier thesis.” It is essentially the Campbellian reformation that “follows the frontier.”

Fourteen years after the publication of *Religion Follows the Frontier*, W. E. Garrison brought out another volume that anticipated the approach that would become normative for comprehensive histories of the Disciples of Christ among those who would become the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In 1945 Christian Board of Publication published Garrison’s *An American Religious Movement: A Brief History of the Disciples of Christ*. In this book the Stone movement was no longer treated as part of the “background.” The shift was apparent on the first page of chapter one. “Who are these ‘Disciples of Christ’? What are these ‘Christian Churches’ or ‘Churches of Christ?’” By 1945 Garrison was prepared to answer, “They began early in the nineteenth century with the union of two separate movements.” The implication of Campbellite main stream and Stoneite lesser “tributary” had been abandoned. This was also evidenced in the organization of the volume. Chapters on the American scene and on the “Christians” precede the account of “The Coming of the Campbells.” The James O’Kelly and Elias Smith and Abner Jones movements are included in the chapter on the “Christians,” but the greatest emphasis is given to Barton Stone and his associates.¹⁶ The impact of this shifted perspective was to be significant beyond the readership of *An American Religious Movement*. In 1948, Christian Board of Publication made available the next installment in the comprehensive history tradition, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* by Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot. Garrison wrote the first ten chapters of this 592-page volume and he brought his new perspective to the task.

In the “preview” of the volume, Garrison identifies the Stone and Campbell movements as “specifically the forerunners of the Disciples of Christ.” In keeping with this view, the “Christians” are given more attention than they had received

in earlier comprehensive histories. After three chapters on the general church, British, and American backgrounds of the Stone-Campbell reformation, there is a discussion of "Christians' Before Stone." The familiar O'Kelly and Smith and Jones reforms are given their due. But, in contrast to previous accounts, Stone is no longer lumped in with these groups. Not only is Stone not treated as "background," but the importance of his movement is underscored by the treatment of the other "Christians" as more in the background. Recall that, even in the 1945 work wherein Garrison elevated the "Christians" to greater importance, the Stoneites were considered along with the others. In the new work, Stone and the Christians were given a separate chapter immediately preceding "The Coming of the Campbells" (apparently Garrison liked this chapter title).¹⁷

Garrison and DeGroot was the standard sourcebook and textbook for the Disciples who would become the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), until the publication of its intended successor, McAllister and Tucker's *Journey in Faith*, in 1975.

McAllister and Tucker extend the basic approach to Stone of Garrison and DeGroot. They give separate chapters to the "American Backgrounds" of the Stone-Campbell movement and to "Stone and the Christians in the West" before introducing the British backgrounds of the movement and the Campbells. The timeline near the front of their volume shows graphically that McAllister and Tucker have adopted the "two main streams" view of the origins of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Whereas Garrison and DeGroot had begun with an overview chapter that placed the Disciples of Christ in the context of the whole history of Christianity, McAllister and Tucker more modestly keep the focus on the particular—the trajectory towards the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Their overview chapter also points to the forthright identification of Barton Stone as a founder of this denomination. The chapter is entitled, significantly, "From Camp Meeting to General Assembly: An Overview." Thus, a lineal descent from Cane Ridge to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is claimed. Furthermore, Stone is identified as a "founding father" in this overview chapter and a brief account of his ministry precedes that of the Campbells.¹⁸

Based on this examination of the comprehensive histories of the Disciples, and with some corroboration from other

book literature, it seems to be the case that Barton W. Stone was not *normally* recognized as a “founder” of the nineteenth-century reformation until nearly the middle of the twentieth century. Although some historians, such as B. B. Tyler, did depict Stone as a founding figure in the late nineteenth century and although others, such as W. T. Moore in the early twentieth century, acknowledged that Stone had not been given his due credit, the normal reading of the history of the movement’s origins was that Stone and his followers were part of the preparatory background of the Campbellite reformation or a tributary that eventually flowed into it. The shift to what became a normative reading of the movement’s origins as both, and more nearly equally, Stoneite and Campbellite may be fairly narrowly pinpointed as coming between the publication of Garrison’s *Religion Follows the Frontier* in 1931 and his *An American Religious Movement* in 1945. With the publication of Garrison and DeGroot’s *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, Stone’s standing as a founder was secured and this was the assumed reading underlying McAllister and Tucker’s work.

If this is a plausible account of the shift, how may we further test it and begin to account for it? Since the shift may be reasonably described as an enhancement or enlargement of the place and importance of Stone and the Stoneites in the history, the question may be asked, “Is there other evidence among Disciples, at about the same time that the shift in the comprehensive histories took place, for a growing interest in the ministry of Barton W. Stone?” One place we might look for this evidence is in periodical literature.

The high-circulation national periodical among those Disciples who would create the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was *The Christian-Evangelist*. An examination of *The Christian-Evangelist* index reveals that there is no subject entry for Barton W. Stone prior to 1888, though the index begins in 1863. For the years prior to 1931 (the year of the publication of *Religion Follows the Frontier*), there are thirty-two subject entries under Barton W. Stone and no reprintings of Stone’s writings. The forty-two years following the first mention of Stone, then, there is an average of fewer than one entry per year. What about 1931 and thereafter? Between 1931 and 1958, the year the index ends, there are thirty-seven subject entries for Stone and two entries related

to Stone's writings. Thirty-nine entries in twenty-seven years brings the average up to well over an entry per year—not a dramatic increase, perhaps, but certainly a perceptible one. Furthermore, the upturn in interest in Stone is not gradual or uniformly distributed throughout the later period. Many of the articles about Stone come in two clusters—one in the first half of the 1930s and the second in 1954. They are clearly connected to two occasions—the centennial of the union of the Stoneites and Campbellites (1932) and the sesquicentennial of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*.¹⁹

At these same times a book literature appeared which focused on Stone to a significant degree. In 1932 A. W. Fortune's *The Disciples in Kentucky* was published by the Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky in commemoration of the 1832 union. Fortune wrote the history with the conviction that "this state perhaps played a larger part than any other section in the early development of the Disciples." Furthermore, Fortune believed that "Disciples historians ha[d] not given the contribution of this section the notice which it merits." A significant part of rectifying the slight Fortune perceived was, of course, to give the Stone movement a prominent place in his history. Fortune went beyond simply recounting the history of Stone's ministry, however. He called Stone "a prophet who was far in advance of his age." Fortune also opined that, in matters in which Stone had engaged in controversy, "the verdict of history would be to his [Stone's] advantage in comparison with his critics."²⁰ A. W. Fortune was doing more than reporting on Barton Stone; he was commending him.

The same year, 1932, Bethany Press published *Barton Warren Stone: Pathfinder of Christian Union—A Story of His Life and Times* by Charles Crossfield Ware. Elmer Ellsworth Snoddy, friend and close colleague in both The College of the Bible and Central Christian Church, Lexington, of A. W. Fortune, wrote the introduction to Ware's book and made the following points: 1) the Disciples of Christ have *two* origins—the Campbellite and the Stoneite; 2) the Northern root had overshadowed the Southern in the literature of the movement; 3) historians had not felt the necessity to take Stone and his ideals into account (note the ideological dimension); 4) such an approach was "wholly unwarranted by historical fact." Snoddy then declared that: "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." It was almost unnecessary, though candid, for Snoddy to add that his conviction was that "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."

Snoddy went on to emphasize the necessity of shifting the perceived "pivot" of the early history of the Disciples southward to Kentucky, to stress Stone's "Americanism," and—with special force—to commend Stone's "total" and "radical" repudiation of Calvinism. "What Paul had done with Judaism, and Luther with Romanism," Snoddy claimed, "Stone did with Calvinism." Snoddy drove his point home by declaring that, in contrast, Alexander Campbell never repudiated Calvinism "as a type of thought." This is why poor Mr. Campbell "was never able to understand and appreciate Stone without reservation."²¹ With Snoddy the historiography of the founders had come full circle. Stone was to be lionized and Campbell pitied!

Ware's biography contains a wealth of information and documentation on Stone's life and ministry. His approach could be pressed into the service of the aims Snoddy announced, though Ware was, arguably, kinder to Campbell. Ware's 357-page work provided Stone with a documented distinguished ancestry, superlative education, and long and dedicated ministry.²² Ware, like Snoddy, was candid in revealing his hope that his book would do more than tell the story of Stone the person. Rather, Ware wished that Stone's "spirit may be known and loved as it was in his day. A double portion of his spirit," wrote Ware, "will help mightily in our day to the climax of Christ's drama of union."²³

The work of Fortune, Snoddy, and Ware in calling attention to Stone's life and contribution were, very likely, part of what caused the shift in Disciples historiography of origins that is discernible between the W. E. Garrison of *Religion Follows the Frontier* and the Garrison of *An American Religious Movement*. But the candor of Fortune, Snoddy, and Ware in commending Stone rather than simply reporting on

Stone's life hints to us that more was going on than simply the refinement of the historical record. Part of what was going on was, of course, that those in North Carolina and Kentucky (Ware's state and Snoddy's and Fortune's, respectively) were claiming the significance of their sections. A plea for the preservation of the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse published in *The Christian-Evangelist* in 1922 and the restoration of that site in 1932 were certainly part of the backdrop to this new-found appreciation of Barton Stone.²⁴ But I believe that the more profound motivation was theological rather than regional. Here we must shift to some broad historical observations.

In the years after the union of the Stoneites and the Campbellites, the combined movement, in Kentucky as elsewhere, followed Campbell on many issues. Campbellite positions became influential—even in Stone's former territory. This point may be illustrated very conveniently. The College of the Bible, though in the very city where Stone once resided, became, in the years of J. W. McGarvey, the flagship institution of a codified version of the "restoration plea" for the unity of Christians, on the basis of the Bible, that the "world might believe." The lines of influence from Bethany to Lexington became strong and formative. Central Christian Church here, though a lineal descendent of a group of Stone's Lexington followers, became, in the days of McGarvey, Moses Lard, and even forward to I. J. Spencer (in the early twentieth century) a congregation much affected by the heritage of Bethany.

It is well known that McGarvey's version of the "restoration plea," learned at Bethany, held sway for nearly the first half-century of The College of the Bible's history. But this perspective was giving way to another at The College of the Bible by 1917. A. W. Fortune, E. E. Snoddy, (names encountered already in this essay), and William Clayton Bower were bringing very different assumptions to Christian faith and ministry than those that McGarvey had held. Well grounded in contemporary thought, in touch with the currents of their day, these "progressives" had good claims on the present and the future. What they needed was a usable past in their Disciples of Christ tradition. What they needed was a founder who, from their perspective, had not remained in bondage to Calvinism or whose views had not been codified into a "Disciples scholasticism"—as they perceived Camp-

bell's had. They needed a different founder, a liberal founder, an *ecumenical* founder, whose commitment to Christian unity was not so closely tied to an insistence on restoring the "ancient faith and the ancient order of things." They, after all, were Disciples and were liberal, ecumenical, and no longer restorationist; they needed *their* founder. They "found" their founder. His name was Barton Warren Stone.

This, I believe, is the real mainspring which drove the "rediscovery" of Stone by liberal Disciples in the first half of the present century. Increasingly, as the twentieth century unfolded, an oral tradition in classrooms and pews named Alexander Campbell the "restorationist" founder and attributed the legalistic construal of restorationism to his own temperament. Conversely, Stone was depicted in this tradition as the "unionist" founder and the ecumenical construal of this Disciples commitment was likewise traced, at least in part, to his temperament. These traditions are not completely without historical foundation. But I believe they have been exaggerated to the point of caricaturing both leaders.

In fact, Campbell and Stone were both for unity and both for a kind of Christian primitivism. Furthermore, Stone, not unlike Campbell, was willing to give his pen and voice to controversy upon occasion. And, perhaps most disillusioning of all, Stone was arguably more "sect-like" in his ecclesiology and more "evangelical" in his theology than Campbell. Will the real liberal founder, then, please stand up?

Probably not. However, part of the explanation for the "nearly 'stone silence'" about Barton Stone that Paul Blowers describes elsewhere in this volume may lie in the fact that, unlike Fortune and Snoddy, more conservative interpreters of the Stone-Campbell heritage felt no need to promote a founder who would be palatable to early twentieth-century liberals.

For those who would become the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Barton W. Stone began to function popularly as a symbol, an icon, of a single value—Christian unity.²⁵ This development was both mitigated and advanced by publications such as that, in 1954, of William Garrett West's book, *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity*. West's treatment is critical and scholarly—based on the author's Yale doctoral dissertation—and it underscores a number of features of Stone's life and ministry. For example, it is West who makes

the controversial claim that Stone was a "Left-Wing" or "sect-like" Protestant. But, again, the greatest emphasis is on Stone the "advocate of Christian unity"²⁶ Through the 1950s and thereafter, titles of *The Christian-Evangelist* articles on Stone included: "Stone's Concept of Christian Unity," "A Prophet of Unity," "Rediscovery of a Prophet of Unity," "Our Views Were One," "Where Unity Begins," "Unity at the Grass Roots." Admittedly there were other articles on other aspects of Stone's life and ministry. But unity was the frequent, recurrent theme.²⁷

Nineteen fifty-four was the other great year of Stone celebration and publication. A new round of gatherings at the meetinghouse that had begun in 1949 and continued for the four years following led to the publication of *Voices from Cane Ridge*, edited by Rhodes Thompson, in 1954. The voices spoke on a number of topics. Two of the voices that spoke about Barton Stone were familiar ones—E. E. Snoddy's and A. W. Fortune's. Snoddy's emphasis was on Stone's place as *the* pioneer "in all the ideals of the Disciples." Again he emphasized the claim that "Barton W. Stone holds the primacy in the origin of the Disciples of Christ." This time Snoddy called Stone "the Luther of our movement" and went on to call the Campbells "the Swiss Reformation" who were "Calvinist in type of mind and thought and life."²⁸ To Snoddy, "Calvinist" was a strongly disparaging term.

A. W. Fortune's contribution to the 1954 volume is quite revelatory of the way Stone was functioning for the writer. Fortune emphasized Stone's open mind and his following of his convictions regardless of the cost. These were attributes certainly visible in Stone—especially to one like Fortune who had himself faced controversy related to having an open mind and following one's convictions.²⁹

I have suggested so far that Stone's place in Disciples historiography shifted significantly in the first half of our century, that this shift was to a place of greater prominence, that this shift was motivated by the desire to promote a founding figure who was perceived as compatible with commitments to early twentieth-century liberal theology and nascent modern ecumenism, and that, in the process of Stone's rediscovery and promotion, he became especially strongly associated in the popular mind with the ideal of Christian unity.

Snoddy, Fortune, Ware, West, Thompson, and others performed a genuine service in rescuing Stone from relative obscurity. Furthermore, the features of Stone's temperament and ideals that they emphasized all had some foundation in historical fact. They did not create Stone out of nothing. They contributed the insights about Stone that their situation and their needs made most clear and available to them. But we are no longer in their age, nor in their situation. Now we must try to bring our age into dialogue with our ancestors in the communion of saints. What do we have to add?

First, we may cease to caricature Stone and Campbell as competing personifications of our church's one *true* central emphasis. To set the "unionist" Stone against the "restorationist" Campbell not only distorts their own self-understandings, but obscures the historical reality of their own costly relationship and the real, if limited, achievement that was the union of their movements.³⁰

Second, we may recognize that if Stone were indeed "liberal," it was not in the same sense that the term is used today, or was used in the early twentieth century. Stone was also, in some senses, an evangelical Christian; but, again, not in the way that the term is used today. In fact, it may be salutary in our day to remember that, in Stone's day, the "evangelicals" were often the "liberals." At the very least they were sometimes the ecclesiastical libertarians or democratizers. In other words, both the statements "Stone was a liberal" and "Stone was an evangelical" are, in a sense, true. Isolated from each other, they become distorting half-truths.

Third, there is an emphasis on the affective, mystic, and spiritual in Stone that is quite different from the accustomed flavor of our churches. Here Disciples have been more "reasonable, empirical, and pragmatic" than Stone. Stone's emphasis on the Spirit, even his openness to what we would call pentecostal or charismatic expressions of Christianity, challenges us to interpret our particular heritage more broadly on such matters than has been our custom.³¹

Fourth, in global, ecumenical Christianity there are many communities where the pull of God's future, Christian eschatology, is far more felt and emphasized than in the more acculturated churches of the North American mainline. Stone's high expectation, his eschatology, might be a resource from our particular tradition linking us with a great

theme of the tradition of the church universal.³²

Fifth, as we move a full generation beyond the rediscovery and promotion of Stone, we can engage in more balanced, critical assessments of his life and work. Helpful doctoral dissertations by Disciples such as D. Newell Williams and David C. Roos have already begun to move us into another era of interpretation. It is hoped that the essays in this volume may also contribute to this development.³³

I am confident that Barton W. Stone will remain a cherished companion in memory. Released from both obscurity and from the burden of simply personifying our commitment to Christian unity, Stone can be allowed to emerge with all the many facets his story will reveal. His memory has called us to wholeness, to unity, for many years. We need to return the courtesy and remember the whole Barton W. Stone.

Notes to Chapter One

1. John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 64.

2. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 435.

3. James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 174-75.

4. Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost, The Curti Lectures* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 166.

5. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 69.

6. Richard Tristano observes correctly that "Many facts and anecdotes that appear over and over again in modern works [on the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement] are ultimately derived from Richardson's account (*The Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History*, [Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1988], 8).

7. Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*, 2 vols. (Phil-

adelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1868; reprint, Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, [1980], 2:118 (page references are to the reprint edition).

8. Ibid. 2:371-89; 538-39.

9. J[ames] H[arvey] Garrison, *The Story of a Century: A Brief Historical Sketch and Exposition of the Religious Movement Inaugurated by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. 1809-1909* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1909), 25, 55, 125.

10. Archibald McLean, "Introduction," in *The Story of a Century*, 13.

11. William Thomas Moore, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ: Being an Account of a Century's Effort to Restore Primitive Christianity in its faith, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909), 31-32.

12. Ibid., 97-8.

13. Ibid., 232-50, 277-99, 401-02.

14. B[enjamin] B[ushrod] Tyler, *A History of the Disciples of Christ* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894), 1-33.

15. Winfred Ernest Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), 64-68, 71.

16. Winfred Ernest Garrison, *An American Religious Movement: A Brief History of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1945), 9, 41-59.

17. Winfred Ernest Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), 7, 12, 79-123.

18. Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), 38-88, 15, 23.

19. *The Christian-Evangelist Index: 1863-1958* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication/Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1962), 1347.

20. Alonzo Willard Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky* ([Lexington:] The Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky, 1932), 7, 64.

21. Elmer Ellsworth Snoddy, "Introduction," in *Barton Warren Stone, Pathfinder of Christian Union: A Story of His Life and Times* by Charles Crossfield Ware (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1932), xi-xiii.

22. Ware, *Barton Warren Stone*.

23. *Ibid.*, 10.

24. W. E. Ellis, "Paying Our Debt to Barton Warren Stone," *The Christian-Evangelist*, 31 August 1922, 1104, 1115. An account of the activities at the meetinghouse, including restoration efforts launched in 1932, is Rhodes Thompson, "The Old Cane Ridge Meetinghouse Through the Years," in *Cane Ridge Meetinghouse: A Temple of Christian Unity*, ed. Rhodes Thompson (n.p.: n.d.), 7-18.

25. Paul J. Crow, Jr., President of the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), brought greetings to the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse Bicentennial Symposium at Lexington Theological Seminary on October 3, 1992. On that occasion he mentioned that Barton W. Stone has functioned as an "icon" of Christian unity for the Disciples of Christ.

26. William Garrett West devotes a chapter to the thesis that Stone was "an American Left-Wing Protestant" who exhibited the characteristics of the "radical sects of the sixteenth century." However, he gives far more space to Stone's advocacy of Christian unity (*Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* [Nashville:Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954], 204, 110-31, 137-202). West's contention that Stone was "sect-like" has been affirmed by a number of other historians. Allen Van Dozier Eikner, for example, made the point that Stone was more "sect-like" than Alexander Campbell in "the Nature of the Church among the Disciples of Christ" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1962). David C. Roos places the "sectarian" Stone at the center of his work on "The Social Thought of Barton Warren Stone and Its Significance Today for the Disciples of Christ in Western Kentucky" (D. Div. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1973), 9, 34-59. C. Leonard Allen's contribution to this volume, and the work of R. L. Roberts upon which it draws, would also have much in common with this line of interpretation. Obviously, there is profound tension between Allen's understanding of Stone and that advocated by Snoddy and his associates. Part of the difference may be explained by the need that the early twentieth-century liberals had for a "liberal" founder. In this "quest" they could focus on the issues on which Stone was less

orthodox, Christology and Trinitarianism, and plausibly argue that Stone was “less Calvinist” than Campbell. If, however, one focuses on philosophy of history or worldview, as Professor Allen does, Stone’s reputed jettisoning of Calvinism becomes more elusive. Other continuities between Stone and Calvinism are suggested by D. Newell Williams in his essay in this volume.

27. *The Christian-Evangelist Index*, 1347.

28. E[lmer] E[llsworth] Snoddy, “Barton W. Stone—Ambassador of the Love of God,” in *Voices from Cane Ridge*, ed. Rhodes Thompson (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 249.

29. A[lonzo] W[illard] Fortune, “Barton W. Stone and his Contribution to Christianity,” in Thompson, *Voices from Cane Ridge*, 140-47.

30. On this point, see my “Alexander Campbell: A Heart Not Made of Stone,” *Discipliana* 48 (Winter 1988): 57-62.

31. W. B. Blakemore describes the more dominant frame of mind in “Reasonable, Empirical, Pragmatic: The Mind of Disciples of Christ,” in W. B. Blakemore, ed. *The Renewal of Church: The Panel of Scholars Reports* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), vol. 1, *The Reformation of Tradition*, ed. Ronald E. Osborn, 161-83. However, there have been some voices advocating the recovery of “Barton W. Stone—Mystic.” See the editorial by that title in *The Christian-Evangelist* 18 May 1916, 611-12; see also the essay by Paul Blowers in this volume.

32. See Richard Hughes, “The Apocalyptic Origins of the Churches of Christ and the Triumph of Modernism,” *Religion and American Culture* 2 (Summer 1992), 181-214.

33. David Newell Williams, “The Theology of the Great Revival in the West as Seen Through the Life and Thought of Barton Warren Stone” (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1979); Roos, “Social Thought of Barton Warren Stone.”

CHAPTER TWO

NEARLY "STONE SILENCE": BARTON W. STONE IN THE MEMORY OF THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

By Paul M. Blowers

I accepted with enthusiasm the invitation to write on how Barton Warren Stone has been remembered among the independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Any opportunity to engage representatives from the three sibling traditions of the Stone-Campbell heritage in serious reflection on our shared past is, in my estimation, a positive initiative. Having said that, I must confess that in the months since that first invitation, the staggering dearth of sources, the general lack of critical monographs, historical studies, or even popular works concentrating specifically on Mr. Stone's life and thought from the ranks of independent scholars and leaders¹ left me at times searching for a clever way to divert to a more answerable question. In my more frustrated moments, I imagined writing under the title "Stone Silence: Barton Warren Stone and Independent Christian Churches," or "Barton Warren Stone and the Christian Churches: A Case of Mild Amnesia or of Informed Neglect?"

Lest my contribution, however, be a grand argument from silence, I have spent considerable time the last several months gleaning bits and pieces here and there from both scholarly and popular literature in the Christian Churches in trying to reconstruct an interpretative profile of Mr. Stone. The product of my research may say as much about the collective historical memory of the Christian Churches as about Mr. Stone's reception in that memory, but the exercise has been a useful one. What I propose here is, on the one hand, to give account of the diversity of perspectives on

Barton Stone represented in the thinking of the independent churches; and, on the other hand, to attempt to explain the relative lack of a sustained interest in Stone, as contrasted with an ostensibly much greater fascination with the figures of Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott.

Let me begin with a trite but important observation. It is a fact as old as Christianity itself that venerated founders of movements, no matter how vivid the record of them in oral and written accounts, evoke contrasting (sometimes divergent) interpretations and appraisals among their followers. The fact was as true of first- and second-generation Jewish Christians who were defining Jesus's significance in relation to that of Moses as it was of those early gentile Christians in Corinth who were apparently fighting it out over whether Peter, or Paul, or Apollos, or Christ himself was the most important to their group identity.

The analogy holds true, albeit certainly on a more modest scale, for the historical memory of communities who have wanted to claim the legacy of a Barton Stone or an Alexander Campbell in a movement to restore New Testament Christianity and to recover the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. I dare say that polling a cross-section of participants in the North American Christian Convention on their perception of the significance of Barton Stone would show up a fairly wide range of perspectives. I know for a fact, having solicited written responses from a representation of veteran scholars from the independent churches, that even with them the memory of Barton Stone evokes quite different sorts of reactions,² some frankly being at a loss to articulate how Stone's particular achievement has uniquely shaped or influenced the witness of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.³ Certainly a "normative" appraisal of Mr. Stone is lacking, other than a general concurrence on his secondary role in relation to Alexander Campbell. Moreover, so far as the popular image of Stone in the independent churches is concerned, I would defer to the judgment of Professor R. Edwin Groover of Atlanta Christian College, who suggests that outside of scholarly circles, Stone is known among "independents" by and large only by anecdotes and cherished folklore, with the result that most people operate with only a superficial grasp of his significance.⁴

Yet there is just enough evidence, I believe, to reconstruct certain trends in the way independents remember and appreciate Barton Warren Stone—positively, negatively, ambivalently—as an architect of their heritage. In fact I shall propose here four different profiles of Mr. Stone afloat in the memory of the Christian Churches, though I would caution that not all of them are equally conspicuous or necessarily manifested across the board in this fellowship of churches and institutions.

Barton Stone the Reluctant Heretic

We do not move very far into the appraisal of Barton Stone without raising questions about his doctrine, so I shall begin there. For independents, and others no doubt, Stone has always been something of a curious mix of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.⁵ His pronounced defiance of "orthodox" Calvinist scholasticism in the name of the religion of the Bible, even if that led him in some instances into dangerous speculative territory, has itself been sufficient to redeem his reputation in the eyes of many in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, especially as these churches have, in the main, tried to articulate their evangelistic ethos over against the traditionally Calvinist mainstream of more recent American Evangelicalism. What would make Stone truly "heterodox" for the Evangelical mainstream is precisely what would make him more "orthodox" to independents: his repudiation of limited atonement or special operations of the Spirit; his rejection of a hardcore notion of human depravity, his general Arminianism.⁶

Though closer scrutiny shows Stone retained some important theological links to Calvinism, he is still truly an anti-Calvinist hero in the popular imagination of those independents for whom the rejection of Calvinism is one of the fundamental elements of the Restoration plea.⁷ If there is no widespread knowledge of or sustained interest in the fine points of his doctrine, there is at least a vivid memory of those moving passages in his autobiography where the young Mr. Stone holds his own before the Transylvania Presbytery, or grapples with the "blasphemous suggestions of Satan" in working his way out of Calvinist scholasticism "into the rich pastures of gospel liberty."⁸ Stone's conversion to a "rational"

biblical faith is certainly remembered as one of the defining moments in the early history of the nineteenth-century Reformation.⁹

There persists, however, the rather embarrassing fact of Stone's theological freelancing in his criticism of such classical Christian doctrines as the Trinity, the preexistence and Sonship of Christ, and the atonement. These are of course areas where critics (A. Campbell included!) and admirers alike have called Stone's doctrinal fidelity into account. The two principal histories of the Stone-Campbell movement circulating among independent Christian Churches do not deal at length with Stone's alleged theological deviations. Both J. D. Murch and Henry Webb call attention to Stone's obscurity or fuzziness in treating Trinitarian notions, and while admitting the quasi-Arian or Unitarian cast of his thought, hint that Stone's salvation here lay in his falling ultimately under the influence of the more patently orthodox Alexander Campbell.¹⁰

Only Richard Phillips, from this branch of the Stone-Campbell heritage, has scrutinized in detail the deeper contextual and philosophical ramifications of Stone's theology proper. Phillips' overall portrait of Stone is that of a sort of atheological pietist,¹¹ or perhaps more precisely a "theologian" fairly purely fashioned by frontier revivalism and emotionalism.¹² There was enough of the logician in Stone, however, to make him a real cause for concern in the mind of Alexander Campbell. Phillips sees Stone's understanding of the Godhead, for example, as "an interesting combination of orthodox categories, logical attempts to resolve classical paradoxes, original thinking, and frontier Biblicism."¹³ In his reflections on the Father-Son relation, Stone's strong subordinationism genuinely paralleled ancient Arianism, providing real fuel for his critics.¹⁴ Yet Phillips rightly points out that Stone, like Campbell, was a fundamentally *Christocentric* thinker.¹⁵ I would add that in contrast with classical Trinitarian theology (which, logically speaking, began with the divine coequality of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity before moving to the consideration of the divine-human relation in the incarnate Christ), Stone and Campbell both began instead with the *fact* of Jesus Christ the Savior and moved backward to the consideration of his preexistent divine status. Campbell had opted to revive scriptural and

ante-Nicene Logos theology as a means to bridge the gap between divine Son and historic Christ. As Phillips demonstrates, Stone took a more circuitous route, ever fending off the charge of Arianism, but continuing to insist that his position truly proved that "all the fullness of the Godhead" was in Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶

Frankly, Trinitarian doctrine has never been a major issue for those independent Christian Churches and Bible colleges that have traditionally disregarded any indebtedness to Nicene formulations and shunned systematic or dialectical theology. Yet Stone's views on the Atonement, a subject more directly impacting evangelistic preaching, had the potential of being more scandalous. J. D. Murch, in his history, minimizes the importance of Stone's open dispute with Alexander Campbell on the nature of the Work of Christ, insisting that it was more important that by the time of the merger in 1832, Stone was willing to abandon all speculations in favor of *scriptural* teaching: "The matter never became a serious issue."¹⁷ A closer look at Stone's speculations indicates that his position was potentially quite damaging, and that his extended controversy with Campbell on this theme really never saw a decisive conclusion or resolution.¹⁸ Stone's nominalist logic, as applied to the "satisfaction theory" and substitutionary atonement, does indeed follow the critical logic of Socinianism;¹⁹ moreover, his focus away from the precise ontology of atonement to the ethical implications of human reconciliation in Christ undeniably evokes the memory of a Pelagius or an Abelard.²⁰ Orthodox Calvinists in Stone's time had applied the labels of "Pelagian" or "Socinian" to those who ostensibly had no organized or consistent understanding of sovereign grace. As William Richardson has recently shown, Campbell did have a coherent doctrine of grace, carefully worked out in response to Calvinist federal theology.²¹ Stone had to struggle.²² In the end, however, his vice was also his virtue, for the flipside of his ignorance of the expiatory or propitiatory aspects of atonement was his zeal for the Cross as an expression of God's *love* (as opposed to an appeasement of his wrath) and the prospect for *all* sinners *freely* to receive that love and reform their lives accordingly. That in itself is perhaps sufficient to redeem Stone's atonement doctrine in the evangelistic mindset of independent Christian Churches.

A recent monograph on the original Pelagius, the fifth-century ascetic theologian and nemesis of Augustine, calls him the “reluctant heretic.”²³ Pelagius’s integrity, in struggling for a new insight into divine grace, simply could not be nullified all the while that he was sized up against the emerging Augustinian orthodoxy. Barton Stone, whom F. D. Kershner once called a “semi-Pelagian,”²⁴ is the “reluctant heretic” of the early Restoration Movement. Some independents are doubtless unaware that he ever entertained any questionable theological ideas; some have tucked him under Campbell’s theological wing; I suspect (and hope) that others will continue to measure his doctrinal integrity selectively but sympathetically.

Barton Stone the Incurable Protestant

In his recent study of *The Democratization of American Christianity*, the American religious historian Nathan Hatch, himself from a Reformed tradition, paints Barton Stone as a premier representative of the sectarian populism that swept the early nineteenth-century frontier with its gospel of anti-clericalism, liberation of individual conscience, freedom of private interpretation of scripture, and defiance of sterile orthodoxies.²⁵ Stone was one among other Protestant iconoclasts in the early republican era who, in the wake of denominational disestablishment and the new crisis of authority in popular religious culture,²⁶ were fashioning an odd mixture “of high and popular culture, of renewed supernaturalism and Enlightenment rationalism, of mystical experiences and biblical literalism, of evangelical and Jeffersonian rhetoric.”²⁷ In Hatch’s view, Stone and his associates in the “Christian Movement” were uniquely adept at propagating their vision of “Bible only” religion: one that combined the assertion of everyone’s right to interpret the scriptures with the conviction that Bible truths were utterly self-evident and plain for all to grasp.²⁸ But the effect of it all was simply a greater privatization and so too fragmentation among Protestant sects.

Hatch’s appraisal might seem a bit reductionistic, or a less than sympathetic reading of Stone’s appeal to biblical authority for those of us who consider ourselves insiders to

the Stone-Campbell heritage. I am not going to judge its merits here. I broach it because the image of Stone as a Protestant sectarian was proposed some time ago by the late Dean Everest Walker, whose work has decisively shaped the thinking of *many* in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. To my knowledge, Walker's only substantial treatment of Stone comes in his little book *Adventuring for Christian Unity*, and here he brands Stone a "thorough-going Protestant" in his unreserved zeal for *private* judgment, and his unquestioning embrace of an "invisible" church in which visible sacraments had little importance.²⁹ For Walker, a "thorough-going Campbellian" who held up the standard of a biblically and historically informed "free church Catholicism," the term "Protestant" was inherently distasteful. It was after all against Protestantism, he said, that Alexander Campbell had held the line in the Rice Debate.³⁰

Walker, though committed to the Protestant principle of commending the Bible to the whole priesthood of believers, was especially put off by Stone's seemingly unrestricted privatization of religion in the name of restoring Christian unity, and so too his propagation of this kind of "Protestantism" in the name of *biblical* Christianity. Nathan Hatch observes that, "What strikes one in studying the use of the Bible in the early years of the American Republic, is how much weight becomes placed on private judgment and how little on the role of history, theology, and the collective will of the church."³¹ Such individualism, for Walker, was inherently sectarian and inevitably divisive. Stone's doctrinal extravagances in some areas, and his repudiation of all "doctrine" in others, have undoubtedly served notice to Christian Churches and Churches of Christ as to the liabilities of declaring radical independence from any traditioned rule of faith or consensual canon of truth. His legacy, in this respect, exposes a raw nerve in those churches that have placed a high value on biblical authority in matters of faith and practice, but also on the sanctified common sense of the church in interpreting scriptural precedents; churches that have cherished their freedom from a denominational magisterium but conceded a doctrinal debt to the historic *consensus fidelium* of the Church catholic.³²

Barton Stone the Irenic Unionist

Different schools of thought on Stone's basic commitment to Christian unity, and specifically to the union of the Stone and Campbell movements, have obtained among the independent Christian Churches. One perspective considers Stone as ultimately faithful to the Campbellian agenda of attaining Christian unity through a more or less programmatic restoration of New Testament Christianity. Sam Stone, current editor of the *Christian Standard*, has upheld such a view. In a 1962 article on Barton Stone—one that was explicitly aimed at countering the thesis of William Garrett West and other Disciples of the time that Stone was a "radical left-wing Protestant"—he rejects the suggestion that Mr. Stone was not fully committed to unity on a biblical pattern, or that he pleaded merely for a union in love or character but not based on express scriptural precedent.³³

This approach, which minimizes the theological differences between Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell and the various tensions between their constituencies (e.g., over name, evangelistic methods, etc.), and maintains that their movements were sealed in a common adherence to biblical authority, is widespread among independents. A particularly tender area, however, is the question of Stone's commitment to the essentiality of immersion. It is frequently noted that Stone ultimately embraced Campbell's view of the design of baptism for the remission of sins.³⁴ But was Stone ever willing truly to make baptism a test of fellowship and the principal criterion of church membership? To put it bluntly, was it the tolerant Barton Stone who originally inspired what many conservatives were to see as a blight on the Movement: the practice of open membership? J. D. Murch hints at such a conclusion by suggesting that Campbell alone held the line for closed membership while Stone opened himself to fellowship with the unimmersed.³⁵ Yet at least one apologist has argued that Stone came to embrace Campbell's position not only on the design of baptism but on closed membership.³⁶ This writer, whom I have failed positively to identify, suggests that despite some "unwise statements" by Stone in the decade of 1830-1840 (we can assume the allusion is to occasional statements in the *Christian Messenger* where Stone

expressed his unwillingness to consign the pious unimmersed to hell³⁷), all the churches once served by Stone became closed-membership churches and, in his last years, Stone was never accused of being "soft" on the baptism issue.³⁸

This conservative view, judging Barton Stone a trusted convert to the "Campbellian" approach to unity, vindicates his memory among many Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. But it is not the only view of Stone's beliefs about restoration and Christian unity. Again I note the position of Richard Phillips, who develops the idea that frontier pietism was the determining factor in Stone's interests in unity. Stone was more emotionalist than rationalist, more revivalist than restorationist. Phillips sees Stone's appeal to the Bible not as an initiative to recover unity through New Testament precedent, but as a sentimental attachment to the Bible as the source of "heartfelt religion" and the instrument of an "immediate contact with the Divine."³⁹ "Through the devotional use of the Bible, the Christian was to 'wait upon God and pray for the promise of the Holy Spirit'; the resultant feeling of love and fellowship with all Christians would create Christian union."⁴⁰ Accordingly, doctrinal agreements or concrete institutional unity meant nothing to Stone, who delighted more in simple freedom from denominational tyranny; in the end he seems merely to have capitulated to the pioneering efforts of Raccoon John Smith and John T. Johnson in the 1832 merger with the Disciples.⁴¹ Phillips claims to find in Stone really no articulated or measured position on the unity of the church. Stone subscribed to a view of union which, in the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* that he signed, was stated in basically negative terms: he just wanted an end to denominational bickering and a common observance of pietistic living.⁴²

If there is a consistent thread in the Christian Churches' memory of Barton Stone as a unity advocate, it is the sense that Stone was a lover and not a born fighter, a conviction certainly fostered by reading the autobiography as a fundamental source for the real Barton Stone. This may be the one point where Stone has bested the sage of Bethany in the imagination of independent church people. Campbell's controversial nature sometimes pales in the face of Stone's gentle spirit and simple virtue.⁴³ For some, Stone was not the intellectual that Campbell was, but his sheer character made

him a prophet of Christian unity anyway.⁴⁴ For others, Stone's revivalist warmth appealed to the mindset of common folk, in contrast with the more aristocratic Campbell.⁴⁵ James North puts it this way: Stone was a zealot of "practical" unity and in this respect manifested the "real spirit of the Restoration Movement."⁴⁶

Such an impression of Stone is perhaps best illustrated by Ralph Harter, a Christian Church missionary in India who, in a 1986 issue of the *Christian Standard*, proclaimed that he had been converted from a "Campbellite" to a "Stoneite" while working side by side with "denominationalists" in the cause of evangelizing lost peoples.⁴⁷ By experiencing solidarity or practical unity with other Christians in concrete acts of service, he says, he reclaimed the lost legacy of Barton Warren Stone:

I have travelled from Campbell and Scott to Stone and Smith, but all within the framework of the restoration movement. In fact, it was because of my allegiance to the principles of the movement that I made the switch. To have remained a rigid Campbellite would have been denominational.⁴⁸

Ironically, in light of this testimonial, there is some disagreement among independents as to whether Stone had always coalesced with the Campbells in the practical commitment to Christian unity expressly for the purpose of world evangelization. Some are inclined to think of this too as a fundamentally *Campbellian* principle that Stone learned only after coming under Alexander Campbell's sway,⁴⁹ or after reading Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*. The Stoneites' evangelistic fervor antedated that of Campbell and the Disciples, but it was a fervor that had to be tamed by the more rational method of the Reformers (viz., A. Campbell and Walter Scott).⁵⁰ Others would say that Stone and his associates were already fully convinced of the principle of unity for the sake of evangelism when they joined forces with the Disciples.⁵¹ Be that as it may, Stone's Cane Ridge experience had led him early on to see a certain confluence of the goals of unity and evangelism; and by the time of his famous 1841 address on "The Union of Christians" he revealed an unflinching commitment to union as instrumental to the

conversion of the world.⁵² Christian Churches have continued to cherish this principle,⁵³ and some at least have maintained that Stone was a faithful contributor in this respect. As J. D. Murch once commented, the evangelistic fervor of Stone, as well as that of Walter Scott, helped keep the Stone-Campbell movement from degenerating into "an abstract adventure in Biblical polemics."⁵⁴

Barton Stone the Frontier Mystic

I would briefly mention one last caricature of Stone etched in the memory of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and that is Stone the mystic. Despite the perception of his fidelity to the rational Lockean definition of faith, many call attention still to Stone's continuing psychological penchant for "experimental" religion. "There was a strong strain of the mystic in Stone," writes Orval Crowder. "It led him to feel one must begin with the consciousness of sharing the God-given Spirit of Jesus, a reality not to be described in terms of Locke's doctrine that all knowledge is delivered through the five senses."⁵⁵ The "unity of the spirit," as Stone called it, had to underlie any rational intellectual concurrence on revealed "facts."⁵⁶

We hardly need to document here the fact that the independent Christian Churches, in their strong identification with the rationalist epistemology expounded by Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott, have by and large distrusted any spirituality detached from the revealed Word in scripture. Some strong conservative spokespersons like Harold Ford have voiced the idea that the legacy of the more *emotional* Stone comes up in the recent history of the Christian Churches precisely whenever any "mystic subjectivism" or "charismatic Holy Spiritism" begins to creep up and take shape.⁵⁷ Tom Thurman of the Christian Restoration Association expresses the same concern when, in a recent editorial, he asks:

Why is the Cane Ridge meeting of 1801 being held up as a model for our present-day movement when, as a matter of fact, we do not trace our history to the excessive emotionalism of Barton Stone's Cane Ridge, but rather to the reasonableness of his 'Last Will and Testament'?⁵⁸

On the other side of the spectrum in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ is the interesting recent emergence of a charismatic fellowship—now turned denomination—that claims to be reviving the fires of Cane Ridge and filling the need for vital spiritual religion. The Christ's Church Fellowship (CCF), inaugurated principally (but not exclusively) by a group of former independent ministers, calls for an anointed renewal in all Christian congregations and a networking with the broader American charismatic movement across denominational lines.⁵⁹ It has openly embraced Barton Stone, the Cane Ridge revivalist, as the true exemplar of the Restoration Movement and the model in whom its future hope lies. One of its exponents states:

I do not question for a moment that if Stone were alive and present in a Charismatic meeting today, where the worship and preaching are anointed, where people are saved, healed, or delivered, and where prophetic utterances are welcomed, he would feel very much at home saying, 'It's the Cane Ridge revival all over again.' Cane Ridge is a vital part of our history. We should claim it once more.⁶⁰

Conclusions

Earlier I suggested that there is little evidence of a substantial knowledge of or interest in the figure of Barton Stone among the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. The reconstruction that I have attempted here of the memory of Stone in this branch of the Stone-Campbell heritage is for the most part, admittedly, a patchwork of reminiscences. One reason, to be sure, is that few "independents" have written of Stone or tried to reflect critically on his unique influence, being either disconcerted about certain features of his work or else more comfortable with letting him remain safely in the shadow of Alexander Campbell. But another reason is that, positively speaking, there really is no uniform image of Stone in the collective memory of these churches.

What we do find in the Christian Churches' memory of Mr. Stone is a remarkable mixture of revulsion, sympathy, embarrassment, and profound admiration. And we see this

curious mix of responses in all the different profiles of Stone that I have sketched: the reluctant heretic, the incurable Protestant, the irenic unionist, and the frontier mystic. Without doubt the overall appraisal of Stone's achievement has been shaped by the intervening years of strife in the Stone-Campbell heritage, especially for independents the tragic rift with the Disciples of Christ and the various ecclesiological and theological alignments that it produced. For some independents Barton Stone began looking more like a thoroughbred Campbellian biblical restorationist precisely when they perceived certain Disciples to be painting him a liberal ecumenist.⁶¹ The independents' memory of Stone (like the Disciples' and A Cappella churches' memory of him) has inevitably been selective, resurrecting particular aspects of his legacy, and spurning others, in the light of their collective experience. That will remain true, I think, whenever the churches grapple, critically or uncritically, with their own identity in relation to the formative history of the Stone-Campbell tradition.

Yet there is a sense in which Barton Stone himself begs for such selective appraisals. He was, historically speaking, a complex mix. Again I note the insight of Nathan Hatch that the likes of Stone amalgamated seemingly contradictory elements from their religious culture: supernaturalism and rationalism, experiential religion and biblical literalism, (we could add Calvinism and Arminianism).⁶² Coupled with that is the fact that Stone's positions and theology were hardly systematic or given to finalized formulations. Any church that would claim his legacy in contemporary times will inevitably have to put together the disparate or paradoxical elements in Mr. Stone and produce a coherent portrait of this complex individual that is both fair historically and edifying.

If at last we are to speak of lasting impressions, or ways that the legacy of Barton Stone has uniquely shaped or edified the fellowship of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, I would suggest three things. First, Stone was the forerunner of a theology of evangelism much cherished by these churches, both in his anti-Calvinist affirmation of the universal application of Christ's atoning work, and in his support of the principle of Christian unity for the sake of evangelical mission. That he was not the only or perhaps not

the original exponent of this theology of evangelism is, in the final analysis, beside the point.

Second, Stone has been something of a hero of free thinking and of liberation from oppressive theological scholasticisms, but, in the negative sense, has served as a living object lesson of the fact that the simple appeal to "Bible religion" is not *ipso facto* a sure route to right doctrine. Stone demonstrated the dangers of a biblicist nominalism that defied any sort of deeper "systematic" reflection on the scriptural revelation. Stone's Bible had a mystique but no mysteries. He seems, moreover, to have relegated its authoritative interpretation simply to the individual believer acting in good faith.

Third, Barton Warren Stone taught in a prophetic way that Christian unity is first an act of *repentance*, and of mutual submission in the bond of peace,⁶³ and that this must precede any formal reintegration of the churches. By many accounts he himself sought to live out this principle in his own affairs, even if he was naive to the mechanics of mergers. And this, in the end, will perhaps be his last, best legacy in the memory of independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. An exception is the study of G. Richard Phillips, "Differences in the Theological and Philosophical Backgrounds of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone and Resulting Differences of Thrust in Their Theological Formulations" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1968).

2. I am greatly indebted in this regard to the following respondents: Dr. James Van Buren, retired Professor at Manhattan Christian College; Prof. James North of Cincinnati Bible Seminary; Prof. Harold Ford of Puget Sound Christian College; Prof. R. Edwin Groover of Atlanta Christian College; Prof. G. Richard Phillips of Milligan College; and Dr. William J. Richardson, Adjunct Professor with Emmanuel School of Religion. I have also benefitted from personal conversations with Dr. Robert O. Fife, retired Director of the Westwood Christian Foundation and now Adjunct Professor with Emmanuel School of Religion.

3. It is interesting to note that in the most recent history of the Stone-Campbell Movement by a scholar from the independent churches, Henry Webb's *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1990), Stone does not receive his own chapter study, but is instead treated in a chapter on "Religion in Early America."

4. R. Edwin Groover, personal letter to the author (9 September 1991).

5. Cf. Dean E. Walker, *Adventuring for Christian Unity: A Survey of the History of Churches of Christ (Disciples)* (n.p., 1935), 25: "It would be a mistake to suppose Stone to be an orthodox evangelical. Two considerations involved him in heterodoxy—first, his conviction that Calvinism must be wrong, because it did not work in practical evangelism; and, second, his intellectual difficulties regarding the doctrine of the Trinity."

6. This is so despite the fact that the Calvinism that informs more recent American Evangelicalism is in many respects a mitigated version of what one finds in the Presbyterian orthodoxy of Stone's day.

7. See Enos Dowling, *The Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1964), 120, who notes the rejection of classic Calvinism as a key element of the Movement, for the sake of a more "sane evangelism" built on the plan of salvation in Acts. Cf. also Marshall Leggett, *Introduction to the Restoration Ideal* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1986), 31.

8. See Barton Warren Stone, with John Rogers, *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone* (Cincinnati: J. A. & U. P. James, 1847; reprinted Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1986), 29, 31-33.

9. Cf. Dowling, *The Restoration Movement*, 24-25; also John W. Wade, *Pioneers of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1966), 10-11; Leggett, *Introduction to the Restoration Ideal*, 28-29.

10. Cf. J. D. Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), 114-15; Henry Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity*, 60-61.

11. G. Richard Phillips, personal letter to the author (3 July 1991).

12. See, e.g., Phillips, "Differences," 383. Phillips's assessment of the essentially emotionalist or pietist fiber of Stone's thought provides an interesting contrast with D. Newell Williams's assertion that revivalist "rationalism" (a rationalism that rejected "dialectical" theology) was the key factor in his theological formation (see his "The Theology of the Great Revival in the West as Seen through the Life and Thought of Barton Warren Stone" [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1979], especially 78-140, 220-21). Perhaps in the end these different perspectives bespeak the fact that pietism and rationalism were destined to be mysteriously intertwined in Stone's theological development.

13. *Ibid.*, 343.

14. *Ibid.*, 345-46.

15. *Ibid.*, 349.

16. See *Ibid.*, 348-49.

17. Murch, *Christians Only*, 115. Webb (*In Search of Christian Unity*, 59-60) similarly observes that Stone ultimately recognized what the Church had historically called the "mystery" of the atonement, and thus he recommended a discussion of the topic only on *scriptural* terms.

18. See Phillips, "Differences," 357.

19. See Stone's fundamental criticisms in the *Biography*, 56-59, and in his *Atonement: The Substance of Two Letters Written to a Friend* (Lexington: Joseph Charless, 1805). Cf. the Socinian position, outlined by R. S. Franks, *The Work of Christ: A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine* (London and New York: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 362-77.

20. Cf. F. D. Kershner, "Stars," (ch. IV on B. W. Stone), *Christian Standard* 75 (1940): 380; Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity*, 60.

21. See William J. Richardson, *The Role of Grace in the Thought of Alexander Campbell*, First Annual Restoration Lectures (Los Angeles: Westwood Christian Foundation, 1991). In a personal letter to the author (29 August 1991), Prof. Richardson does suggest, interestingly, that Stone had already by 1805 rejected federal theology, and that later on, Campbell actually shared Stone's position and developed it in greater detail.

22. Cf. Phillips, "Differences," 351-52. Phillips points out that Stone, straddling the fence between Calvinism and

Arminianism, was prone to contradictions of which he may not have been fully cognizant: cf. his view of faith as rational assent to testimony as combined with his ultimate acceptance of "extended prayer" and the "mourners' bench."

23. B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 1988).

24. Kershner, "Stars," 380. Cf. Walker (*Adventuring*, 33), who was comfortable with calling Stone a "Socinian" in his Christology and Pneumatology.

25. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 13, 69-71, 173; cf. his "*Sola scriptura and Novus ordo seclorum*," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59-78 (and especially 71-73). Hatch's portrait of Stone, I would add, provides an interesting contrast with William G. West's characterization of Stone as an "American Left-Wing Protestant" with a passion for unity (see his *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* [Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954], 203-15). Hatch, unlike West, sees Stone not as a prophet of Christian unity but simply as one of those frontier egalitarians whose efforts ironically resulted in greater fragmentation in American Protestantism.

26. See Hatch, *Democratization*, 17-46.

27. *Ibid.*, 35.

28. Hatch, "*Sola scriptura and Novus ordo seclorum*," 71-72.

29. Walker, *Adventuring*, 25 (Walker adds here that Stone's movement was destined "to be, not a church, but an evangelistic movement of liberal theology and practical moment"). Cf. Phillips's discussions of Stone's "Un sacramentarian, Theologically Indiscriminate Protestantism" and "Nominalist Concept of the Church" ("Differences," 333-37, 360-64).

30. Walker, *Adventuring*, 37.

31. Hatch, "*Sola scriptura and Novus ordo seclorum*," 70. Cf. Richard E. Wentz's characterization of the Stone-Campbell movement in terms of "biblicist and rationalist Christianity" in his recent book *Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 213-17.

32. Cf., however, Robert O. Fife, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," *The Christian*

Quarterly 2 (1957): 13. Fife asserts that the commitment of Stone and the other signers of the Last Will and Testament to the free course of all Christians to the Bible as their rule was precisely a show of confidence in the *consensus fidelium*, “the confidence that the faithful Church will properly understand the Bible.”

33. Sam Stone, “Barton W. Stone—Champion of the Word,” *Christian Standard* 97 (1962): 629-30. He remarks (p. 629): “Many persons who have studied Stone’s life have seemingly done so with the hope of finding historical sanction for current changes in theology and polity. By analogy to journeying in an automobile, one might say that the liberal ‘back seat drivers’ of this country are trying to make Stone turn left! W. G. West for example, terms him an early example of American left-wing Protestantism.”

34. Here too there are dissenting opinions. Harold Ford, in a personal letter to the author (8 July 1991), expresses the belief that Stone actually was not even fully committed, as was Campbell, to the design of baptism for the remission of sins.

35. See Murch, *Christians Only*, 118-19.

36. “Barton W. Stone and ‘Open Membership,’” [author not named], 4-page essay in the Restoration Archives, Emmanuel School of Religion.

37. E.g., *Christian Messenger* 5 (1831): 180-81.

38. “Barton W. Stone and ‘Open Membership,’” 3-4.

39. Phillips, “Differences,” 338-40.

40. *Ibid.*, 340. See Stone’s own statement in his 1841 address on “The Union of Christians,” in *The Works of Elder B. W. Stone*, 2nd ed., ed. J. M. Mathes (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys, & Co., 1859), 262: “The Bible alone *in heart* believed, and in spirit obeyed, is doubtless the means of Christian union.”

41. *Ibid.*, 364-79.

42. *Ibid.*, 378, 382-84.

43. Cf. H. Eugene Johnson, *The Christian Church Plea* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing-New Life Books, 1975), 27.

44. E.g., Calvin Phillips, “Understanding the Restoration Movement: A Course of Study at South Side Christian Church, Munster, Indiana” (Unpublished D.Min. thesis, Christian Theological Seminary, 1984), 34. Cf. John Wade (*Pioneers*, 14), who notes how Stone’s “generosity and deep Christian love were obvious” in his discussions of unity with Campbell.

45. James Van Buren, personal letter to the author (15 July 1991); cf. Kershner, "Stars," 427: "It is no wonder that Hoosiers never got over their fondness for Barton Stone. Campbell could make greater speeches and write more flaming editorials, but he was not half so lovable a man."

46. James North, personal letter to the author (29 August 1991).

47. Ralph Harter, "From Campbell to Stone" ("Reflections" column), *Christian Standard* 121 (1986): 247-48.

48. *Ibid.*, 248.

49. E.g., Phillips, "Differences," 383. Cf. Johnson (*The Christian Church Plea*, 9), who also sees this as a basically Campbellian insight.

50. Cf. Dowling, *The Restoration Movement*, 68; Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity*, 159-60.

51. See Wade, *Pioneers*, 15.

52. See "The Union of Christians," in *Works*, 265-270.

53. See, e.g., John Mills, "The Restoration Movement—A.D. 2000: Rising Star or Falling Meteorite," *Christian Standard* 122 (1987): 412.

54. Murch, *Christians Only*, 117.

55. Orval Crowder, "Elder Stone and the Unity of the Spirit," *Christian Standard* 93 (1958): 110.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Harold Ford, personal letter to the author (8 July 1991).

58. Editorial, *Restoration Herald* 63 (1989): 2.

59. Cf. the review of its history in the *Paraclete Journal* (Spring 1988): 5, 12.

60. Don Basham, "Walking in His Fullness," *Paraclete Journal* (Fall, 1987): 5, 12. Cf. also David Reagan, "Holy Spirit Baptism," *ibid.* (January 1986): 13: "The church began with a great outpouring of God's Spirit (Acts 2). The Restoration Movement also began with a similar outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801. It is time for us to get back to our roots." Max Ward Randall has expressed sympathy with this plea in "The Holy Spirit and Revival: The Real Roots of the Restoration Movement," *ibid.* (Winter 1987), 13: "Unfortunately the Restoration Movement forsook emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit in revival, though without this work there probably would be no Restoration

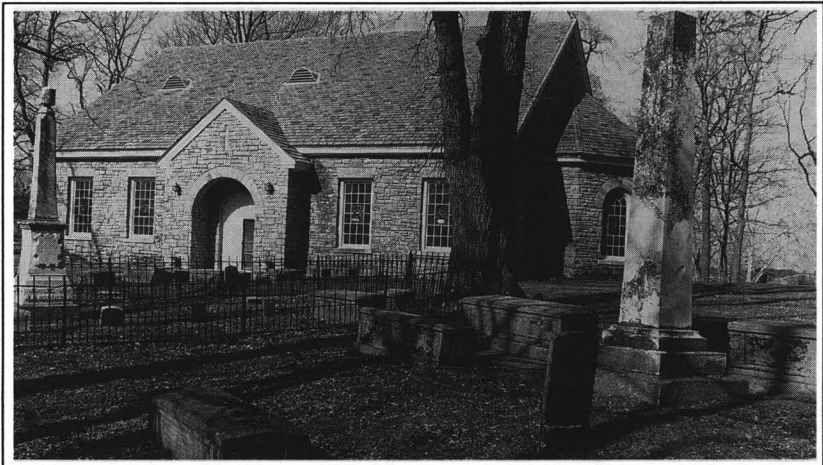
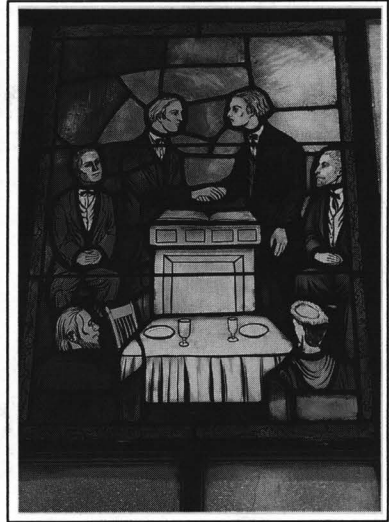
Movement. I believe one of the reasons for this is the transfer of leadership from Stone to Campbell—for some reason Campbell seemed to be afraid of revival, of its unpredictability. Also, as the dispensational view of the Holy Spirit became accepted in the Movement (the gifts and power of the Spirit are limited to the first century) our roots in a Spirit-empowered revival became an embarrassment.”

61. Cf. again Sam Stone’s characterization of B. W. Stone, countering the thesis of William Garrett West, as observed above, note 33 and related text.

62. See above, note 27 and related text.

63. Stone eloquently sets forth this principle in his opening editorial in the first issue of the *Christian Messenger* 1 (1826): 1-4.

This window is in the superstructure that has surrounded the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse since 1957. It depicts the handshake between Barton Stone and John Smith that symbolized the union of the (Campbellite) Disciples and the (Stoneite) Christians in 1832. Stone called this union the "noblest act" of his life. The superstructure (below) completely encloses and protects the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse. The entire site is dedicated to Christian unity.



Photos by David Perry

Massive "Cane Ridge Limestone" ledger stones, obelisks, and smaller markers identify the graves of some of the early members of the Cane Ridge congregation or of the surrounding community. Often mistaken for crypts, the ledger stones are actually solid rock.

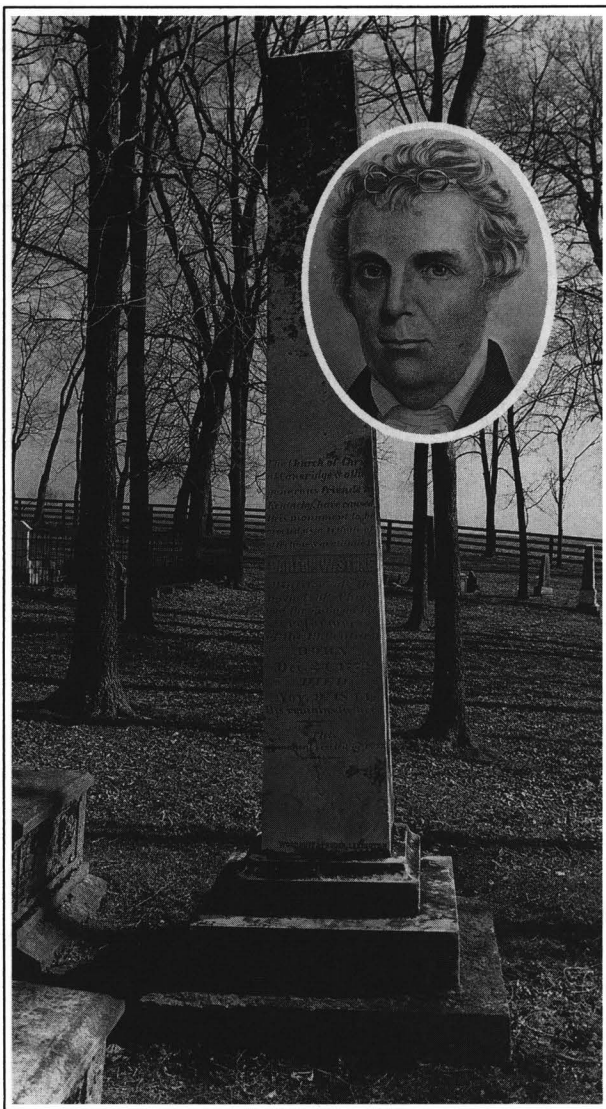


Photo by David Perry

This marker identifies the third burial site of Barton W. Stone, 1772-1844, and commemorates his leadership in the Reformation of the Nineteenth Century. Stone had been pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Cane Ridge at the time of the revival of 1801 and was a signer of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*.

CHAPTER THREE

“THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED”: BARTON W. STONE IN THE MEMORY OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST*

By C. Leonard Allen

In a 1928 biographical sketch in the *Gospel Advocate*, editor H. Leo Boles stated as well as anyone the dominant view of Barton Stone among Churches of Christ in the twentieth century. Boles spoke in reverent tones. He recounted how Stone broke from Presbyterianism, how he took the name “Christian,” how he adopted baptism for remission of sins soon afterwards, and how he formed churches after the New Testament order. Then when Stone came into contact with Alexander Campbell, Boles asserted, the two movements “had so much in common and so little difference” that they naturally began to converge. Stone emphasized “the New Testament idea and spirit of unity” and Campbell emphasized “exact conformity to the primitive faith and practice.” “It was not difficult to unite these two,” Boles concluded, “as both were New Testament teachings.”¹

The other slight and scattered references to Stone among twentieth-century Churches of Christ tell basically the same story. N. B. Hardeman noted in 1928 that Stone and Campbell, in their first meeting, discovered “almost perfect agreement between them.” In 1939 another historian wrote that the two men discussed certain issues for a time but soon realized that they held “practically the same” views. In 1945 another wrote that Stone’s plea provided “the beginning of the way out of confusion into the light of gospel truth.” He said that Stone’s movement could unite with Campbell’s because the two groups were “so nearly in perfect agreement.” Such harmony was “simply the result of studying the same book” and desiring to restore the New Testament pat-

tern. In 1957 still another historian wrote that Stone and Campbell “discovered that they were both teaching the same thing” and “standing on the same foundation.”²

The other modern histories give a few more nuances but paint essentially the same picture. One cites Stone’s own 1831 assessment of his similarities to Campbell—anticeedal, faith on evidence, and “baptism as a means”—but shows little firsthand awareness of Stone’s thought. Two other accounts list basic differences between the two (the name “Christian,” frequency of the Lord’s Supper, the emphasis on immersion, evangelistic methods, and the contrast between spirit and reason), but they emphasize that the “similarities far outweighed the differences” and note the “ease” with which the union occurred.³

In short, the picture of Barton Stone among twentieth century Churches of Christ looks something like this: Stone pioneered the rejection of creeds and the call to unite on the Bible alone; he met up with Campbell and both were struck by the similarity of their agendas; they easily ironed out a few minor differences and united in 1832, forming the great platform of truth on which the Churches of Christ have stood ever since.

One should not get the impression from this quick survey that Barton Stone occupies a prominent position in the memory of Churches of Christ. Far from it. Alexander Campbell stands as the great champion of restoration, and several of the historians explicitly date the movement’s beginnings either to the “Declaration and Address” of 1809 or to the founding of the Brush Run Church a short time later. Stone stands far back in the shadows. He often gets a couple of paragraphs or pages right before a chapter or two on Campbell.

But the basic problem is not that Stone stands back in the shadows in undeserved obscurity. It is not that he has been slighted and simply deserves somewhat more credit. It is rather that the Barton Stone standing back there in the shadows bears only the slightest resemblance to the man himself. To put it differently, one could say that the memory and legacy of Stone has been almost entirely lost among Churches of Christ in the twentieth century—even though his name remains known by many and his memory revered by some.

To outsiders this conclusion might at first sound simply curious or unsurprising. To insiders it may sound rash or perhaps a bit shocking. The point in such a conclusion, however, reaches far beyond arousing curiosity or producing discomfort. The point rather is this: when Churches of Christ lost the memory and legacy of Barton Stone by the early twentieth century they lost the theological soil in which they were first rooted and the theological legacy that deeply shaped their identity throughout much of the nineteenth century. My essay is an attempt to explain what was lost—and perhaps why.

R. L. Roberts for many years has argued that Churches of Christ owe their first and primary debt to Barton Stone and his “Christian” movement, not to Alexander Campbell.⁴ In a groundbreaking article published twenty-five years ago, Roberts traced the growth of the Stone movement from 1804 to 1832. He traced details of Stone’s extensive evangelistic work, which centered in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee, and chronicled the host of preachers under his influence who labored in small, mostly backwoods churches across the Ohio, Tennessee, and Mississippi valleys—men like Samuel and John Rogers, John Mulkey, Ephraim Moore, James Matthews, B. F. Hall, W. D. Jourdan, Tolbert Fanning, and Reuben Dooley.

Roberts located the strength of the Stone movement in the Cumberland Plateau region of Kentucky and Tennessee. He compiled a list of about 200 Stoneite preachers in the Cumberland region who were establishing what they called “Churches of Christ” long before Campbell was ever known there. Stone himself lived just above Nashville, Tennessee, for two or three years beginning in 1812. By 1832 there were as many as 380 Stoneite churches in Tennessee and northern Alabama, most of them established by men who were largely unaware of Campbell’s work. In addition, there were reports by 1824 of Stoneite preachers in Texas, and in 1835 several families—assisted by Davy Crockett—led a whole Stoneite church from West Tennessee to East Texas, from which the movement spread further west.⁵

As the Churches of Christ emerged as a separate movement somewhat later in the century, their geographical center and strength lay precisely in the Cumberland Plateau

region where the Stone movement had been dominant well before Campbell's influence. The Disciples of Christ, on the other hand, found their strength in a line stretching across the upper Midwest to Kentucky—the areas where Campbell's influence was most pronounced. Such regional alignments resulted not simply, or even primarily, from the sectional tensions associated with the Civil War, as some historians have tended to assume. As Richard Hughes has shown in a recent ground-breaking article, they were rooted, in fact, in a much earlier division—in the two sharply differing theological worlds of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell.⁶

To be sure, Campbell's influence, beginning in the mid-1820s, quickly eclipsed Stone's and became by far the dominant force in the movement. Campbell's precise "ancient gospel and order of things" provided theological structure and rational certainty for those distressed by experimental religion and perplexed by pluralism. It thereby brought polemical success in the competitive religious marketplace of Jacksonian America.

As the Stoneite "Christians in the West" gradually adopted Campbell's new theology of conversion and church order they underwent a subtle but significant transformation. Their spirit of freedom and openness diminished, giving way to a growing certainty that they had restored the ancient order.⁷ But behind this shift remained the worldview of Barton Stone. Unlike Campbell, who brilliantly tapped the profound cultural optimism of the period, Stone's outlook on culture was profoundly pessimistic, and this pessimism was rooted in an apocalyptic worldview largely foreign to Campbell. Hughes' key insight is that this apocalyptic worldview, overlaid with Campbell's biblical patternism endured in some form among the southern Churches of Christ throughout the nineteenth century. It endured as the legacy of Barton Stone.

Near the heart of Stone's theological outlook lay a solidly Calvinistic assessment of human nature. Though Stone reacted against some features of traditional Calvinism, especially the doctrines of election and predestination, he retained a profound sense of human sinfulness. Joined to that was an understanding of conversion rooted deeply in the Reformed tradition and reshaped in the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. Though he turned away from the

standard view of faith as infused by God, Stone continued to view conversion as a profound spiritual transformation wrought in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁸ For this reason he always looked favorably on revivalism and, as late as 1832, was willing to retain the mourner's bench—if such a practice, he said, was “contrary to the letter and spirit of the gospel,” then “we cannot conceive how God should have blessed so many in the practice of it.”⁹

Campbell, on the other hand, held a much more modern view of the conversion process. He found revivals with their experimental conversions revolting. The gospel, he insisted, “makes no provision for despondency”; indeed, people can bypass all the emotional paraphernalia of revivalism—they can simply examine the biblical testimony, promptly believe it and “obey the gospel,” receiving immediately the full assurance of salvation. Time and again he insisted adamantly that “all the converting power which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now exercises upon the human mind, is in the word” and its factual testimony to the Messiah. Conversion did not involve, as in classical Protestantism, a sudden and radical change of affections; rather, one entered a new state or legal standing before God—change of affections then gradually followed the acceptance of the gospel “facts.”¹⁰ Campbell, in short, rationalized conversion, turning it into an ordered, educational process that followed certain inviolable natural laws.

In these contrasting views of conversion or God's work in the individual we find an important clue to Stone and Campbell's contrasting views of God's work on the larger stage of history. James Davidson and others have argued recently that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the way people viewed God's work in history often paralleled their view of God's work in individuals. Put another way, the millennial views of the period often were models of conversion writ large.

This meant that if one viewed conversion as arising out of seasons of affliction, then one's view of redemptive history tended to reflect apocalyptic images of overturning and catastrophe. Evil would appear more deeply entrenched and intractable. Human effort would seem weak and insufficient. The heralds of progress would sound hollow and deluded. But

if one viewed conversion as preeminently rational, quick, largely free of humiliation or affliction, then one tended to see a progressing world, one surging forward to a brighter future. Evil would appear to be in retreat or at least being successfully repelled. Progress would appear all but certain before a conquering rationality. Optimism about human potential would soar.¹¹

Here then we find two worldviews, the one more culturally pessimistic and apocalyptic, the other more progressive and postmillennial. One was Stone's world, the other Campbell's. The difference between these two worlds was not simply a difference over the prospects for Christ's imminent return, that is, over precise pre- or post-millennial issues. Such a focus misses the important issues. As Hughes points out, the differing millennial views, rather, provide a window into a cluster of theological issues that, taken together, mark out two strikingly different theological visions. These visions involved differing views of divine agency in the world, of the Holy Spirit, of conversion, of the kingdom of God, of the stance toward culture, and of the nature of Christian discipleship.

Campbell's vision partook deeply of the early modern, scientific worldview. Beginning with the Protestant Reformation, he said, "the march of mind has been onward and upward"; in that momentous age "learning awoke from the slumber of centuries; science assumed her proper rank." His heroes were "Bacon, Newton, Locke, and all the great masters of science." The names and ideas of this triumvirate permeate his writings, and no person (except Jesus Christ) receives higher honor or greater encomiums. "What have these mighty minds achieved for science, physical, mental, and moral—for the world!" he exclaimed. Under their ministrations science has "advanced society ten generations in a single century."¹²

It was just such enormous confidence in scientific advancement that had given rise in the late eighteenth century to postmillennial views. Postmillennialism emerged not simply with the view that Christ would return after the millennium (that was common by the seventeenth century), but when Christians came to view history as a series of gradual, ordered, progressive steps toward a perfect or near perfect worldly order. Such thinking thereby instilled in believers

the confidence that, using scientific and moral "means," they could establish the kingdom on earth.¹³

The irony here is that Campbell's primitivist theology was profoundly modern. It was modern in its reverence for order and system, its view of divine agency in the world, its adulation of scientific empiricism, and its deep confidence in scientific and moral progress. But the primitivist impulse, with its powerful sense that one can transcend history and culture, veiled this modernity. It served as an enormous screen, masking the cultural particularities and modern intellectual traditions that remained always at work in the movement.

Campbell was brimming over with Enlightened optimism when, in 1833-36, he engaged a man named Samuel McCorkle in a lively exchange. McCorkle was an ardent apocalypticist and he struck hard at Campbell's basic assumptions. Those who sought "a gradual millennium," he said, were nothing more than "silly dreamers of the age." The world was too full of corrupt tradition and "spiritual drunkenness" to be "wafted by the gentle gales of prosperity into the Millennium." Despite the best human exertions, the world was growing steadily worse—only God could restore the divine government of the world to its "primitive rectitude."¹⁴

Such an apocalyptic scenario Campbell found unreasonable, fanciful, and downright aggravating. It represented the disillusioned dreamings of the disaffected or ignorant; it flew in the face of an enormous amount of hard evidence to the contrary. "Almost every common newspaper," he said, "presents insuperable difficulties to such a preposterous opinion." Science was on the march. And as science runs its inexorable course, he said, it will "exalt man above himself, and raise a generation of intellectual and moral giants from the pigmies of the present day." Indeed, science is "preparing the world for some great, and . . . most salutary and happy change." Already its path was strewn with remarkable accomplishments, all of which served to refute such an outlandish apocalyptic forecast.¹⁵

If Campbell dismissed such apocalyptic views with a wave of the hand, Barton Stone was deeply sympathetic to them. Though not agreeing with McCorkle in every particular, he held a very similar apocalyptic outlook. This outlook took shape to some degree early in Stone's career, and was

not simply the result of millenarian excitement in the late 1830s and early 40s as some historians have supposed. His youth was a time when the new American nation witnessed an enormous outpouring of literature on prophetic themes. So radical appeared the democratic revolutions that people on every hand turned to apocalyptic imagery to explain what was happening. The old, hierarchical structures of authority were breaking down, many sensed, and a "new order of the ages" was arising. The majority envisioned this new order in nationalistic and optimistic terms, while a minority saw it more in pessimistic and millenarian terms.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, apocalyptic expectations ran high at the Cane Ridge Revival and in the early Stoneite movement. "We confidently thought that the Millennium was just at hand, and that a glorious church would soon be formed," wrote participants Robert Marshall and John Thompson. And David Rice, a critic of the revival, noted the revivalists' "high expectation of the speedy approach of the Millennium."¹⁷ The old order, dominated by creeds, traditions, and the clergy, was passing away, they felt, and a whole new order of spirit-formed holiness and unity was fast approaching.

Between the revival and 1827 we know little of Stone's eschatological views, but by the late 20s the early apocalypticism had become an explicit premillennialism. In 1829 Stone wrote that "popular establishments . . . must fall in order to prepare the way of the Lord." God will "overturn, and overturn, and overturn, till Messiah shall reign alone." A short time later he spoke explicitly of Christ's thousand year reign on earth. "In his first coming he abode but a few years on earth," Stone wrote; "in his second coming he will abide 1000, and not leave the world, till he [has] . . . assigned to each one his eternal portion."¹⁸

By 1836 he could write that "the grand revolution has commenced, which will close at the coming of the Lord." The Great Revival had "loosened the shackles," liberating many from the bondage of creeds. And soon, he said, all remaining obstacles to unity "will be cast to the moles and bats." Evil clouds are gathering, but out of it "God will bring good—the union of Christians."¹⁹ While Campbell viewed unity as the means of ushering in the millennium, Stone here envisioned a divinely wrought millennium as the only way to any lasting unity.

To grasp the import of Stone's apocalyptic eschatology,

Campbell's postmillennial eschatology, in contrast, gave his ethics a different shape and tenor. Campbell had little basic sense of alienation from his culture. In his early years he did lampoon fashionable church buildings and oppose religious societies, but he eventually left such rhetoric well behind. For Campbell the church was identified primarily by its apostolic forms and ordinances, not so much through the visible marks produced by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Though he was a pacifist and could at times express his disillusionment with politics, he by and large embraced the myth of progress and the belief in the triumph of Anglo-Saxon civilization that so captivated the intellectuals of the moderate British Enlightenment. And so he could write that "There is now no cross under our government. In other words there is no persecution in our country Hence no man in these United States has to carry a cross for Christ's sake."²³ Campbell's thought in general reveals an ethic of accommodation far removed from the apocalypticism of a Barton Stone.²⁴

When in 1832 the two movements united, this fundamental difference in worldview lay deep and obscure. Controversy focused on things like the name "Christian," fellowship with the unimmersed, the frequency of the Lord's supper, ministerial authority, and evangelistic methods. As a result, the far larger difference was hardly ever articulated or perhaps even recognized. It was obscured by certain commonalities—by the common rejection of creeds and "human invention," by the common rhetoric of restoring primitive Christianity, and by the common goal of Christian unity. The two groups could unite in 1832 believing that they shared the same basic assumptions and goals. But the underlying difference in worldview remained—and it lay like a deep geological fissure hidden for a time beneath a somewhat placid landscape, its presence betrayed only by occasional tremors.

The deep faultline, of course, soon began shifting. And as it did the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ slowly emerged as two distinct groups. As Hughes has shown, the Churches of Christ retained the Stoneite worldview and clung to the primitivist elements of Campbell's thought, particularly his "ancient gospel and order of things" and his early opposition to all human "innovations." The Disciples of

we must see its close connection to his ethics. Throughout his career Stone issued the call to radical discipleship and separation from the fashions, preferments, and allures of the world. The Christian must be willing to surrender all "worldly gain," and even to see his family suffer hardship and persecution. The great spiritual snares, he warned time and again, are "the love of money . . . the love of ease and the dread of persecution." "To make religion wealthy, and honorable in view of the world," he said, "and to confer on it worldly ease and comfort, were among the first causes of its ruin and fall."²⁰ Such warnings and such calls to separation from the world make up a constant theme throughout all of Stone's writings.

Closely linked to this call to separateness was Stone's disdain for all human government (including America's) and his call for the Christian's non-involvement in it. Human governments, he believed, had arisen when human beings rebelled against God's government. All human governments, therefore, remained as vestiges of human revolt against the divine sovereignty. But Christians, those who are now citizens of God's kingdom, acknowledge and submit to the true and rightful sovereign, and therefore, Stone said, we "must cease to support any other government on earth by our counsels, cooperation, and choice."

For Stone this meant no political office-holding, complete pacifism, and even refusal to vote. It also meant rejecting all religious societies beyond the church. Christians "have no divine right," Stone wrote in 1829, "to build colleges for educating pious young men for the ministry, nor for Sundays Schools, nor tract societies, nor bible societies, nor rag societies, nor mite societies, nor any such money institutions."²¹ For the same reason that Christians stood aloof from civil government they also drew back from such humanly devised institutions.

Many people, of course, continued to refuse the "government of Jesus," and Christians "should not aid them in rebellion against the rightful sovereign." But the time is coming, Stone concluded, when the "lawful king, Christ Jesus, will shortly put them all down, and reign with his Saints on earth a thousand years, without a rival." Only then shall "the unity of Christians take the place of strife and discord."²² Here we see, in sharp relief, the close link between eschatology and ethics in the Stoneite movement.

Christ embraced the Campbellite worldview with its cultural optimism and retained a few elements of Stone's thought, particularly his concern for unity. What Churches of Christ as a whole did not embrace was Campbell's confidence in scientific and moral progress; indeed, they maintained a powerful anti-modern stance. What Disciples of Christ as a whole did not embrace was Stone's apocalyptic worldview with its deep suspicion of scientific and moral progress; indeed, they maintained a consistently modern stance.

Each group assumed a different stance toward the modern world. Churches of Christ maintained a sectarian stance toward the world, while Disciples moved by fits and starts toward a softer denominational stance. The one was constantly suspicious of culture and alliances with it, the other usually hopeful and optimistic about its promise—it was, after all, *American* culture and institutions they were dealing with. The one was marked frequently by apocalyptic (and sometimes explicitly premillennial) eschatology, the other by a postmillennial outlook attached closely to the progress of science and American culture. For the one, new developments in culture required above all a redoubling of efforts to preserve the old, primitively fixed way; for the other, such developments called for studied adjustments and adaptations. The primitivist Churches of Christ inevitably made certain adjustments (if in nothing else, at least in resisting modernism), though they did not intend to and certainly would not have admitted it.²⁵

Among the emerging nineteenth-century Churches of Christ, the memory of Barton Stone and familiarity with his writings faded fairly quickly. But his influence and legacy remained strong, especially in the South. The most important bearer of that legacy was David Lipscomb of Nashville, Tennessee, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* for fifty years and unquestionably the most influential leader of the southern Churches of Christ in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though Lipscomb imbibed much of Campbell's rational and common sense theology, his writings also reveal an apocalyptic worldview remarkably similar to Barton Stone's.²⁶

Lipscomb's earliest religious influences came out of the Stoneite movement. By 1831, the year of Lipscomb's birth, his father and uncles had been expelled from the Baptist church and had united with a Stoneite church. According to

Lipscomb, the first preacher of the reform movement he remembered hearing was Thacker V. Griffin at the Salem Church on Bean's Creek in Franklin County, Tennessee (a church established by the Stoneite preacher James Matthews). Griffin's name appears in the lists of "Christian" preachers in the early issues of the *Christian Messenger*. Lipscomb's mentor was Tolbert Fanning, who had been deeply influenced by several Stoneite preachers in his youth.²⁷ Campbell's influence, of course, also figured prominently. Lipscomb indicates something of the extent of it when he reported that he had read every issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* since he was ten years old.

Lipscomb published his apocalyptic views in many articles and in a little book entitled simply *Civil Government*. Like Stone before him, he believed that all human government represented the rebellion of humankind against God's sovereign rule and the transferring of allegiance to the kingdom of Satan. Due to this rebellion, the earth, which was once a paradise, became "a dried and parched wilderness" where sin and suffering permeated everything. Christ came, Lipscomb said, to rescue this world and to restore it to its "primitive and pristine allegiance to God." Christ mightily engaged Satan's rule and succeeded in re-establishing God's kingdom. But this kingdom in its present churchly form was not the "everlasting kingdom," but the kingdom in "a lower state of growth and development." But the time will come, Lipscomb believed, when that kingdom "shall break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of earthly origin." Jesus will come again and then "the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and all things in the world will be restored to harmonious relations with God."²⁸ Lipscomb clearly envisioned a restored millennial kingdom on the earth, though he refused to speculate about Jesus reigning for a literal thousand years.

For Lipscomb, as for Stone, this apocalyptic outlook deeply shaped his ethics. Christians should stand aloof from civil government, refusing to hold political offices, to participate in war, and even to vote. They should live lives of simplicity, sacrifice, and service, expecting as a matter of course the misunderstanding and scorn of the world.

This apocalyptic outlook characterized a sizeable segment of Churches of Christ throughout the nineteenth century. In the

early twentieth century, however, Churches of Christ largely cast off the apocalyptic worldview with its calls for radical discipleship. Some openly denounced Lipscomb's apocalypticism as heresy. One of the most influential men among twentieth-century Churches of Christ, for example, charged that Lipscomb had cultivated the seedbed for premillennialism; and he charged that Lipscomb's book, *Civil Government*, was "about as rank with false doctrine as one book of its size could be."²⁹ Among most people, however, Lipscomb's apocalypticism was simply ignored or forgotten. And so it remains to the present day.

Two episodes epitomize the rejection of the Stone/Lipscomb worldview in the twentieth century. In 1922 a young preacher came to work for a congregation in Memphis, Tennessee. His main purpose in coming, he said, was to build a new church building. He threw himself into the task and by 1925 the building was completed. In a lengthy report to the *Gospel Advocate*, the preacher estimated the building's value at \$125,000—an enormous sum in a time when a new Ford cost around \$300.

A sharp and lengthy response from James A. Allen, a protegee of Lipscomb and editor of the *Advocate*, followed the preacher's report. He wrote that a building costing that much money was "a satire on the spirit and genius of Christianity." He said it was "a sin that cries to heaven and will continue to so cry until it is sold and that huge amount of money given to the poor or used to have the gospel preached." Such a building, he continued, breeds "a spirit of worldliness that is incompatible with the true worship and service of God."

Allen concluded with words that could just as well have been written by his mentor David Lipscomb. "In the age when the church grew most rapidly," he wrote, "most of its members were common laboring people; and while some few of its members were men of wealth, they were taught to preserve their wealth by giving it away. They were taught to give to two objects—to help the poor and to have the gospel preached."³⁰

The other episode epitomizing the rejection of the Stone/Lipscomb worldview occurred during World War II. By this time the apocalyptic worldview of Stone and Lipscomb, with its dim view of all human governments and its sole allegiance

to God's kingdom, had eroded badly. With the war fever raging, the strict pacifist stance which had predominated in Lipscomb's time made little sense to many people. A preacher named O. C. Lambert expressed the prevailing attitude. "I lose faith in the Lipscomb Lion and Lamb story!" he proclaimed. Indeed, Lambert stated that Churches of Christ should call in all copies of "the Lipscomb book [*Civil Government*]" and burn them. So dangerous was its message, he was convinced, that it "would be outlawed now if the FBI knew its contents."³¹

With the apocalyptic outlook of Stone and Lipscomb cast off, what typically remained was a rigid and garrulous form of Campbell's biblical patternism and an exclusivism easily identifying Churches of Christ as the one true restored kingdom of God. What also remained was a constituency ever more at home in American culture and ever more content with conventional moral standards. The sense of separateness from the world remained a significant factor past mid-century, but it was like a cut flower; severed from its apocalyptic roots and buffeted by the winds of respectability, its days were numbered.

It is not surprising, then, that in 1928 H. Leo Boles and N. B. Hardeman could speak of the "almost perfect" agreement between Stone and Campbell, and that the other twentieth-century historians could follow suit. For, in the first place, the actual memory of Stone and his writings had disappeared well back in the nineteenth century; and, in the second place, his legacy that had been born under the name of David Lipscomb recently had been cast off. But Stone was too distant and too heroic to be branded a heretic—as some did Lipscomb. And so Stone, still left well back in the shadows, received a new persona, one fitting more easily into what Churches of Christ had become.

Today Churches of Christ are facing a period of considerable disorientation and change. Many members are questioning their recent theological heritage and reacting against it. In such a time, it may be that some will discover again the countercultural, apocalyptic vision of Barton Stone. That itself presents no small challenge, however. For it will mean, among other things, rediscovering the Stone that many of the builders rejected.

Notes to Chapter Three

*A few paragraphs in this essay are borrowed and adapted from my paper, "Primitivism in the Stone-Campbell Movement: Historic Strengths and Weaknesses," prepared for the conference on "Christian Primitivism and Modernization: Coming to Terms with Our Age," Pepperdine University, June 6-9, 1991. They are used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.

1. H. Leo Boles, "Barton W. Stone," *Gospel Advocate* (July 12, 1928), 654-55. See also J. W. Shepherd, *The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration* (1929, reprint ed., Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1961), who makes essentially the same point: Stone and Campbell found their differences "more imaginary than real, and they joined hearts and hands and God blessed them with the most important work since the apostolic age" (251). Behind both of these views lies the work of John F. Rowe, *A History of Reformatory Movements Resulting in a Restoration of the Apostolic Church* (G. W. Rice: Cincinnati, 1884), a work that did much to set the historiographical pattern for twentieth-century Churches of Christ. Rowe says very little about Stone, basically noting that Stone and Campbell "sought and accomplished the same ends by the same means" (175).

2. N. B. Hardeman, *Tabernacle Sermons* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1928), 3:121; E. M. Borden, *Church History, Showing the Origin of the Church of Christ, and Its History from the Days of the Apostles to Our Time* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1939), 348; Homer Hailey, *Attitudes and Consequences in the Restoration Movement* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1945), 43, 46, 47; Robert W. Brumback, *History of the Church through the Ages: From the Apostolic Age, through the Apostasies, the Dark Ages, the Reformation, and the Restoration* (St. Louis: Mission Messenger, 1957), 323, 341; on Stone see 291-99, 319-20, 323-24, 341-43. See also Leslie G. Thomas, *Restoration Handbook: A Study of the Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1941), 74-75.

3. Earl I. West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1949), 1:18-35; Bill J. Humble, *The Story of the Restoration* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1969), 31-32;

F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom: A History of the Church of Christ*, rev. ed. (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 1961), 341-47.

4. R. L. Roberts, "The Influence of B. W. Stone vs. A. Campbell in the History of Churches of Christ in America" (unpublished paper); R. L. Roberts and J. W. Roberts, "Like Fire in Dry Stubble—The Stone Movement, 1804-1832 (Part I)," *Restoration Quarterly* 7 (1963), 148-58, and "Like Fire in Dry Stubble—The Stone Movement (Part II)," *ibid.* 9 (1965), 26-40.

5. Roberts, "Like Fire in Dry Stubble (Part II)," 26-40; Roberts, "Early Tennessee and Kentucky Preachers" (unpublished paper).

6. Richard T. Hughes, "The Apocalyptic Origins of the Churches of Christ and the Triumph of Modernism," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 2 (Summer 1992), 181-214.

7. See Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, "From Freedom to Constraint: The Transformation of the 'Christians in the West,'" in *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 102-32.

8. See Newell Williams, "Barton W. Stone's Calvinist Piety," *Encounter* 42 (1981), 409-17; Williams, "The Theology of the Great Revival in the West as Seen Through the Life and Thought of Barton Warren Stone" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1979), 78-96.

9. Barton Stone, *Christian Messenger* 6 (1832), 86; cf. Stone, "Revivals of Religion," *ibid.* 5 (July 1831), 164-67.

10. Alexander Campbell, "An Address to the Readers of the Christian Baptist. No. IV," *Christian Baptist* 1 (March 1, 1824), 148; *A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice, on the Action, Subject, Design and Administrator of Christian Baptism* (Lexington: A. T. Skillman & Son, 1844), 629-33, 638, 643, 674-75.

11. James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought* (New Haven: Yale University, 1977), 129-41, 161-63; James H. Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," *Journal of American History* 71 (December 1984), 524-42. Both point to an "afflictive model of progress" in this period, where one cannot neatly oppose an optimistic progressivism to a pessimistic apocalypticism. With

this model, one hears two seemingly opposed claims: things are getting better and better, yet evil is rising. Resolution lay in the fact that, as God's kingdom progressed, Satan's opposition would mount. Progress thus took place through periods of affliction. Campbell (along with other advocates of a more rational religion) moved beyond the afflictive model, though he could fall back on it at times as his movement encountered unexpected obstacles.

12. Alexander Campbell, "Extract of the Opening Speech at the Commencement of the Late Debate," *Millennial Harbinger*, new series, 7 (December 1843), 530; Campbell, "Evidence of the Gospel—No. 3," *ibid.* 6 (October 1835), 472; Campbell, "A Word to Neutrals and Partial Reformers," *ibid.* 3 (January 2, 1832), 40.

13. On millennialism and the idea of progress, see David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), esp. 366-70. On the emergence of postmillennialism as a dominant outlook in early nineteenth century America, see Davidson, *Millennial Thought*, 269-76. Though Jonathan Edwards is called the first postmillennialist in America, a full postmillennialism developed only in the 1790s through early 1800s.

14. Samuel McCorkle, "The Signs of the Times," *Millennial Harbinger* 4 (February 1833), 64; "Signs of the Times (2)," *ibid.* (March 1833), 101, 105; "Signs of the Times (9)," *ibid.* (October 1833), 483.

15. A Reformed Clergyman, "The Millennium—No. 3," *Millennial Harbinger* 5 (October 1834), 550; Alexander Campbell, "McCorkle Reviewed—No. 4," *ibid.* 7 (April 1836), 159-61.

16. On millennialism in America at the end of the eighteenth century, see Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1985), and Nathan Hatch, "Millennialism and Popular Religion in the Early Republic," in *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1984), 113-30. On the crisis of authority, see Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 17-46. The 1790s saw a spate of premillennial interpretations of Christ's second coming, which paradoxically arose at the same time that postmillennial optimism was emerging as dominant. See Davidson, *Millennial Thought*, 272-75.

17. R. Marshall and J. Thompson, *A Brief Historical Account of . . . the Christian, or as it is commonly called, the Newlight Church* (Cincinnati, 1811), in *The Biography of Elder David Purviance* (Dayton, 1848), 255; David Rice, *An Epistle to the Citizens of Kentucky, Professing Christianity* (1805), quoted in Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky* (Lexington, 1824), 335.

18. Barton Stone, *Christian Messenger* 3 (February 1829), 91; Stone, "The Millennium," *ibid.* 7 (October 1833), 314. Cf. Stone, *ibid.* (December 1833), 365-67, and Stone, "To Elder William Caldwell," *ibid.* 8 (May 1834), 148. For a fuller treatment of Stone's eschatology, see Hughes, "Apocalyptic Origins of the Churches of Christ."

19. Barton Stone, "Desultory Remarks," *Christian Messenger* 10 (December 1836), 181-83.

20. Barton Stone, "An Humble Address to the Various Denominations of Christians in America," *Christian Messenger* 2 (January 1828), 50, 51.

21. Barton Stone, "Sectarianism," *Christian Messenger* 3 (June 1829), 194.

22. Barton Stone, "Reflections of Old Age," *Christian Messenger* 13 (August 1843), 123-25. Cf. Stone, "Civil and Military Offices Sought and Held by Christians," *ibid.* 12 (May 1842), 201-205. On such views among the Stoneite churches, see John T. Jones, John Rigdon, M. Elder, D. P. Henderson, "Report," *ibid.* 9 (November 1835), 250.

23. Alexander Campbell, "Opinionisms—No. 1," *Millennial Harbinger*, 5th series, 2 (August 1859), 437. See also Campbell, "Address on the Anglo-Saxon Language: Its Origin, Character and Destiny," and "The Destiny of Our Country," in *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (St. Louis, 1861).

24. We must be careful in accepting the ethical consequences that pre- and post-millennialists assigned to one another. Premillennialists sometimes charged that making the millennium metaphorical and postponing it would cause complacency, while postmillennialists sometimes charged premillennialism with causing withdrawal and despondency. But in this period both groups fail to fit the stereotypes that developed (and which historians have tended to perpetuate). On the nineteenth-century premillennialists' efforts to reform American culture and evangelize the world, see Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and Ameri-*

can Millenarianism, 1800-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970).

25. Even those Churches of Christ that have been the most separate, the most conservative and suspicious of the modern and innovative, nonetheless unconsciously embraced an earlier "modernism"—an approach to the Bible not currently modern but formerly modern. In this regard Martin Marty noted that the various conservatisms of the late nineteenth century "were, in large part, very modern inventions of these countermodernists." *Modern American Religion, Volume 1: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986), 194.

26. Establishing this theological linkage between Stone and Lipscomb is a key contribution of Hughes article, "Apocalyptic Origins of the Churches of Christ."

27. *Christian Messenger* 1 (November 25, 1826), 21. On Fanning and his early influences, see James Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement* (Dallas: Sweet Publishing, 1969), esp. 13-16.

28. David Lipscomb, "The Ruin and Redemption of the World," in *Salvation from Sin* (1913, reprint ed. , Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1950), 109-28; Lipscomb, *Civil Government: Its Origin, Mission, and Destiny and the Christian's Relation to It* (Nashville: McQuiddy, 1889), 44-93; Lipscomb, "The Kingdom of God," *Gospel Advocate* 45 (May 21, 1903), 328; Lipscomb, *Queries and Answers*, ed. J. W. Shepherd (1910, reprint ed. Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 1942), 360.

29. Foy Wallace, Jr. , "The Lipscomb Theory of Civil Government," *Bible Banner* 6 (October 1943), 5, quoted by Hughes, "Apocalyptic Origins," 204.

30. John Allen Hudson, "My Work with the Union Avenue Church," *Gospel Advocate* 67 (December 3, 1925), 1158; James A. Allen, response to Hudson, *ibid.*, 1158-59. For an analysis of this episode, see Don Haymes, "The Road More Traveled: How the Churches of Christ Became a Denomination," *Mission Journal* (March 1987), 48.

31. O. C. Lambert, "The Lipscomb Theory of Civil Government," *Bible Banner* 6 (October 1943), 3; Lambert, "The David Lipscomb Book," *ibid.* 7 (September 1944), 15; and letter from Lambert in Foy Wallace, "The Lipscomb Theory of Civil Government," *ibid.* 6 (October 1943), 3, cited by Hughes, "Apocalyptic Origins," 203.

CHAPTER FOUR

IS BARTON OUR CORNERSTONE?

By Richard L. Harrison, Jr.

There is a certain audacity in even suggesting that we might consider anyone other than our Lord as a cornerstone. Let us allow at least a little audacity as we play with an image and a name and as we consider the significance of one human being.

What did Barton W. Stone contribute to the heritage and destiny of the Disciples? When the Christians and Disciples united in 1832, the Stone churches constituted about half of the new Christian/Disciples church. Stone thus contributed significant numbers to the movement, allowing it to achieve the necessary critical mass to survive the coming traumas of the nineteenth century.

Stone brought an understanding of the Lord's Supper that emphasized openness, and resulted in a change to a practice of open communion in most of the Campbell churches. He brought an understanding of ministry that saw the church as having a reality beyond the local congregation, and that the ministry of the church was based both on the whole church and on the congregation. This shared responsibility and accountability, formally instituted among Disciples in the 1850s in North Carolina, has come to be the chosen path of modern day Disciples in the form of regional commissions on the ministry.

He shared with the Campbells an emphasis on the authority of scripture, the propriety of believers' baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the competence of the congregation to manage its own affairs.

In two areas, however, he gave an emphasis, a perspective and interpretation that went some distance beyond the Campbells. The first of these is in the area of liberty and freedom of interpretation. Yes, both Campbells also spoke of such things. But Barton Stone lived an acceptance of diversity, he lived a valuing of other viewpoints that clearly moved

further than the Campbells, or at least further than Alexander Campbell wanted to go within the church.

This is seen in part in Barton Stone's willingness to think anew about any and every Christian doctrine that crossed the path of his mind. He challenged the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the nature of Christ and the atonement. He believed that when one based Christian belief first and foremost on the text of the Bible, it was not possible to adhere to the traditional views of these subjects. But he never made his own view of things a test of membership or fellowship or communion.

Likewise, although he believed in and practiced baptism by immersion, he did not require immersion for membership or communion. His opposition to creeds was at these two points. First of all, creeds, he said, detracted from the primary authority of scripture. Secondly, and, of equal importance, where creeds were used as tests of fellowship they led to division among Christians.

It may be that Alexander Campbell's views on the liberty of opinion were colored, have been colored, in his own and our minds by his participation in public debate. At any rate, where the Campbell churches had insisted on immersion as a prerequisite for admission to the communion table, they learned from Stone that it was not their responsibility either to invite or restrict access to the Supper. Likewise, the vast majority of Stone churches for a hundred years learned from the Campbell churches to require immersion for church membership. The differences between Stone and Campbell on liberty of opinion are primarily matters of emphasis and general attitude.

There is no clearer place of influence by Barton W. Stone on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) than in the area of Christian unity. Having said that, it is important also to say, in agreement with the comment by Ronald Osborn, that what Stone had to say about Christian unity is little related to the modern ecumenical movement, except in the underlying emphases.¹

For Barton Stone, the concern for Christian unity began in earnest in his experience of the great revival at Cane Ridge. Here he saw the positive impact of Christians of various denominations laying aside their particular doc-

trines and working together "simply" as Christians. "Simply" Christians and "simple" Christianity would be an important mode of expression for Stone. In the frontier environment, in an age that valued "simple gifts" and simple living, in an age that saw simplicity as a matter of returning to roots, of "restoring" the simpler times, Stone saw the possibility that if Christians would return to the simple gospel proclaimed in scripture, Christians would find it possible to lay aside sectarianism, partisanship, denominationalism, and the church as created by Jesus in the first century would be reclaimed.²

For Stone, there were a number of competing roads that claimed to lead to Christian union, which he sometimes described as "Book Union," "Head Union," "Water Union," and "Fire Union."

The first of these, "Book Union," relied on creeds as "authoritative." Accept our creed, it was said, and we will be united. As far as Stone was concerned, such a use of creeds added to schism and disunity, and he believed that "as light and liberty progress, they will be banished from the christian community."³

Secondly, there was "Head Union," which Stone defined as "a union founded on opinion." He observed that many Christians "denounce with much zeal, all creeds and confessions, as sectarian and anti-christian. They extol the Bible, and boast of it as being their only creed and discipline." He says that on the face of this, this is a correct position, but when they encountered differences of opinion over what was meant in various parts of the Bible, they would demand that all follow their opinion, for their "opinion was absolutely essential to salvation. . . . Now how does this union differ from that formed on a human creed? The only difference is this, that a human creed is made up of opinions, and written or printed in a book. Each is equally authoritative." Stone then says something rather remarkable: It is better to have written creeds than unwritten opinions that have the authority of creeds. To try to force union based on opinions "is not worth a straw, and never can effect christian union, or the union of primitive christianity."⁴ One does wonder if Stone had in mind some of the more extreme followers of Campbell here, those Campbellites who would have liked to see Camp-

bell move in narrower circles. This question is even more pointed when Stone looks at the third form of unity.

“Water union,” according to Stone, is “a union founded on immersion into water. But fact proves that this union is easily dissolved, and that immersion will not keep those who are immersed, united.”⁵ Surely this is a jab at the Campbellite-Baptist history. Stone says that this four-fold analysis of Christian union was based on a sermon he had preached twenty-five years earlier, which would have been about the time he himself was immersed, and prior to the rise of the Campbell movement. Nevertheless, one does wonder.

The fourth form of union, the only workable form, according to Stone, is “The union of fire, . . . defined to be the unity of the spirit—a union founded on the spirit of truth. Fire effects a perfect union—so does the spirit of burning, the spirit of Jesus; and no union but this will stand, no other union is worth the name.”⁶

This form of union is not based on opinions, “whether written or not written, but in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners; and by a cheerful obedience to all his known commands.” This kind of union, and this spirit that makes such union possible, “leads us to love God and [God’s] children. . . . This is the very union for which Jesus prayed, and by which the world will believe that he is the Christ of God.”⁷

This is the tone of virtually every comment made by Stone on Christian unity, at least those that survive through the printed record. For the most part, Stone did not address how the Christ-spirit would effect union, lead to union, nor did he talk in detail about how a united church would look and function. He rather naively assumed that the New Testament carried within it a clear outline of the structure of the church.

But he did talk about what could happen if the church were united, if Christians did live in the spirit of Christ. Quoting John 17:20-21, he said that the only way for the world to believe the Christian gospel would be for Christians themselves to claim each other, to love each other, to be united. “Why has not the world believed in Jesus? . . . Because the means ordained for this purpose is withholden from them; I mean the union of Christians. Were they one, . . . the world would believe.”⁸

Some twenty years after C. C. Ware published his biography of Stone, William Garrett West, in one of the most

important studies of Barton Stone, argued effectively that Stone's "spirit and active practical interest in unity" was the primary cause of the successful union of Disciples and Christians in 1832. West saw correctly that Stone understood Christian unity would never come as a result of the restoration of "New Testament doctrines," but of New Testament life, as it is seen in the love of Christ."⁹

It was the character of one's life, the way one lived as a Christian that was paramount to Stone, not doctrine or structure. He generally stayed away from large ideas of Christians meeting to consider unity. There were a couple of exceptions. In the mid-1830s, for instance, the great Congregationalist leader Lyman Beecher called for a gathering of representatives from all the denominations for the purpose of ending sectarian strife, and beginning the work of cooperation in the evangelism of the world. Stone responded:

Could I be heard by Dr. Beecher, I would beseech him to begin the good work, so heartily, and religiously proposed by himself. Let him designate the time and place of this delegation's meeting. Let every Journal in the United States be requested to publish them—then we shall see realized, at least, in part, that for which Christians of every name have been long sighing and praying—the UNITY OF CHRISTIANS.¹⁰

In 1841 he again spoke of a general conference. He said, "Would it not be a good thing to have a convention of the various denominations of Christians to be holden in some central point in America, and there and then consult upon some general points respecting the union of Christians?"¹¹

Again, no specifics. And there was an underside. On both of these occasions, one of the issues leading to the call for Christian unity was the perceived threat to Protestantism by the growth of Roman Catholicism. The period from about 1830 until after the Civil War saw a bitter anti-Catholicism in American life and culture. Political parties were born over this one issue. The attitudes of Stone and the Campbells were no worse, and were often less harsh than those of other Protestant leaders of the day. This is particularly true of Alexander Campbell who vigorously defended the rights of

Roman Catholics. Unfortunately, the talk of Christian unity seemed often to assume that to be Christian was to be equated with being Protestant.¹²

Despite this negative tone in the nineteenth century views of unity, Stone's understanding was overwhelmingly positive. As he reflected on Christian unity, he often centered on Christian piety, the life of the individual in response to and in concert with God and God's Holy Spirit. He had come to despair of "church" union and thus focused on "Christian" union, as Newell Williams has so clearly shown. "For Stone a union of churches that was not a union of true Christians—even if such could be achieved—would not be the union of believers for which Jesus prayed."¹³

So Stone turned to the individual Christian, saying, "Let every christian begin the work of Union" internally, within the self. "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" your fellow human beings, those "who bear the image of the heavenly—then you will have the spirit of Jesus to love the fallen world, and like him to sacrifice all for their salvation." Those who live by "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."¹⁴

Stone concluded this essay written late in life with words that speak the truth in any age: With God's Spirit, "partyism," sectarian divisions, "will die." Without God's Spirit "anti-partyism in profession only, will become as rank partyism as any other, and probably more intolerant."¹⁵

What Barton Stone taught and stood for was the fundamental task of living the Christian life, of living unity by being in communion with other Christians. He believed it possible to disagree broadly while loving deeply. He advocated an attitude towards other Christians motivated by the example of Jesus. He called for Christian unity as a habit of the soul, that in which the soul lives, that by which and through which the soul gives expression to itself. He saw Christian unity as the roadway to being in relationship with the God who is love.¹⁶

If this seems an obvious prerequisite for Christian unity, let us observe that much of church life sometimes lacks the obvious, whether within denominations, including the Disciples, or among denominations.

Let us be clear: There can be no significant unity without a form for that unity. There can be no unity without expressions of that unity in ways that affect the church and the world to which the church makes witness. There can be no unity without some form of common confession of the faith. But none of these categories, form, expression, confession, can have life unless they are animated by a spirit of love, a spirit which leads to caring for one another enough to accept differences with celebration.

This is what Barton Stone offers the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Church Universal. It is that preliminary step which is essential to unity. It may indeed be the one common essential in the faith, that is, that we will be known by our love for one another, by our openness to learn from each other and value each other, especially where we do not agree with each other.

So long as we begin here, efforts for Christian unity have a chance. So long as we begin here, the gospel message of good news will be proclaimed by our very lives. When we begin by loving our fellow human beings, the attitudes of Barton Warren Stone become, if not *the* cornerstone, certainly a part of the foundation on which can be built an edifice of beauty and function, of profound meaning and purpose, of witness and ministry. That building is called the Church.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Ronald E. Osborn, "Crisis and Reformation," *The Reformation of Tradition*, edited by Ronald E. Osborn, vol. 3 of *The Renewal of Church: The Panel [of scholars] Reports*, edited by William Barnett Blakemore (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 27.

2. While the "frontier environment" encouraged simplicity, the Stone movement brought to that setting the values of the major intellectual and cultural movements of that day which they themselves sought and advocated the simple, the natural, the orderly. To seek the simple is not the same as to be simplistic.

3. Barton Warren Stone, "The Retrospect," *Christian Messenger* 7 (October 1833):314-15.

4. *Ibid.*, 315.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Barton Warren Stone, "The Union of Christians," *Christian Messenger* 11 (March 1841):331.

9. William Garrett West, *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 111. As Leroy Garrett has observed, "Stone was more a unionist, Campbell more a restorationist, while both were reformers" (*The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* [Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981], 125).

10. Barton Warren Stone, "Remarks," *Christian Messenger* 9 (December 1835):282-83.

11. Barton Warren Stone, *Christian Messenger* 11 (March 1841): 247.

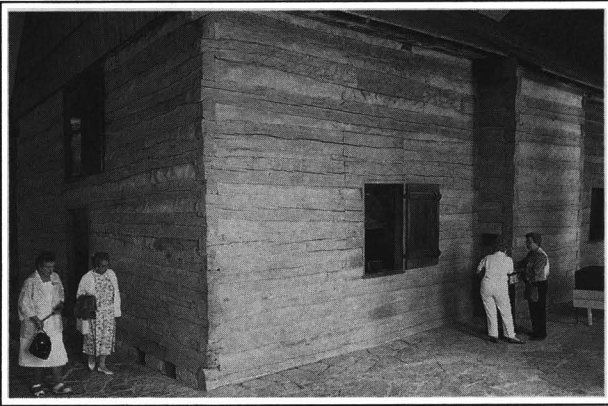
12. See, for instance, Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); John Highan, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963); and Agnes Geraldine McGann, *Nativism in Kentucky to 1860* (Washington, D.C.: n. p., 1944).

13. D. Newell Williams, "The Theology of the Great Revival in the West as Seen through the Life and Thought of Barton Warren Stone" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt, 1979), 169.

14. Barton Warren Stone, "The Union of Christians," *Christian Messenger* 11 (March 1841):334.

15. *Ibid.*

16. See D. Newell Williams, "Barton W. Stone's Calvinist Piety," *Encounter* 42 (1981):409-17; see also his *Disciples Piety: A Historical Review with Implications for Spiritual Formation*, Disciples Divinity House Discussion Papers (Chicago: Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, n.d.).



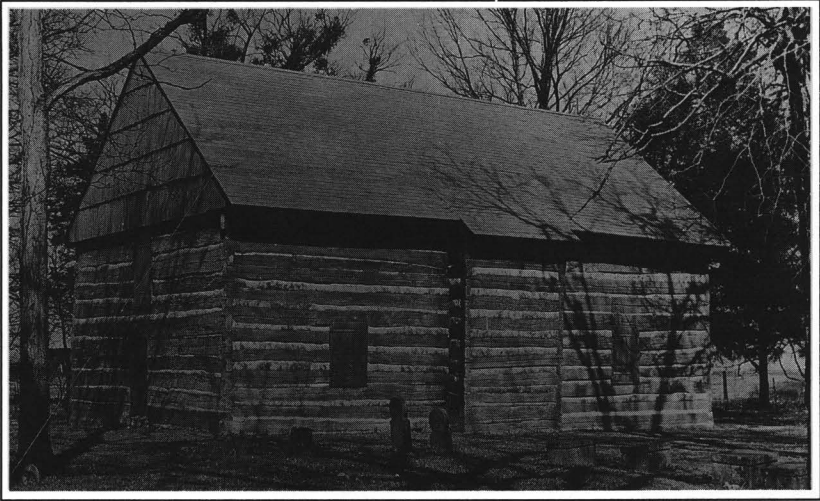
The original exterior of the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse, as well as the interior, is clearly visible from within the walls of the protective stone building.

Photo by David Perry



Photo by Walt Johnson

Although recent gatherings have not equalled the reported attendance at the Cane Ridge revival, crowds may still be drawn to the Ridge. An estimated 1,000 persons attended the Cane Ridge Day celebration in June of 1991.



The Cane Ridge Meetinghouse has stood on its original foundation for over 200 years. It may be the largest single-room log structure in the United States.

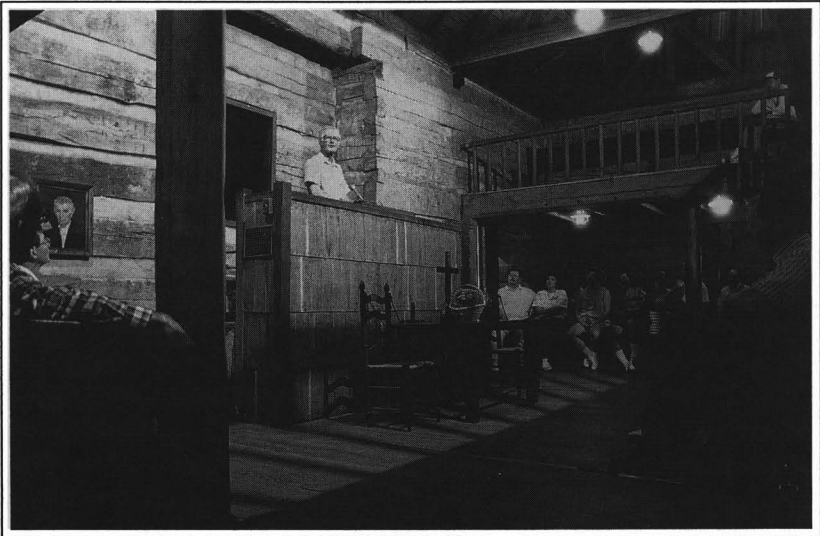


Photo by David Perry

Franklin McGuire, Curator of the Cane Ridge Preservation Project, stands in the pulpit of the old meetinghouse. The gallery, visible on the upper right, stands freely on eighteen posts. It was originally used by African-American members of the congregation.

CHAPTER FIVE

BARTON W. STONE'S REVIVALIST THEOLOGY

By D. Newell Williams

In the fall of 1803 Barton W. Stone and four other members of the Synod of Kentucky withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Synod rather than suffer censure for advocating Stone's theology. Participants in the conflict magnified the differences between Stone's views and those of the Synod. Historians have generally followed suit. To be sure, Stone's doctrine of faith differed from that of his opponents in the Synod. This difference can be accounted for by the impact of rationalism on Stone and by the insight that he claimed to have gained from his observation of the rapid conversions characteristic of the Great Revival. What often goes unnoted when Stone's views on faith are compared to those of his opponents in the Synod are the fundamental continuities in the theologies of the two parties. For example, in sharp contrast to the New Haven Theology popular among Northern revivalists of the era (which taught that once sinners are awakened by the Holy Spirit to their dangerous situation, they can *choose* to be saved out of mere concern for their own good), Stone—*along with* his opponents—taught that sinners, awakened by the Holy Spirit to their dangerous situation, *will* choose to be saved *only after* the Holy Spirit has renewed their *wills* with love for God. The purposes of this chapter are (1) to trace the development and character of Stone's doctrine of faith, (2) to assess the differences between Stone's theology and that of western Presbyterians who opposed his position, and (3) to identify the appeal of Stone's doctrine of faith to those western Presbyterians who accepted his views.

Development and Character of Stone's Views on Faith

Stone's theological background, like that of most western Presbyterians, was New Light. The New Lights were those Presbyterians who had supported the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century.¹ Stone learned this theology in the 1790's while he was a student at David Caldwell's Academy in North Carolina. Stone's most influential teachers of this theology appear to have been Caldwell and an earlier student of Caldwell's, James McGready.² McGready would later become the leading preacher of the early phase of the Great Revival. Following McGready's death, the sermons that he had preached over and over again throughout his ministry in North Carolina and Kentucky were collected. They are an invaluable source for examining both the theology that Stone was taught by McGready and the content of McGready's preaching during the Great Revival.

McGready taught that human beings were created to know and enjoy God. As a result of humanity's first sin, humans are under the power and dominion of sin—they have lost the ability to know and enjoy God. That first sin, and all subsequent sin, is defined by McGready as "refusing to choose, love and delight in God's law and government."³ As a consequence of humanity's first sin, humans are chronically unhappy, despite their valiant efforts to achieve happiness through the satisfaction of their "animal nature," the possession of "riches" and "honors," and the practice of a "religion of external duties" which is thought to appease a God whose "infinite glory" they do not perceive.⁴ Another consequence of humanity's first sin is humanity's continuing disobedience of the Divine law. This law requires not only external acts, but the love of God with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. Having lost through sin the ability to know and enjoy God, humans are incapable of obeying the command to *love* God. Thus, humans stand under the wrath of God and will suffer indescribably horrible punishments after death.⁵

McGready proclaimed that God has chosen to save a portion of humanity from the consequences of humanity's first sin. The instrument of this salvation is Jesus Christ. Through his life and death Christ had "paid down to the

justice of God the whole infinite sum of the elect's ransom." The benefits to the elect achieved by Christ's life and death are twofold: (1) release from the punishment for sin required by God's law and (2) release "from the very being of sin; from its dominion and enslaving power." In other words, through Christ the elect are to receive both pardon for sin *and* spiritual regeneration—renewal of the ability to know and enjoy God.⁶

McGready insisted that salvation from the consequences of humanity's first sin is God's gift to the elect. There was nothing that one could do to earn salvation. Nevertheless, McGready declared that only persons who "flee the wrath to come" by applying to Christ for salvation could have any hope of receiving salvation. In response to the objection that since God has chosen to give salvation to the elect, sinners need not bother applying to Christ for salvation, McGready answered, in the tradition of his New Light mentors, that "it is the will of God" that sinners apply to Christ for the gift of salvation.⁷

How did one "apply to Christ" for salvation? McGready answered, "by using the means of Grace." What are the means of grace? In one sermon McGready listed eight: (1) forsaking "vain companions, vain conversation, and every known sin;" (2) diligence in performing "every known duty;" (3) reflection upon one's "dreadful condition while destitute of an interest in Christ;" (4) attention to the "voice of conscience" and to "every motion of the holy Spirit;" (5) crying out to God "to speak peace or pardon to your soul;" (6) resolving "never to rest" in one's "reformatations, duties, prayers, tears or melting frames" as a substitute for love for God; (7) meditation upon "the fullness and freeness of the great salvation which is provided for miserable, lost, perishing sinners of every description;" (8) trusting in God to give you salvation—pardon for sin and renewal of the ability to know and enjoy God.⁸

McGready urged that sinners not only flee the wrath to come, but strongly advised that they flee *without delay*. In accord with New Light tradition, he taught that there is a certain time in the sinner's life when the sinner *may* be saved. This is the time when the Spirit of God awakens the sinner to the sinner's dreadful situation under sin and calls the sinner to apply to Christ for salvation by use of the means

of grace. After the sinner's "day of grace has passed," the sinner is no longer troubled by the Spirit and is thus beyond the reach of grace. To resist the Spirit, McGready warned, was to commit the unpardonable sin. Sinners were to seek salvation without delay, lest they "sin away" their day of grace.⁹

For New Lights the doctrine of the day of grace was held in tension with the doctrine of election. To be sure, God had chosen particular individuals to be saved and particular individuals to be damned before the foundation of the earth. Nevertheless, sinners who resisted the Holy Spirit were responsible for their damnation.

In keeping with New Light tradition, McGready taught that the Spirit uses the sinners' seeking of salvation to convince them that they cannot save themselves. Knowledge that one cannot save oneself was understood as a necessary preparation for salvation.¹⁰ According to the New Lights, God saves sinners by giving them a view of the "glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." The glory of God in Jesus Christ was identified as the *excellence* of the One who freely saves *helpless* sinners. Thus, only persons who understood themselves to be helpless sinners could perceive the glory of God in Jesus Christ.¹¹

New Lights taught that a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ creates love for God. "No sooner," McGready wrote, "does the 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus,' shine into their souls, than they are enraptured with his excellency, and their hearts are filled with his love." Such love, in turn, produces true repentance. Having caught a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ, sinners grieve over the "evil of sin" for they see more clearly the character of God against whom it is committed, and the lengths to which God has gone to redeem them from its power. However, McGready stressed that the love for God and consequent sorrow over sin which is born of a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ is not based upon anything that God has done for the sinner in particular, but upon the glory of God who freely saves helpless sinners; it is a love for God in and of God's self, not a "love" for God for God's benefits to oneself.¹²

McGready taught that to enjoy the benefits achieved by Christ's life and death (pardon for sin and renewal of the

ability to know and enjoy God/release from the power of sin) one must receive them; that is, one must "come to Christ." McGready identified the elect as those whom the Spirit "makes willing" to come to Christ for pardon and renewal. Since, for McGready, sin is refusing to choose, *love, and delight* in God's law and government, it is only the love for God in and of God's self, born of the disclosure of God's glory in Jesus Christ, which overcomes sin and makes the sinner *willing* to come to Christ not only for pardon, but for spiritual renewal—for release from the power of sin. In other words, only persons who want to be free from the power of sin (and not merely free from its penalties) will want to come to Christ. And, only persons who love God will want to be free from the power of sin. Thus, the elect are those who, having seen the glory of God in Christ Jesus, love God and willingly come to Christ.¹³

In the manner of his New Light instructors, McGready cautioned that the glory of God in Jesus Christ is "not seen by the eye of the body, or of the imagination." Rather, as with the sinners' awareness of their helplessness to save themselves, it is "beheld by the understanding." For McGready, as for his New Light forebears, God used "rational" or "moral" means—ideas—to influence, indeed, to save, God's rational creatures.¹⁴

Stone's doctrine of faith grew out of his intellectual struggle with the New Light Presbyterian theology which he had been taught and out of his observation of the rapid conversions of the Great Revival. New Light Presbyterians understood that truth can be paradoxical, that the implications of one truth may be contradicted by another truth. Thus, New Light Presbyterians could teach that God has chosen to save particular individuals and to damn others, a doctrine which implies that sinners need not bother applying to Christ for salvation, while asserting that it is God's will that sinners apply to Christ for salvation. Acceptance of the paradoxical character of truth (common among Reformed Christians prior to the Enlightenment) also allowed New Light Presbyterians to affirm the seventeenth-century Westminster Confession. This confession states that "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy council of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass" (a

doctrine that would seem to imply that human beings are not accountable for their actions), but adds that this doctrine is not to be interpreted so as to make "God the author of sin," to suggest that the "will of creatures" is violated, or to take away "the liberty or contingency of second causes."¹⁵

Stone, though taught New Light Presbyterian theology, was a product of the Revolutionary era in America that had been charmed by the philosophy of John Locke. In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke had distinguished between propositions that are true "according to reason," propositions that are "above reason," and propositions that are "contrary to reason." Propositions that are contrary to reason are identified as self-contradictory, such as the proposition that there are two Gods. The very idea of God implies that there can be only one God.¹⁶ Influenced by Lockean thought as popularized in the Revolutionary era, Stone could not rest comfortably with paradoxical formulations of truth. Affirmation of such formulations created for him an "embarrassed" mind.¹⁷

Stone's major difficulty with New Light Presbyterian theology was reconciling the gospel of God's love for sinners disclosed in Jesus Christ with the doctrine of election as taught in the Westminster Confession. This was an especially serious problem for Stone since he, like other New Light Presbyterians, believed that God saves sinners by giving them a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ—the glory of the One who freely saves helpless sinners. This view of the glory of God creates in sinners the love for God which makes them willing to come to Christ not only for pardon, but for release from the very power of sin. If God were a liar, professing in Jesus Christ to love sinners and to desire their salvation, while secretly determining that certain sinners would never be saved, how could anyone love God for who God is? That is to say, how could anyone be made *willing* to come to Christ for release from one's refusal to choose, love, and delight in God's law and government? Further, if God had secretly determined that certain sinners would never be saved from sin, how could any sinner feel bold enough to come to Christ for salvation? In short, for Stone, the doctrine of election seemed to rob the gospel of its rational or moral power to save sinners from the power of sin.¹⁸

For a time, Stone was able to solve his difficulties by affirming the distinction between “natural” ability and “moral” ability widely adopted by New Light Presbyterians. Natural ability was the freedom to act or choose without any “physical” constraint or compulsion. All persons have natural ability to come to Christ. Thus, persons fail to come to Christ not because they lack the natural ability, but because they lack the moral ability; that is, because they do not want to come to Christ. By use of this distinction, New Light Presbyterians could proclaim that God loves sinners, while affirming the doctrine of election: sinners who failed to come to Christ were damned not because God prevented them from coming to Christ, but because they did not want to come to Christ.¹⁹

However, Stone could not long remain satisfied with this paradoxical way of reconciling the gospel of God’s love for sinners with the doctrine of election. For Stone, influenced by the popular Lockeanism of the Revolutionary era, either God seeks the salvation of sinners, or God does not love sinners—at least not all sinners. At length, Stone gravitated toward a resolution of his difficulties based on a reading of Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” From this text he inferred that it is God’s purpose to “exercise his power” in saving persons who “believe” (that is, “come to Christ”) and in damning persons who “believe not.” If God were willing to save persons who believe, then God could not be charged with duplicity for damning persons who refused to believe. Stone concluded that salvation was available to all who would believe!²⁰

This resolution, however, proved no more helpful than the distinction between natural and moral ability. Stone was still left with the question of why some persons believe (that is, come to Christ) while others do not. He considered the possibility that God gives faith to persons who ask for it. But, according to New Light teaching, one must have faith (that is, the love for God which makes one willing to come to Christ) before one could expect one’s prayers to prevail with God. Therefore, he could not believe that faith is given to sinners because they ask for it. Neither could he believe God gives faith because of the “worthiness in one, and not in another.” Thus, he concluded that God gives faith in a purely sovereign manner. This being the case, his “resolution” of the difficulty

of reconciling the gospel of God's love for sinners with the doctrine of election was no help at all; it still appeared that both salvation *and damnation* were wholly in the hands of God. In short, it seemed to Stone that God must not love all sinners.²¹

Stone remained at this impasse until he observed the rapid conversions characteristic of the Great Revival, which spread through Tennessee and Kentucky during the years 1799-1804. Prior to the Great Revival, the conversion process had been expected to take several weeks or months.²² After being awakened to one's dangerous situation as a sinner, one would seek to convert oneself, to make oneself love God. It was this period of seeking to convert oneself that might last from several weeks to several months. Failing at the attempt to convert oneself, one would finally catch a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ—the glory of the One who freely saves helpless sinners. This view of the glory of God would create in one the love for God which makes one willing to come to Christ. Stone observed that under the influence of preaching at meetings of the revival, many persons were converted—from start to finish—within a matter of hours. Persons so converted declared “the wonderful works of God” to other persons attending the meetings of the revival and urged them to “repent and go to Jesus” for salvation.²³ Seemingly as a result, several of their hearers were in turn converted in equally short periods of time. This phenomenon provided Stone with the flash of light that enabled him to reconcile God's love for sinners with the notion that faith is the sovereign gift of God. His new light was that God gives faith—the *willingness* to come to Christ—through the gospel of God's love for sinners in Jesus Christ. He concluded that sinners who hear the gospel and refuse to come to Christ are damned, not because God refuses to give them “faith”, but because they refuse to *believe* the gospel.²⁴

Following his withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the synod of Kentucky, Stone published a systematic statement of his reconciliation of God's love for sinners with the notion that faith is the sovereign gift of God. Faith, he asserts, is not the “moral” act of coming to Christ. Rather, faith—as such—is the intellectual act of believing the testimony of God. The sinner who believes the testimony of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ is made willing to come to Christ. Faith (that is,

belief of the gospel) is the sovereign gift of God because it depends on the strength of God's testimony, not on any disposition of the sinner.²⁵

What did Stone mean by the statement that faith in the gospel depends on the strength of God's testimony? Stone was heir to the New Light teaching that "as God can accept no other worship than rational from reasonable creatures, he cannot require us to believe a revelation to be divine without sufficient reason; and therefore, when he gives us a revelation, he will attest it with such evidences as will be sufficient foundation of our belief."²⁶ By stating that faith in the gospel depends on the strength of God's testimony, Stone meant that the divine authority of the gospel is attested by God.

How does God attest the divine authority of the gospel for Stone? Stone declares that "The word of truth . . . has sufficient evidence in itself to produce faith."²⁷ To what evidence did he refer? The widely read New Light preacher, Samuel Davies, had identified the following as "intrinsic" evidences of the gospel: (1) its tendency "to promote true piety and solid virtue in the world," which rules out the possibility that it "could be the contrivance of wicked infernal spirits, selfish, artful priests, or politicians, or a parcel of daring impostors, or wild enthusiasts" and (2) "its glorious energy on the minds of men, in convincing them of sin, easing their consciences, inspiring them with unspeakable joy, subduing their lusts, and transforming them into its own likeness."²⁸ Although Stone does not identify the evidence that the word has in itself, he does state that God brings sinners to faith and repentance by his word "shining in his people," a phrase that seems to refer to the visible impact of the word on the lives of believers.²⁹ And, of course, Stone's fundamental premise was none other than that the gospel has a transforming energy on the human mind.

Stone argues that persons who are addressed by the gospel in its self-evident authority, but refuse to believe it, cannot blame God for their spiritual state. He illustrates the matter as follows. "If a man be in a dungeon, and light be emitted, he must see, if he does not shut his eyes against the light." In like manner, "when the gospel is preached in the Spirit, the light beams upon sinners in darkness, and were they not to resist the light, or shut their eyes against it, they would see, and believe. . . ."³⁰

Similarities in the theology of Stone and Thomas P. Craighead of Davidson County, Tennessee, have been noted more than once.³¹ Craighead was a Presbyterian minister who *opposed* the Great Revival.³² In a sermon published in 1809, Craighead argued that faith is not a “moral” act but an intellectual act. “No man,” Craighead stated, “can resist the force of credible testimony if he suffers it to enter into the view of his understanding. Neither disposition, nor will, nor motives, have the least effect.”³³ Shortly following the publication of this sermon, John P. Campbell, a Presbyterian minister who opposed the views of both Stone and Craighead, published a book claiming that Stone had learned his “heresy” from Craighead!³⁴

Since there is no record of response from either Craighead or Stone to Campbell’s charge, it is difficult to assess the role that Craighead may have played in the development of Stone’s doctrine of faith. Nevertheless, it is clear that despite the striking similarity in their definitions of faith, Stone, preacher of the Great Revival, and Craighead, opponent of the Great Revival, held fundamentally different theological positions. (1) For Craighead, salvation was the result of a carefully reasoned decision to act in one’s own best interest. Presbyterian revivalists often described the decision to “come to Christ” as the result of the Divine “implanting” of a religious or spiritual “principle” in the heart of the believer.³⁵ Knowing this tradition, Craighead asserted that “Every moral, political or civil principle is formed by a fair examination of the objects of pursuit and aversion, with their several relations and consequences.” Believing “in full confidence that God will accomplish what He has promised,” the person who will be saved recognizes “it to be infinitely best for him to keep God’s law, and therefore, steadfastly resolves to keep that law as his greatest intent.” Craighead concluded that “This choice or resolution built upon these promises” is the saved person’s “moral or religious principle.”³⁶ For Stone, the decision to come to Christ was the result of love for God born of faith in the gospel. (2) For Craighead, persons come to love the law of God only as they discover “its tendency to personal and general happiness.”³⁷ For Stone, persons love the law of God because they have come to love God. (3) For Craighead, the Spirit’s work ended with the writing of the

Scriptures.³⁸ For Stone, the Spirit, by which sin is overcome, is active in the lives of believers and in the church. Thus, even if Stone did learn his definition of faith as an intellectual act from Craighead, he did not share Craighead's theology as a whole. Indeed, on the key matters of how one is converted and the very character of the Christian life, the theologies of Stone and Craighead differed as radically as one would expect the theologies of a proponent and an opponent of the Revival to differ.

Revivalist vs. Revivalist

Stone and the other ministers who withdrew from the Synod of Kentucky in the fall of 1803 claimed that opposition to their theology in the Synod was initiated by persons opposed to the Revival.³⁹ This may well have been the case. Nevertheless, members of the Synod who wrote against Stone's theology were not opponents of the Revival, but supporters of the Revival. The conflict that emerges from these sources is not over the merits of the Revival, or even over the physical "exercises" associated with the Revival, but over Stone's theology.⁴⁰

Stone's principle opponent in the published debate associated with his withdrawal from the Synod was revivalist, John P. Campbell. Campbell focused on Stone's denial of the work of the Spirit in preparing the heart or mind to believe or "approve" the gospel. "Even Arminius, and many who have since been called by his name in later times," he wrote, "do not appear to have so entirely deviated from the great principles of the Reformed churches, as not to have held that divine power, prepares and disposes the heart to believe to salvation." In Campbell's view, the critical danger in Stone's doctrine of faith was what he perceived to be Stone's failure to recognize the work of God in the conversion of sinners.⁴¹

Stone was sensitive to the charge that his view of faith failed to recognize the work of God in the conversion of sinners. In the systematic statement of his views published following his withdrawal from the Synod, he was careful to show that his doctrine of faith does not deny the work of God in the conversion of sinners. He asserts that God is active in God's word.

His word is his power to salvation. By it he spoke all things into being and by it he upholds all things. It is the voice of his Spirit now, and *always* addressing us. It is as a *fire* and *hammer*; and the sinner who receives it feels its powerful efficacy.⁴²

Stone declares that God is also active in the church where the truth of the gospel is attested through spirit-filled preaching and the holy lives of believers. He also notes that God works to bring persons to faith and repentance through “particular providences, which are the means of bringing divine truth before the view of the mind.”⁴³ What he disallowed, as Campbell underscored, was the notion that the Spirit must prepare the mind to “approve” the gospel before sinners can believe it to the salvation of their souls. Defining his position against that of his opponents, he writes,

They say the mind must be enlightened by the Spirit, in some secret, mysterious way, to see and *approve* the truth, before the sinner can believe it. We say, the truth which the Spirit speaks, is that which enlightens the mind; and which cannot produce this effect until it is believed.⁴⁴

To what degree did Stone’s revivalist theology differ from that of his revivalist opponents? On first glance, it might appear to have differed by a full turn of the compass. Stone’s doctrine of faith collapsed the paradoxical structure of New Light Presbyterian theology which taught, on the one hand, that God loves sinners and desires their salvation, and on the other, that God had determined that particular sinners would be damned. Stone preached the first half of this paradox. He would not teach that God had determined that particular sinners would be damned. This has led one recent interpreter to state that Stone’s theology amounted to a fundamental rejection of the theology of McGready and others in the Synod.⁴⁵

On closer inspection, it would appear that Stone’s revivalist theology differed very little from that of his Presbyterian opponents. (1) Stone and his opponents both defined sin as refusing to choose, love, and delight in God’s law and govern-

ment. (2) Stone and his opponents both defined salvation as pardon for sin and release from the power of sin. (3) Stone and his opponents both taught that one must “come to Christ” for salvation. (4) Stone and his opponents both identified a “view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ” as the rational means of creating the love for God that makes sinners willing to come to Christ. (5) Stone and his opponents both exalted the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners. For Stone, the Spirit worked through the word to bring sinners to faith and repentance. For Stone’s opponents, the Spirit prepared sinners’ minds to believe the word to the salvation of their souls. (6) Both Stone and his opponents exhorted their hearers to meditate on “the fullness and freeness of the great salvation which is provided for miserable, lost, perishing sinners of every description” and to trust in God to save them (items 7 and 8 of McGready’s means of grace).⁴⁶

Appeal of Stone’s Theology

If Stone’s theology was so similar to that of his opponents, why would Stone and four other revivalists withdraw from the jurisdiction of the Synod rather than renounce his views on faith? Stone’s doctrine of faith was attractive to western revivalist Presbyterians for two reasons. First, it was supportive of revivalist practice. All western Presbyterian revivalists encouraged their hearers to seek salvation at once. This was the point of the New Light Presbyterian teaching on the day of grace: one who failed to respond to preaching by use of the means of grace at once ran the risk of sinning away the day of grace. In a book opposing Stone’s doctrine of faith written near the end of the Revival, Presbyterian revivalist John Andrews wrote “we have no cloak for our sin—no excuse for our ungrateful and obstinate rebellion . . . and let us never presume to offer anything to justify ourselves.” Rather, Andrews exhorted, we should “apply to the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins through His atoning blood, and for the sanctification of our hearts by the gracious influences of His Holy Spirit. . . .”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, sinners did commandeer orthodox Presbyterian views of the work of the Spirit in conversion to make God the effective cause of their unbelief. Reporting on his ministry in the early

years of the nineteenth century, the Methodist, Lewis Garrett, noted that his preaching was often “repulsed by sayings like these—‘if I am to be saved, I shall be saved,’ and ‘I await the effectual call’ . . .”⁴⁸ Stone’s doctrine that the Spirit speaks through the word undercut the foundation of such rejoinders, leading one of his supporters to observe that Stone’s doctrine of faith had great effect in “removing the disbelief of the world.”⁴⁹

The second reason for the attractiveness of Stone’s doctrine of faith to western Presbyterian revivalists was the solution it provided to a theological problem that was increasingly difficult for New Light Presbyterians in the early years of the nineteenth century: how to reconcile God’s love for sinners with the confession that God gives faith. This problem was particularly critical since New Lights understood that it is a view of the glory of God in Jesus Christ—the glory of the One who freely saves helpless sinners—which enables sinners to believe to the salvation of their souls. Earlier generations had been comfortable with a theology of paradox in which the implications of one doctrine are contradicted by the plain teaching of another. The doctrine of predestination, which clearly teaches that faith is the gift of God, was to be understood in relation to the distinction between natural and moral ability; sinners are free to serve God, they just choose not to! Careful use of this distinction would allow one to maintain the doctrine of predestination while preaching the gospel of God’s love for sinners to all. But, such a theology simply would not do for Presbyterians of the Revolutionary era who had been charmed by a philosophy which asserted that self-contradictory propositions cannot be true. From their perspective, either God loved sinners and sought their salvation, or God did not love sinners—at least not all sinners. Stone’s doctrine of faith made it possible for western Presbyterians whose minds had been influenced by the popular Lockeanism of the Revolutionary era to preach what New Light Presbyterians had always preached: the saving message of God’s love for sinners disclosed in Jesus Christ.

Historians, following the lead of Stone and his Presbyterian opponents, have magnified the differences between the theologies of Stone and his opponents. To be sure, Stone’s doctrine of faith, adopted by four other Presbyterian revival-

ists, differed from that of other revivalist Presbyterians in the Synod of Kentucky. As has been shown, this difference was a result of the impact on Stone of Lockeanism as popularized in the latter years of the eighteenth century and the insight he claimed to have gained from his observation of the rapid conversions characteristic of the Great Revival. Nevertheless, there were fundamental continuities between the theologies of the two parties. The significance of these continuities becomes apparent when the theologies of Stone and his Presbyterian opponents are compared to the New Haven theology referred to at the outset of this chapter. The New Haven theology, popular among Northern revivalists of the era, taught that awakened sinners can choose to comply with the terms of salvation out of an enlightened self-interest.⁵⁰ For Stone, as for his Presbyterian opponents, salvation was not something one chooses out of fear of going to hell, but a love relationship with God established by the Holy Spirit through God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. For the origin and character of New Light Presbyterianism see Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948) and Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

2. Barton W. Stone, *Biography of Eld. Barton W. Stone, Written By Himself, with additions and reflections by Eld. John Rogers* (Cincinnati: Published for the author by J. S. and U. P. James, 1847; reprinted in *The Cane Ridge Reader*, ed. Hoke S. Dickinson, N.p.: n.p., 1972), 6-11. Caldwell studied under Robert Smith of Pequa and Samuel Davies. See E. W. Caruthers, *A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Rev. David Caldwell, D.D.* (Greensborough, N.C.; Swaim & Sherwood, 1842). McGready studied under John McMillan and Joseph Smith as well as Caldwell. See William Henry Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina* (New York: Robert Carter, 1846), 368; Robert Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky: With a Preliminary Sketch*

of the Church in the Valley of Virginia (New York: Robert Carter, 1847) 259-260; Dwight Raymond Guthrie, *John McMillian: The Apostle of Presbyterianism in the West, 1752-1833* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1952), 87; and Joseph Smith, *Old Redstone, or Historical Sketches of Western Presbyterianism, Its Early Ministers, Its Perilous Times, and Its First Records* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854), 76, 78, 191.

3. James McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James McGready, Late Minister of the Gospel in Henderson, Kentucky*, 2 vols., ed. James Smith (Louisville: W.W. Worsley, 1831 and Nashville: Lowry and Smith, 1833), 1:53.

4. *Ibid.*, 1:51, 150-151; 2:363-64.

5. *Ibid.*, 1:54-55, 62-65; 2:363-64.

6. *Ibid.*, 1:22-23.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:73. For a similar response in the sermons of eighteenth-century New Light leader Samuel Davies see Samuel Davies, *Sermons on Important Subjects*, 3 vols. (New York: R. Carter and Brothers, 1849), 2:396.

8. McGready, 1:119-120; see also *ibid.*, 1:73-74. For similar lists in the sermons of Davies, see Davies, 2:367 and 3:331.

9. McGready, 1:121, 123. For references to this doctrine in Davies, see Davies, 1:279 and 3:471-74. See also a work by a writer highly prized by the New Lights, Philip Doddridge, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, Illustrated in a Course of Serious and Practical Addresses, Suited to Persons of Every Character and Circumstance* (Boston: Daniel Kneeland for Nicholas Bowers, 1771), 238-39.

10. McGready, 1:75-76, 92, 126-27, 132-33 and 2:36. For evidence of the same view in Davies, see Davies 1:50-51.

11. McGready, 1:93-95, 126-27. For evidence of the same views in the writings of older New Light authorities, see Davies, 2:195-96 and Doddridge, 313.

12. McGready, 1:93-95; see also *ibid.*, 2:10.

13. *Ibid.*, 1:126-27, 132-33.

14. *Ibid.*, 2:191-92. For a discussion of the New Light view that God works through "rational means" see Trinterud, 179-84.

15. *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, containing the Confession of Faith, The Catechisms, and the Directory for the Worship of God:*

Together with the Plan of Government and Discipline (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842), "The Confession of Faith," Chapter 111, Section 1, 21-22.

16. I. T. Ramsey, "Introduction" in John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 9-10.

17. Stone, *Biography*, 56.

18. Barton W. Stone, *A Reply to John P. Campbell's Strictures on Atonement* (Lexington, Ky: Joseph Charles, 1805), 3-5; see also Stone, *Biography*, 29-31.

19. *Ibid.* David Rice, *A Lecture on the Divine Decrees, To Which is Annexed a Few Observations on a Piece Lately Printed in Lexington, Entitled, "The Principles of the Methodists, or the Scripture Doctrines of Predestination, Election and Reprobation"* (Lexington, Ky.: John Bradford, 1791), 22-23, 49; Robert Marshall, "A Sermon preached at Bethel, June 1793, Prior to My Ordination, Text Appointed by Presbytery, John 15:15," Marshall Papers 1790-1808, Shane Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For a classic treatment of the distinction see Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards*, ed. Sereno E. Dwight, vol. 2: *A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of That Freedom of Will Which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue, and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (New York: S. Converse, 1829), 283; see also Joseph Bellamy, *The Works of Joseph Bellamy, D.D.*, vol. 1: *True Religion Delineated* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 97-98.

20. Stone, *Reply to J. P. Campbell*, 5-6. Stone reports that he also considered the doctrine that God will eventually save all persons as a solution to his problem, but found it "everywhere condemned in scripture" (*ibid.*, 5). He may have been influenced toward this conclusion by Caldwell. See David Caldwell, "The Doctrine of Universal Salvation Unscriptural," in Caruthers, 285-302.

21. Stone, *Reply to J. P. Campbell*, 6.

22. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, first series (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott and Co., 1850; reprint ed., Richmond, Va: John Knox Press, 1966), 427; Benjamin St. James Fry, *The Life of Rev. Richard Whatcoat* (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1852), 62-63; Henry Smith, *Recollections and Reflections of An Old*

Itinerant (New York: n.p., 1848), 237-41; John M'Lean, *Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch, 1751-1835* (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1854), 12-17; Robert Paine, *Life and Times of William McKendree*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1874), 1:45-50; William Hickman, "A Short Account of My Life and Travels, For More Than Fifty Years: A Professed Servant of Jesus Christ, to Which is Added a Narrative of the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Early Settlement of Kentucky; Giving an Account of the Difficulties We Had to Encounter, etc.," typescript, n.d., Dargin-Carver Library, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tennessee, 3-4; John Taylor, *A History of the Baptist Churches of Which the Author Has Been Alternately a Member in Which Will Be Seen Something of the Author's Life, For More Than Fifty Years* (Frankfort, Ky: printed by J.H. Holeman, 1823), 290-98.

23. Stone, *Biography*, 34-35.

24. Stone, *Reply to J. P. Campbell*, 6.

25. Barton W. Stone, "A Compendious View of the Gospel," in Robert Marshall, et al., *Apology of the Springfield Presbytery*, published with Stone, *Biography*, 203-06.

26. Davies, 1:10.

27. Stone, "A Compendious View of the Gospel," 206.

28. Davies, 1:10-14.

29. Stone, "A Compendious View of the Gospel," 220-21.

30. *Ibid.* 217-18.

31. For a recent example see Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 141-42.

32. For information on Craighead see Davidson, 264.

33. Thomas B. Craighead, *A Sermon on Regeneration with an Apology and an Address to the Synod of Kentucky Together with an Appendix* (Lexington, Ky.: William Worsley, 1809), 26.

34. John P. Campbell, *The Pelagian Detected: Or a Review of Mr. Craighead's Letters Addressed to the Public and the Author* (Lexington, Ky.: Thomas T. Skillman, 1811), 56-60.

35. According to New Light tradition, all human life was the result of principles. In addition to the religious or spiritual principle which is the source of spiritual life, there was said to be an animal principle which is the source of animal life and a rational principle that is the source of intellectual

life. Every type of human life, be it spiritual, animal, or rational was understood to have certain peculiar "tendencies, sympathies and antipathies." Thus, it was taught that just as the animal principle results in an inclination toward food, the spiritual principle results in "a disposition and power to serve God." Davies, 2:389-92; see also McGready, 1:144.

36. Craighead, 43-44.

37. Ibid., 38.

38. Ibid., 23.

39. Marshall, et al., *Apology of the Springfield Presbytery*, 149-51, 154-55.

40. Conkin suggests that the issue that divided Presbyterian ministers was "one of attitude and role" in relation to the physical exercises of the revival (Conkin, 113-14). The sources examined in this chapter do not support Conkin's thesis.

41. [John P. Campbell], *The Passenger*, No. 2 (No title page or date), 21.

42. Stone, "A Compendious View of the Gospel," 204.

43. Ibid., 220-21.

44. Ibid., 211.

45. Conkin, 140-42.

46. See above.

47. John Andrews, *A Brief Essay on Natural and Moral Inability, Embracing Several Important Doctrines of the Gospel, Particularly: Human Depravity, the Agency of the Spirit, the Holy Nature and Divine Origin of Faith, the Sovereignty of Divine Grace, the Justice of God in Rejecting and Punishing Sinners* (Lexington, Ky.: Daniel Bradford, 1806), 63.

48. Lewis Garrett, *Recollections of the West to Which are Added Fletcher's Six Letters on the Spiritual Manifestation of the Son of God* (Nashville: Printed at the Western Methodist Office, 1834), 54-55.

49. David Purviance, "Memoirs" in Levi Purviance, *The Biography of Elder David Purviance, with His Memoirs: Containing his Views on Baptism, the Divinity of Christ, and the Atonement, Written by Himself; With an Appendix Giving Biographical Sketches of Elders John Hardy, Reuben Dooley, William Dye, Thomas Kyle, George Skidler, William Kinkade, Thomas Adams, Samuel Kyle, and Nathan Worley. Together with a Historical Sketch of the Great Kentucky Revival* (Day-

ton: Published for the author by B. F. and G. Wells, 1848), 41; see also Stone, *Biography*, 36.

50. Nathaniel W. Taylor was the father of the New Haven Theology. For a discussion of his views on the power of the sinner in regard to salvation, see Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858, A Connecticut Liberal* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967), 97-111, 121-27.

CHAPTER SIX

CANE RIDGE FROM A PRESBYTERIAN POINT OF VIEW

By Ronald P. Byars

History is always written from a particular point of view. Even though historians attempt to be as impartial and objective as possible, there is really no way to recreate historical events "exactly as they happened," because whether present or past, events are always capable of being understood in more than one way. Perhaps this is especially true of events which have resulted in the creation of institutions, which understandably develop a permanent interest in justifying their origins. A denomination is one of the best examples of such an institution. Since denominations are nearly always created out of some controversy, the events which brought them into being are likely to be interpreted differently by descendants of the several parties in the conflict.

For members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and related groups (independent Christian churches and churches of Christ, and non-instrumental Churches of Christ), the shrine at Cane Ridge represents much that is precious: their spiritual life, their nurture in the Christian faith, and friendships formed over the years. There is a sense in which Cane Ridge has left an indelible mark upon the spiritual descendants of Barton W. Stone. The glad-hearted fellowship of that frontier camp meeting has helped to form the Disciples ethos. For Presbyterians, obviously, this wonderfully bucolic place nevertheless has a different set of associations. Events that occurred there amounted to a repudiation of Presbyterian church government and doctrine. For Presbyterians, the events associated with Cane Ridge represent a disruption of church life, and the dissipation of vital energies. It is said that well into this century there remained a lingering bitterness in certain Presbyterian circles in the Bluegrass of Kentucky over the defection of the "Christians"

in the early nineteenth century. But times have changed. Presbyterians are not by any means what they were in 1804. Descendants of the Stone movement who became the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are certainly vastly different from those people who insisted that they were a movement, denying that they were a denomination like others. The problems that face these two denominations today are different than the problems of 185 years ago, and the religious landscape of the state and the nation is entirely altered. Sharing the “mainstream” malaise, Presbyterians and Disciples tend to be allies, outnumbered as they are by religious groups whose values, commitments, and styles are dramatically different from those these two communities share.

Cane Ridge, then, is both an intersection and a point of departure. In that place, the separate histories of Disciples and Presbyterians once moved apart, and here also they converge. But what is “Cane Ridge?” Cane Ridge is a geographical place, given its name by pioneers who were struck by the proliferation of cane growth there. It was a Presbyterian congregation. It became the seedbed of the “Christian” movement. But of course it was also that enormous camp meeting so well remembered by secular as well as church historians. Cane Ridge, the camp meeting, had its origin in the Scottish communion seasons. In Scotland, a particular parish was likely to celebrate the Lord’s Supper only once or twice a year, but when they did celebrate it, they did it on a grand scale! There would be several days of preparatory services leading up to the actual communion. People would come from other parishes, sometimes from some distance, to participate. There were often so many people that the services had to be held outdoors, and several ministers would share in the leadership. It was this Scottish communion season, imported to America, that became the seedbed of the American camp meeting. In fact, reading the diary of the Rev. John Lyle, who participated in the Cane Ridge camp meeting, one reads of this or that preacher delivering the so-called “action” sermon, which refers to the sermon that led directly to the communion celebration.¹

The Cane Ridge congregation itself was first mentioned in the minutes of Transylvania Presbytery dated October 4, 1791. From 1791 to 1792, the minister who served the Cane Ridge church was the Rev. Andrew McClure, a “stated sup-

ply." From 1793 to 1795, the Rev. Robert Finley served as pastor, having come from South Carolina. Hearing repeated complaints, the Presbytery investigated Finley on charges of habitual inebriation, and in response he renounced their jurisdiction. Presbytery suspended him in 1795. He was restored, then deposed again in 1796. Although Finley made a subsequent attempt to return to the Presbyterian Church, he was unsuccessful. Finally, in 1812, he became a Methodist minister.² The Cane Ridge church was served by a series of supplies until 1798, when Barton W. Stone arrived from North Carolina.

Barton Warren Stone had always had theological struggles, from very early on finding himself at odds with Presbyterian orthodoxy as he understood it. Stone had been influenced by the Rev. James McGready, a hellfire and brimstone revival preacher in North Carolina. Stone was revolted by the emotionalism, but admired the effectiveness of the revivalist method.

Although Stone had prepared for the ministry, he had not yet been ordained when he came to Cane Ridge in 1798. At that time, as now, the Presbytery of jurisdiction was Transylvania Presbytery. When Stone received a call from the Cane Ridge church to become their pastor, Presbytery acted favorably upon the petition of the congregation, examining Stone and proceeding to ordain him. Although the minutes of the Presbytery do not record it, Stone always claimed later that he had given a qualified answer to the standard ordination question that asked, "Do you promise to receive and adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in holy Scripture?"³ If it is true that he replied, "I do, insofar as I see it consistent with the Word of God," his answer would not have been particularly shocking, since Presbyterians then and now considered all confessions of faith to be "subordinate standards,"—subordinate, that is, to scripture.⁴ Without a doubt they considered the Westminster Confession to be at least a reasonable exposition of Biblical doctrine. Stone was duly ordained, in any case, and installed as pastor of the Cane Ridge and the Concord Churches.

Soon, Stone heard talk about a revival going on in Logan County, Kentucky, under the leadership of the same James McGready from North Carolina about whom he had had such mixed feelings. Stone went to Logan County, where the

revival had stirred up considerable excitement, including the same bizarre physical phenomena which later exhibited themselves at the Cane Ridge revival. He came back to report his experience, and almost immediately his fascinated congregation began swooning and weeping, just as people had in Logan County. From this response developed the famous camp meeting with all its notorious flamboyance.

Presbyterians had earlier divided over the question of revivalism. Some have said that there has always been a faultline running through American Presbyterianism, roughly dividing those whose first priority is "order" from those whose first priority is "ardor." The Scots tended to fall toward the orderly side; while the Presbyterians of English origin tended to lean toward ardor, which at the time marked them as liberals, tending to favor a certain degree of pragmatism and experimentation. Revivalism was one of the pressure points which was likely to reveal the differences between Presbyterians of opposing dispositions. Impressionistic evidence indicates that most of the Presbyterian ministers in central Kentucky had been sympathetic to revivalism, but some of them began to be nervous about it as they observed the extremism that came to be associated with it. In his autobiography, Stone himself tells the story of a meeting in Paris, Kentucky, also in Bourbon County, not far from Cane Ridge. People had begun to set up arrangements for an outdoor meeting. A Presbyterian minister, unnamed, who had come to be known for his suspicion of revivalism, rounded them up and exhorted them to take the meeting indoors, into a local church. Then another minister proceeded to take the pulpit and "Calvinize" them, Stone said, preaching what he took to be a cold and lifeless sermon. When the preacher was done, Stone proceeded to pray out loud. Joined by others, the noise became so raucous that the preacher and supporting ministers fled by way of the windows!¹⁵ Such bold and indiscreet challenges to the standing order did not endear Stone and his allies to their colleagues.

Growing nervousness with the barking, jerking, swooning, and even more extreme responses to the revival fervor caused a conservative reaction among the Presbyterians. The actual break, however, came not in the form of any crack-down on Stone, but as the result of a reaction to the ministry

of the Rev. Richard McNemar, a member of the Presbytery of Washington. Washington Presbytery straddled the Ohio River, including parts of both Ohio and Kentucky, although it was part of the Synod of Kentucky. Richard McNemar was based in Ohio. From as early as 1801, McNemar had held premillennial views.⁶ He and those attached to him had discerned a variety of signs that indicated that the second coming of Christ was near at hand. Led by an elder in his church, about eighty persons signed a petition against McNemar charging him with doctrinal irregularities. Washington Presbytery found him guilty as charged, but nevertheless at a subsequent meeting assigned him preaching responsibilities at several of its churches. The Synod of Kentucky met on September 6, 1803, at the First Presbyterian Church of Lexington. The petitioners from Washington Presbytery asked the Synod to review the inconsistency of the Washington Presbytery action in giving McNemar preaching assignments when they had found him guilty of doctrinal irregularities. The Synod sustained their complaint. Synod's action intimidated Stone and others who were attached to the revival and who also shared many of McNemar's views on a variety of theological issues. They walked out of the Synod meeting and refused to be drawn back by a commission appointed to seek reconciliation. These five ministers renounced the jurisdiction of the Synod, and formed what they called "Springfield Presbytery." The five were Barton W. Stone, Richard McNemar, John Dunlavy, Robert Marshall, and John Thompson.

Up to this point, none of these proceedings had anything in particular to do with Christian unity, even though the later "Christian" movement saw itself as a nondenominational unity movement stemming from the Cane Ridge revival. It is true that Baptist and Methodist preachers had participated in the Cane Ridge camp meeting, but that was not unique. It is true that Methodists and Baptists communed with Presbyterians, but although that was not entirely accepted procedure, it was not unprecedented. At this stage in the developing conflict, the controversy had to do mainly with the extent of freedom enjoyed by an officer of the church. The question raised was one of authority, particularly in relation to specific doctrinal quarrels, and so had to do with the very nature of the church itself. Stone, McNemar and the others

were at odds with the Presbyterian church on some very basic issues, and this led them to resent that system of church government which had called their positions into question.

The historian Ralph Morrow argues that Stone and his allies led a second revolution in the American church.⁷ The first revolution was that in which church and state had been separated, with the church becoming a voluntary association. Americans were free to choose to be affiliated with one church or another, or with none. Stone's revolution, Morrow says, demanded that each individual be considered equal and autonomous, and that the church reorganize its internal life accordingly. In other words, claiming an absolute priority of individual freedom over the rights of the group, Stone and his colleagues issued an ultimatum to existing ecclesiastical institutions.

Nathan O. Hatch, of Notre Dame, argues that Stone and his allies were basically of one mind with several other revolutionaries who represented a widespread popular movement with roots in the American revolutionary war era of a few years earlier.⁸ Hatch includes William Miller, the founder of the Seventh-Day Adventists; Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet; and Francis Asbury, the pioneer Methodist bishop along with others who articulated a deeply-felt hostility to traditional authority. It may have been that the revolutionary era had raised ordinary people's hopes to an unreasonably exalted level. In any case, for about forty years following the revolutionary war, there seems to have built up a tremendous anger arising out of popular disappointment that the revolution had not changed more things than it had. The war had been fought and won, but it seemed that the same class of people were still in charge. Life was still hard, and even though the British had been defeated, there were still established authorities which seemed to represent interests different from those of ordinary people. People's anger took the form of hostility toward traditional authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical. People had little respect for tradition, for formal learning, or for institutional structures and tried procedures. Everything was turned upside down. The learned were held in contempt, while ordinary people were taken to be the sources of great wisdom. As Hatch says about Stone and his people, they illustrated "the exaltation of public

opinion as a primary religious authority. They called for common folk to read the New Testament as if mortal man had never seen it before."⁹ Stone's personal suspicion of the current social order was reflected in his insistence on the wearing of "plain dress," and in his opposition to voting and to any participation in government.

In our own century, during the 1960s, a good many people who were disillusioned with the institutions of contemporary society spoke fondly of some not-so-distant time in the future they called "the revolution." Speaking wistfully of that marvelous time, "after the revolution. . .," they dreamed that the world itself would soon be transformed. Similarly, for forty years after the Revolutionary War, people seethed with disappointment, anger, and resentment. Their generation's dream of what life would be like "after the revolution" had gone sour. In their disappointment, they responded to leaders who could articulate their resentment effectively. Stone and his colleagues were among these. They argued that ordinary people could make decisions for themselves without deferring to the educated or the experienced. Sophisticated decision-making systems seemed designed to confound and frustrate ordinary folk. Presbyterianism became an easy target in those days, with its respect for formal learning, its carefully structured systems of government and its attention to theological detail. Until 1830, neither Baptists nor Methodists on the frontier required of their ministers even so much as the ability to read and write.¹⁰ Presbyterians stood alone in requiring a classical theological education of their clergy. Whether they were right in holding so firmly to this tradition is perhaps open to question, but it certainly did make them an exposed target on the frontier. Stone, who himself was troubled by some aspects of orthodox doctrine, became an effective spokesman for many who longed for someone to lead them in an act of defiance against the symbols of traditional authority they so resented.

In Disciples hagiography, Stone is remembered as a prophet of Christian unity. However, the revolt at Cane Ridge was not first or foremost about Christian unity. Rather, it was the unsettled frontier, the post-revolutionary generation, flexing its muscles. It was disappointed heirs of the American Revolution calling once more for freedom, and

denying the legitimacy of any authority which questioned their way of exercising the freedom they claimed. In the process, they expressed their disdain for the old formalities: for Europe, the east, the old settled ways, and any and every obligation to defer to authoritative persons, ideas, or institutions.

Christian unity did in fact become a theme of the revolt during the short period of the life of the Springfield Presbytery, which had been organized by the dissenters after they had renounced the jurisdiction of the Synod. Rice Haggard, who had left the Methodist Church in North Carolina with the so-called "Republican Methodists," had become interested in the new movement. It was he who suggested that the Springfield Presbytery take the name "Christian" only. The *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, of June 28, 1804, exhibits Haggard's influence.¹¹ Even so, the *Last Will and Testament* reads primarily as an assault on every ecclesiastical structure beyond the local congregation, and on every authority above the individual, than it reads as a plea for Christian unity. Insofar as Christian unity was its theme, it was not a plea for common understanding among the denominations, or a reconciliation of differing traditions. It was a plea addressed to individuals, calling them to renounce all church authorities, structures, and traditions in order to read and respond to the New Testament autonomously. The accent in the *Last Will and Testament* falls on the challenge issued to denominational authorities to try every dissenter as a heretic and cast them out, so that they may be free "to taste the sweets of gospel liberty." The anti-ecclesiastical blows fall equally on Presbyterian synods and presbyteries, Episcopal or Catholic dioceses, Methodist conferences, Baptist associations, and certainly would fall with equal vigor on today's regional and international "manifestations" of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). At that moment in history it was not a matter of *which* ecclesiastical structure might be in the right, but a matter of rejecting every such structure because it threatened the authority of the lone individual reading his or her Bible.

There was also a certain amount of premillennialism in the air, and as noted above, Richard McNemar had had premillennial sympathies since about 1801. (John Thompson has said that it was McNemar who was the primary drafter of the *Last Will and Testament*.) It may well have been that the

five colleagues expected that their revolt would help to bring on the crisis which would lead to the sudden transformation of the world and the dawning of that "new age" in which there would be an absolute equality of all, and none would have authority over another, and none would be divided or set apart from the others.

In any case, whether there were premillennial expectations at work or not, Stone was soon to be disappointed. Shaker missionaries came from New York, having heard of the revival, to visit Stone and his allies. At first Stone welcomed them, and reported that he was positively impressed. McNemar, whose views had always been the most extreme, soon converted to Shakerism. John Dunlavy followed him. Some historians believe that these defections saved the "Christian" movement, which had begun to include a growing number of persons with extreme opinions. Once the ties had been broken with the Presbyterians, some had departed further and further from orthodox Christianity. The Shaker defection helped to stabilize the "Christian" movement by draining off the more radical elements.¹²

In the meantime, the remaining two signers of the *Last Will and Testament* had been having serious misgivings. They saw a need for some minimal written expression of doctrinal consensus, given the extremism that had been exhibiting itself in the movement, but they met with passive resistance. John Thompson and Robert Marshall returned to the Presbyterian Church. This left Barton W. Stone alone as the last of the signers of the *Last Will and Testament*.

Marshall, who had taken most of the members of his congregation with him to form a Christian church just across the road from the Bethel Church in Fayette County, was restored to membership in Transylvania Presbytery in 1811. In 1819, he again resumed the pastorate of the Bethel Presbyterian Church. This church is still in existence. Marshall died in 1832, having been Clerk of the Presbytery of West Lexington and assigned other positions of weight and responsibility within that body after his return. He is buried at Bethel.¹³

John Thompson, who returned to the Presbyterian Church at the same time as Robert Marshall in 1811, served ably in the ministry in southwestern Ohio for many years. In 1833 he moved to Indiana. Four of his sons became Presbyterian ministers. He died in 1859.¹⁴

Stone had started out as a rebel. He had successfully articulated the deep-seated feelings of masses of ordinary people. But Stone put on a different hat when he saw where the Shakers were leading them. It may be that he discovered the New Testament doctrine of "episcopate," or "oversight," which requires pastors and shepherds to guard the faithful from false doctrine and from religious predators. Whatever his motivation, in the controversy with the Shakers, Stone became a conservative, using his pen and tongue to defend a more centrist position. He had, then, in his turn, become the one to take the defensive. It is never comfortable to be the one on the defensive. It was not any more comfortable for Stone, certainly, than it had been for the Presbyterians. Once the rebel juices are stirred, it is a losing battle to try to defend established institutions. Defiance is driven by anger, and passion, and by a sense of injustice. Defense of established ways always seems like rationalizing and self-justification. Ralph Morrow commented that, "In the revival, tradition suffered the perverse fortune of having only the case against it presented fully and explicitly."¹⁵ Is that not usually the case? A few years ago, Hollywood was producing films like *Easy Rider* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Nearly all the moviegoers of the time took the side of the rebels whom those movies glamorized. There certainly was a case to be made for "Big Nurse," and for the authority and responsibility she represented, but that case was never made; and had it been, it would not have aroused much enthusiasm. So it seems that the Kentucky Presbyterians had been handed an impossible task, and had suffered from the passionate enthusiasm of those who rose up against them. Stone tasted a bit of that same difficulty when he was thrust into the position of trying to defend the faith against the onslaughts of the Shakers.

The initial movement had been only indirectly about Christian unity. When Rice Haggard introduced a vision of the unity of the faithful once they had cast off their ecclesiastical shackles, the Springfield Presbytery had been caught up in it. It seemed that their bid for freedom might lead to a unity that lay beyond all the old institutions that divided Christians. The "Christians" caught a vision of possible unity, not by means of the restorationism of Alexander Campbell, but by the abolition of ecclesiastical institutions, and

the renunciation of all creeds and systems of doctrine. This primary bid for freedom, in fact, was of a higher priority to them than was unity. Stone believed that creedlessness and complete individual freedom in matters of doctrine would lead to unity. We know now that it did not. (There have been at least three major divisions in the Campbell-Stone movement to date, and certainly a number of less official divisions among the non-instrumental Churches of Christ.)

The Presbyterians also had had a longstanding interest in unity, dating from the Reformation, and their theology and polity were oriented toward a corporate understanding of the church. But the Presbyterians had an equal concern with preserving the integrity of the church and of the Christian faith. One of the questions currently addressed to church officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and not a new question either, is this: "Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the church?"

There is, of course, a problem hidden in that question. Peace and unity are one thing—purity is quite another. Peace and unity may require pluralism, diversity, freedom. But purity—i.e., integrity—requires something else altogether. It requires placing certain limits on individual freedom within the Christian community. It is necessary to say "no" to some doctrines or practices that seem to violate the very substance of the Biblical faith. Apartheid is one example, the "German Christianity" of the Nazi era is another, and the Shaker doctrines that denied the flesh and separated the sexes and disrupted the marriage bond may be another. Seeking freedom first, Stone envisioned unity as a bonus. Even he, however, sensed that there were limits to freedom. He felt it necessary to draw a line against the teachings of the Shakers. The Presbyterians, who held and still do hold to the ecumenical doctrine of the Trinity, believed that the integrity of the Christian faith was fundamentally threatened by Stone's basically unitarian (Arian) position. The question between the two groups, then, seemed to be not whether a line should be drawn to distinguish faithful from unfaithful teaching, but where it should be drawn? and how? and by whom?

From the Presbyterian point of view, there is inevitably a certain tragedy associated with Cane Ridge. Whether Stone

or his opponents were right or wrong on particular issues in dispute is not really the most pressing question. It was true that Presbyterians had been slow to adapt their ways, which had been formed in settled and more sophisticated societies, to a frontier environment. And in fact, the schism of the "Christians" made them even more defensive.¹⁶ But the tragedy here is that neither Stone nor the Presbyterians then or since have discovered how to have *both* unity and purity in the same church. That is why both communities have experienced divisions. A church with creeds, confessions, and orderly governmental decision-making puts the accent on purity, or integrity, without necessarily letting go of a communal ideal. A church which repudiates creeds in the name of freedom, and embraces congregational and individual autonomy, places the accent on unity-in-diversity, while perhaps hoping that purity will take care of itself. But neither Disciples nor Presbyterians have succeeded in keeping their own faith communities one in times of stress. The problem, it seems, is as real today as it was in 1804. We are really no closer to a solution. Herein lies the tragic dimension associated with events at Cane Ridge.

There is, perhaps, a smaller tragedy, too. When Stone renounced the jurisdiction of the Synod, the pulpit of the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church was declared vacant. The Cane Ridge Christian Church was organized in 1803.¹⁷ That must have been almost immediately after the rupture. But the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church did not cease to be as of that moment. In fact, there continued to be a Presbyterian congregation for some years. The Presbyterian congregation must have been small, because it never again had a settled pastor. The Presbytery of West Lexington supplied it with temporary pastors until 1811, when Presbytery officially dissolved the congregation and urged its remaining members to seek out certain neighboring Presbyterian churches. However, the minutes of Presbytery show that ministers were still being assigned to preach at Cane Ridge as late as 1816. Louis Weeks, in his book *Kentucky Presbyterians*, claims that the Rev. John Rankin preached at the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church as late as 1821, when the last of the members moved to Ohio, leaving Kentucky because they were anti-slavery in their sentiments.¹⁸

There is a list of members of the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church as of December, 1811. It includes persons named Wallace, Malcom, Campbell, Henry, Donnell, Elliot, Mills, Trotter, Jones, Herriott, and Hopkins.¹⁹ There were also black members of the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church as of that date. Why did these few remain Presbyterians when all the others followed their pastor into the "Christian" movement? What was the fault-line that divided them from those who went with the new church? Was it a matter of family disputes? Class differences? The dividing line between active members, and marginal and passive members? Whatever it may have been, the division of this congregation makes for a small tragedy of its own.

The early Barton W. Stone wanted the freedom to follow his conscience without the church raising any questions about it. Unity of Christians was at first incidental, and even then conceived in a way vastly different than people conceive of it today. The later Stone was a different story. To find greatness in this drama, it seems necessary to look at the later Stone. The older Stone expressed remorse for having preached and lectured polemically in such a way as to demean the opinions of others. That kind of remorse is rare enough, then or today; it certainly was rare among his opponents. But this is a sign of the character of the mature Stone. An even greater sign of his peacemaking character was the strong support he gave to unity between the "Christians" and "Disciples" even though he was badly treated by Alexander Campbell. While Campbell preferred to emphasize the priority of his own insights, and to draw back from the "Christians" on the grounds of small differences, Stone swallowed the insults and committed himself to work for the unity of these two groups.

Later Disciples have chosen to appropriate the early sentiments in favor of Christian unity, and to redefine them in ways that suit a more mature assessment of the situation. Presbyterians might learn, from this experience, what they have unfortunately had to face many times: that a commitment to purity, or integrity of faith, is not easily compatible with unity.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. Diary of the Rev. John Lyle (Frankfort, Kentucky: Archives of the Kentucky State Historical Society).

2. Robert Stuart Sanders, *An Historical Sketch of Springfield Presbyterian Church, Bath County, Kentucky* (Frankfort: Roberts Printing Company, 1954).

3. Alonzo Willard Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky* (Published by The Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky, 1932).

4. William Garrett West, *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), quotes the Adopting Act of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia with respect to the way that American Presbyterians had resolved the question of how strictly candidates for ordination must adhere to the Confession of Faith: "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" (70). West, quoting Thomas Campbell's *Studies in Cumberland Presbyterian History*, cites specific examples of instances in which the Presbytery of Transylvania had licensed candidates for the ministry in spite of the fact that they had taken exception to certain doctrines in the Westminster Confession.

5. Barton Warren Stone, *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself: With Additions and Reflections. By Elder John Rogers* (Cincinnati: American Christian Publication Society, 1853), 44.

6. John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 156.

7. Ralph Morrow, "The Great Revival, the West, and the Crisis of the Church," in *The Frontier Examined*, ed. John F. McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

8. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

9. *Ibid.*, 81.

10. Morrow, "The Great Revival, the West, and the Crisis of the Church," 76.

11. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805*, 154.

12. Robert Marshall and John Thompson, *A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrine and State of The Christian, or as it is Commonly Called, The Newlight Church* (Cincinnati: J. Carpenter and Co., 1811). "We separated from Synod in September and formed the Springfield Presbytery—In January our Apology was published—in March we began to change our views on the Atonement—in June we signed the Last Will and Testament, and dissolved [sic] our Presbytery, when it had existed about nine months—About the same time, Richard McNemar, and several more began to deny the resurrection of the body, and a future judgment—and believed that they would never die, but be made immortal by some extraordinary operation of the Spirit. And in a few months more, he, J. Dunlavy and a great many of the people were caught in the net of Shakerism. . . ." (22, 23).

13. From an unpublished history of Bethel Presbyterian Church, dated July 13, 1952.

14. From the *Presbyterian Almanac*, 1859-1860.

15. Morrow, "The Great Revival, the West, and the Crisis of the Church," 70.

16. *Ibid.*, 78.

17. Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky*, 50.

18. Louis B. Weeks, *Kentucky Presbyterians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983).

19. Sanders, *Presbyterians in Paris and Bourbon County*, 214, 215.



The Disciples of Christ Historical Society and the Cane Ridge Preservation Project have worked together to perpetuate the memory and, more importantly, carry forward the ideals of Barton W. Stone as part of the Christian heritage. This window, depicting Stone, is in the Thomas Phillips Memorial building which houses the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee.

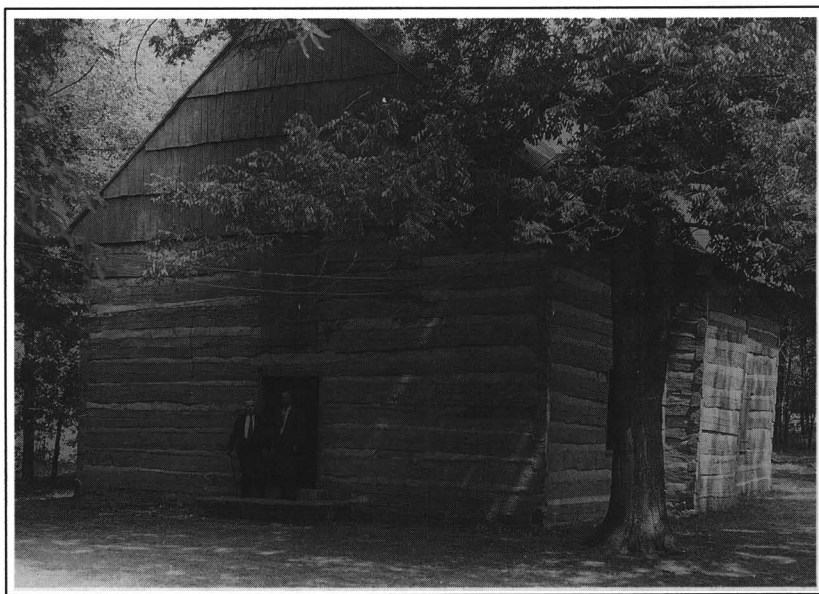
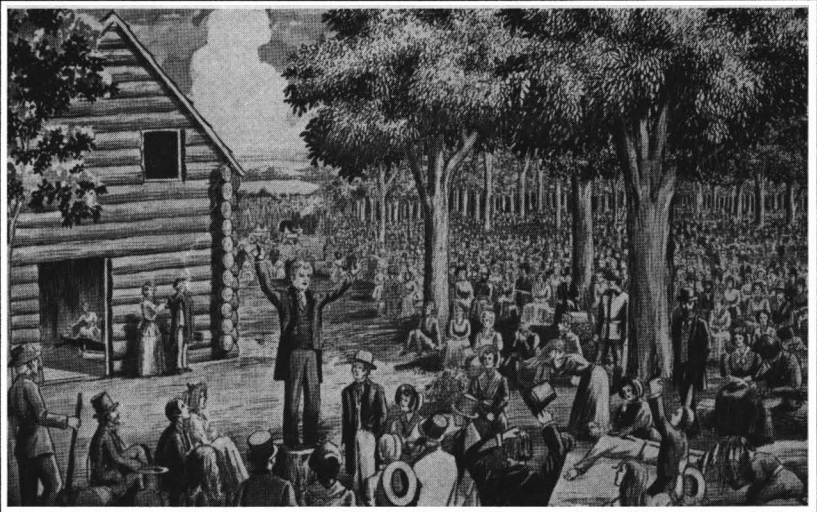


Photo by Gene Maner, Paris, KY

Robert M. Hopkins (left), former president of the United Christian Missionary Society, directed the Cane Ridge Preservation Project from 1953 until his death in 1955. Rhodes Thompson, then pastor of First Christian Church, Paris, KY, tirelessly promoted the preservation effort in its early years.

Photo by David Perry

The Barton W. Stone Memorial Museum is also on the site of the Cane Ridge Shrine. It houses and displays documents and artifacts related to the construction of the Meetinghouse, the ministry of Barton W. Stone and his associates, and the significance of Cane Ridge in American religious history.



The Cane Ridge revival of 1801 was a gigantic example of a sacramental occasion in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition that took on its own significance in American religious history.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CAMBUSLANG: THE SCOTTISH PREDECESSOR TO CANE RIDGE

Newton B. Fowler, Jr.

In the west of Scotland, near Glasgow, stood the village of Cambuslang. William McCulloch was the minister of the parish in the summer of 1742. The annual communion service was scheduled for Sunday, July 11. Although the reformation in Scotland under John Knox had called for frequent observance of the Lord's Supper, various forces had restrained its observance to an annual or semi-annual occasion. It was not uncommon for a parish to go several years without an observance of communion. The reasons for infrequency are complicated and convoluted. They are grounded in the multi-sided internal disputes among the Presbyterians, and equally grounded in their mutual hostility toward the formerly imposed Anglican eucharist and Roman Catholic Mass. At various times political realities had forced observance of Reformed communion to go underground, or to be held surreptitiously in fields, woods and rural settings.

The day for the annual sacramental observance at Cambuslang approached. When it was over, an estimated thirty thousand people had attended, with some seventeen hundred having communed.¹ The annual sacramental service followed a pattern. The preceding Thursday and Friday were fast days, a period of self-examination and remorse for one's sins. Saturday was a day of preparation during which several ministers preached in the open country at different locations to the large crowd. The people were reminded of the terrors of the unconverted life and of the hope of mercy in repentance. Sunday was the day for the "action sermon," and for receiving the elements for those with communion tokens. The several communion tables were placed in different locations to accommodate the crowd, and were "fenced" to control access by only those certified by elders and pastors as worthy

of approaching the table. Monday was a day of thanksgiving for the outpouring of the Spirit.²

The eyewitness accounts of Cambuslang read like those of Cane Ridge. There were faintings, weeping, swooning, much praying aloud, and shouting accompanied by shakes and trembles.³ The first communion at Cambuslang was so successful that an unprecedented second communion was planned for August 12, 1742. Attendance was larger than at the first communion. Three thousand people received the elements. These two communions in the summer of 1742 made the name Cambuslang a metaphor for the whole tradition of Scottish sacramental revivalism. The Cambuslang “wark,” or work, gave the evangelicals a sense of renewal, vindication, and success.⁴ Cambuslang represented the culmination of nearly two hundred years experience in Post-Reformation Scotland. Emotional outbursts of the Spirit had accompanied the sacramental season. These annual observances of the Lord’s Supper joined “conversion and communion,” ritual with revival.⁵

Cane Ridge would be the next Cambuslang. Leigh Eric Schmidt traces the entire phenomena in his award winning historical treatise *Holy Fairs*. Schmidt documents in detail the two hundred year tradition of the Scottish sacramental season, and connects it with American revivalism. These occasions functioned as festival and community renewal. The Reformers had rejected the rituals of medieval Catholicism, particularly those of Easter and Corpus Christi. But much of the popular piety, expectations and superstitions associated with these previous cultural events were transferred unwittingly to the “holy fairs.” The communion was the “actualized gospel,” outcroppings of the power of God to convict and redeem. The sacrament had charisma. On the other hand, not all who came did so for religious motives. Those “holy fairs” were fun! Drummers sold their wares. The records tell of numerous complaints of drunkenness and sexual dalliance. The poet Robert Burns satirized these sacramental circuses in “Holy Fair,” which gave Schmidt the title of his volume.⁶

There was nothing unique or distinctive about the pentecostal outbursts at the Cane Ridge Meeting in 1801. Such behavior had been associated with sacramental observances in seventeenth and eighteenth century Scotland. August 8,

1801, was the day set for the annual observance of the Lord's Supper at Cane Ridge. There is a recognizable continuity from the Kirk of Shots (1640), to Cambuslang (1742), to Cane Ridge (1801), Cambuslang was the Scottish predecessor to Cane Ridge.

Demographically the largest group of people in Kentucky at the turn of the nineteenth century were of Scottish ancestry. Hence, the largest religious group was Presbyterian. They had come from either Scotland or Ulster, the Protestant plantation in Northern Ireland. Schmidt documents the existence of the "holy fairs" in Ulster.⁷ The annual observance of the Lord's Supper had always created large crowds from a wide geographical area over a several day period in both Scotland and Ulster. The description of the large number of people, the distances traveled, the camp-like conditions, the presence of scoffers and entrepreneurs all had their counterparts in Scottish tradition. The tents for preaching, the several ministers exhorting the crowd from different locations, the large number of communion tables, the role of elders in responding to those stricken all had precedent in Scottish tradition. From this point of view, the context for Cane Ridge was the two hundred year tradition of the annual Scottish sacramental season. Cane Ridge was an American "holy fair."

The recent work which provides the larger American context for Cane Ridge is Paul Conkin in *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost*.⁸ He is aware of the research of Schmidt, but his own interest focuses on the pervasiveness of Scottish Presbyterian culture in this country prior to Cane Ridge. He also connects Cambuslang with Cane Ridge.

Only recent scholarship has linked the pentecostal and sacramental character of Cambuslang with Cane Ridge. Both Schmidt and Conkin are non-Disciples. How have the "standard" histories of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) treated Cane Ridge in respect to its sacramental character and/or to its continuity with Scottish evangelical Presbyterian tradition? William T. Moore, *History of the Disciples of Christ*, 1909, gives no mention of any observance of the Lord's Supper at Cane Ridge, nor any reference to Cambuslang. W. E. Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, 1948, describes Cane Ridge as a sacramen-

tal observance and gives the number of communicants. There is no reference to similar occasions in Scotland. William Tucker and Lester McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, 1975, give no mention of communion at Cane Ridge, nor any reference to the Scottish sacramental tradition.

In 1847 two works were published in which a connection was made between Cane Ridge and its predecessors. James R. Rogers in seeking to justify the pentecostal behavior at Cane Ridge wrote that "these extravagances all are the legitimate offspring of orthodoxy . . . that they were very common in the eighteenth century, under the labors of such as Wesley, Whitefield, Erskine, and even the celebrated Jonathan Edwards."⁹ Whitefield and Erskine had been participants at the Cambuslang communion in 1742. The pastor, William McCulloch, had exchanged correspondence with Jonathan Edwards.¹⁰

The second account in 1847 was Robert Davidson in *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky*. "Swoons and convulsive falling had not been without precedent. They have been recorded as occurring in the days of Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, the Tennants, and Blair, as well as at Cambuslang and Kilsyth."¹¹

Why there is a lack of connection in Disciple historiography between Cane Ridge and the two century sacramental tradition in Scottish Presbyterianism remains an open question. It is curious that a denomination which places the Lord's Supper central to its weekly worship has neglected the sacramental character of the Cane Ridge Meeting. The denominational symbol, the St. Andrew's Cross superimposed on a communion chalice, may hold more historical significance than first perceived. Stone, being of English descent from a nominally Anglican family, would have had no direct memory of the Scottish sacramental season. Perhaps the loss to consciousness among the Presbyterians at Cane Ridge, as well as those succeeding interpreters, may illustrate the American bias for "novelty" over acknowledging continuity with European origins.

Actually the reverse was true in Scotland. A letter from William Hume, a Scottish Presbyterian missionary on the American frontier gave an account of Cane Ridge. In 1802 he wrote to his people back in Scotland, "Last summer there

appeared among the Presbyterians a work still more astonishing. . . . The work seems to be of the same complexion with that which took place long ago at Cambuslang, in the west of Scotland."¹²

In 1982 Roscoe Pierson, then librarian of Lexington Theological Seminary and a member of the Board of the Disciples Historical Society, wrote to me while I was in Edinburgh on a sabbatical leave. He wished for me to photocopy Hume's letter. Pierson thought the Cambuslang connection would be a fruitful research project. With only a sixty year interval, he opined a few at Cane Ridge might have been present at Cambuslang, or had known someone who had experienced the earlier "wark." Pierson foresaw what Schmidt and Conkin have now accomplished.

Once the larger ethnographic context is perceived, questions arise about the popular explanations for the causes of the "Western Revival." The frontier thesis may need a thorough reworking. Since the "holy fair" pattern existed for nearly two centuries in Scotland which had no "frontier," why explain the gatherings and behaviors in terms of geographical isolation, insecurity of the frontier, and alienation from cultural centers? Perhaps to see these sacramental occasions as a "gathering of the clans," as ethnic renewal, may be closer than explanations rooted in assumed deprivation, religious or social. This may suggest why more came than communed.

The frequency of communion was being debated within Presbyterian circles on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the nineteenth century. Conkin admits the difficulty for establishing the chronology of the shifting patterns. However, as quarterly and weekly observances emerged, the revivalistic expectations associated with the annual observance diminished. The place where the residual memory of the annual sacramental season continued was in the custom of the annual revival. But such revivals were not sacramental occasions. As revivalism flourished in the nineteenth century, the expectations shifted from the charisma of the sacrament to the charisma of the evangelist. Cane Ridge stood at the end of the annual sacramental season in Scottish evangelical Presbyterianism.¹³

Notes to Chapter Seven

1. Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 115. See also Duncan MacFarlan, *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, particularly at Cambuslang* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1980).

2. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 61.

3. MacFarlan, 76f.

4. Schmidt, 49.

5. *Ibid.*, 50.

6. *Ibid.*, 3f.

7. *Ibid.*, 29-35.

8. Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

9. James R. Rogers, *The Cane Ridge Meeting House, to which is Appended the Autobiography of B. W. Stone* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing House, 1910), 402.

10. Fawcett, 142.

11. Robert Davidson, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847) 145.

12. *The Christian Magazine; or Evangelical Repository* (Edinburgh), vol. vii, 1803, 35.

13. Conkin, *Cane Ridge*, 166.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CANE RIDGE HAD A CONTEXT: LET'S SEE WHAT THEY WERE

By Samuel S. Hill

A college professor ought to speak better English than "Cane Ridge Had a Context: Let's See What They Were." Is "context" singular or plural? Did Cane Ridge have one context or several? Well, an event can have only one context but the Cane Ridge event was many-sided, rich, a whole bunch of things.

Indeed, this place, the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse we celebrate at age 200, the date of the Springfield statement we recall from 1804, is a whole bunch of things. A huge crowd of people, maybe 20,000, were here for one or more periods during the Cane Ridge revival of August 6-11, 1801. A large number of ways of worshipping God and reviving his church came to a mighty climax during that brief but intense season. Some of those ways, forms, and methods derived from innovative practices in Scotland between 1620 and 1750. Others had originated back east, in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Also some energetic people had brought the good news of a fresh outpouring 200 miles away in Logan County, Kentucky, the year before, including one B.W. Stone. Stone, remember, was pastor here and at Concord, both Presbyterian congregations, beginning in 1798. Like his later associate and co-founder of the Stone-Campbell movement, Alexander Campbell, Stone got around. You might even say that Stone himself was a context; he certainly had an impressive one. Much flowed into the reservoir that he was, in diverse experience, widespread travels, and acquaintance with prominent religious leaders.

So far then, "whole bunch of things" refers to crowd size and multiple influences helping make the Cane Ridge event all that it was. But we're just getting started. What took place here between 1791 and 1804 is a veritable vector of American

history, social and demographic as well as religious. So much came together here—"context"—and so much emanated from here—partial context for many subsequent developments.

Looking around this rural site even today, and most emphatically 200 years ago this summer, one does not conclude that this is the hub of the universe—home, sweet home, maybe, but not the stackpole of the cosmos. It's also a pretty unlikely spot for America's Pentecost, as several contemporaries called it. There must be a hundred places in U.S. territory as lovely and likely as this one for a decisive manifestation of the power of God's spirit. But the Almighty always has confounded human logic. What happened here did change, or contribute to changing, many tastes and patterns in American society, religious and otherwise.

Let's begin with the most startling insight from a contemporary. The Rev. George Baxter, Presbyterian minister and educator from Lexington, Virginia, came to Kentucky shortly after the Cane Ridge season "to observe and to report" to his fellow supporters of revival back east.¹ For one thing he defended the physical exercises at Cane Ridge as authentic signs of the Spirit's working. For my purposes here, the central insight is this: the cultural pluralism of the West is what marked off the revivals out there—here—from what had taken place in Virginia and other eastern places.

In other words, several different denominations, nationalities, and classes of people were participating here. That meant and means: (a) western forms were fluid, awaiting being shaped by whoever was there; (b) eastern forms had about them a normative quality that, while modified from old England and New England ways, nevertheless manifested a European fondness for a right way agreed upon by most; (c) the future of complex, diverse, and pluralistic American society was being anticipated here.

Who was present here? Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and deists. Descendants of Scotch-Irish, English, and African immigrations. People high and low on the social scale. Slaves and free people. Women and men. Any of these might fall or faint or jerk or bark. Stone himself called all this expressiveness "holy laughter or singing." As we soon will see, this degree of selfsurrender to bodily control by the Spirit was to be brought under some restraint, notably by the

Stone-Campbell tradition. What compels our attention about the original Cane Ridge is how innovative it was in bringing together peoples and new modes of expression. We have to turn 400 miles east to Baxter's Virginia to see what that means.

What was dying out? What was giving way? How had things been? What used to be taken for granted? We may sum up the answer to that battery of questions this way: normativity, normal behavior. One standard set of something: a liturgy, a relationship between church and state or church and society, one kind of people, a way of "doing religion" and "being religious." A norm, a standard, taken-for-granted religious modes; that is what normativity meant in the longer-settled and more settled-down society back east.

It is true that all of this was undergoing challenge and change by the late eighteenth century. Still, in many places like George Baxter's neighborhood in the southern Shenandoah valley, there were some norms that directed, if not quite dictated, the taken-for-granted religious right way. There, it was Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who had adopted a certain mode of warm, enthusiastic Christian expression. Understand, Baxter's western Virginia area differed from earlier Tidewater regions. But a new normativity had emerged that seemed Rockbridge County's correct course.

At Cane Ridge, normativity was missing. Everything was missing, in a manner of speaking. Except that there were people—peoples, really—and suggestions of new ways of doing things and fresh urgencies for making them happen. In a way, Baxter overspoke what was new out there in Bourbon County, Kentucky, since fluidity and multiplicity are some of the marks of the frontier. "Cultural pluralism" indeed, a mix of peoples, ecclesiastical heritages, social groups, and even forms of expressing religious experience.² Not just tears and shouts of happiness, but also, as we have noted, jerks, barking and physical falling.

In another essay the Disciples of Christ Historical Society invited me to write, I have argued that the later Campbell-Stone movement—as distinct from what came to flower here, Stone and Cane Ridge—aimed for normativity.³ What Campbell was after was the deletion of all man-made forms of Christianity in favor of the commonsensical one and only and clearly defined, the Christian constitution spread on the

pages of the New Testament. A bit more about that later development a little later. Cane Ridge effectively spelled the end of the normativity that had been standard in the British Isles and then in the British colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. Cane Ridge borrowed a great deal, but it took nothing for granted. And it blended several disparate component parts of the received tradition, seasoned with cultural herbs growable only in western soil.

One of those component parts came indirectly, even circuitously, from Scotland.⁴ I mentioned this earlier, but need now to give the Scottish sacrament meetings the due they have lately received from scholars, but about which the interested laity has been told little. The American frontier is not the setting that gave birth to inspired, enthusiastic, demonstrative religion we so often associate it with. What happened on this longitude, in Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and adjacent places, wove a different cloth, but the Scots had been in the wool business, growing and fashioning, for centuries. Similarly, Protestants in Scotland witnessed the electricity of God's Spirit as early as the 1620s, intermittently, then again in the 1740s. I remind you that some Scots moved across the narrow bridge of land through Campbelltown and water to Ulster, Northern Ireland. Scots in Scotland and Scotch-Irish in Ulster: Alexander Campbell was of them both. And the western Presbyterian preacher, James McGready, knew about these revivals of vital piety. Via the McGready highway and others, so did Barton Warren Stone. What is most significant, in the American context especially, is the nature of these "revivalistic" Scottish services: they were built around Communion, Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper. "Significant" is not strong enough—"dramatic" is much more like it.

In the United States, the history of revivalism has not often shown association with sacramental meetings or communion services. The sacramental denominations—think Lutheran and Episcopal—have simply not "bought into" revivalism. In fact, so stylized and unspontaneous an occasion as communion has been out of place in settings where instantaneous conversion and spiritual enthusiasm have been hallmarks. Not so, in the Scotland of the 1620s and 1740s. Paul Conkin, the Vanderbilt historian, affords us suitably vibrant descriptions of these occurrences: "they

began to turn the communion time into a revival meeting"; "the great communions . . . became a festival or fair, the most exciting time of the year"; ". . . some communions . . . could be the peak experience of a lifetime."⁵ The "extended communion," as it was called, was the "institutional matrix" of the revival. In Scotland this pattern of revivals-as-communion-services reached its peak in 1742 at Cambuslang near Glasgow. Conkin concludes that what happened at two communions at Cambuslang "had an almost eerie resemblance to the one at Cane Ridge," 4000 miles and a whole culture removed.⁶

Side by side these fervent Protestants were: ingesting the fruits of field and vine in remembrance of Christ's death; and groaning, falling to the ground, and rhythmically dancing. The service of the table is so set and fixed and formal. The body-soul physical response is—or was at that stage—so spontaneous. The controlled and controlling, in tandem with the expressive and who-knows-what-the-Spirit's-prompting-may-cause-to-break-out. But when you think about it, the communion service has all the elements. Christ's giving his life on the cross for each person's sins—that is what is being remembered and in some sense made real and present. Grasped, that realization just might be expected to produce the shakes or groanings or tears or embraces. Conkin's depiction of what happened at Cambuslang prepares us for Cane Ridge happenings that blessed thousands at the time but were to become occasion for fun-poking and stereotyping later on. He writes: ". . . the normal weeping that occurred during the self-examination and penance that came before communion, and the tears of joy that came after the reenactment of Christ's passion, yielded to more intense feeling and more extravagant bodily effects."⁷ Notice what we have here: a straightforward portrayal, that possesses great power for personal impact, but which sometimes leads to demonstrative motions, and can even become "wild."

The American religious context has shown capacity for separating theological Siamese twins. The people who nurtured me in Christian faith, the Southern Baptists, long ago separated worship and evangelism, gave evangelism priority and, generally, became unacquainted with the power of worship. You with the Stone-Campbell heritage, especially Stoneites, once wed sacrament and enthusiastic experience. Over time you separated the two and gave higher priority to

weekly communion than to deeply felt and openly expressed experience. A loss in both cases, the Baptist and the "Christian"—and comparable stories can be told about other denominations. On the other side, America has seemed to make life difficult for traditions that try to hold together several emphases in vigorous balance, the Methodists being the best example.

I have begun to think, and write a little, about what the American context has done to baptism and communion, the classic Protestant sacraments, both their secular influence and their churchly significance. When you are trying to understand the evangelical denominations of the South you note that the sacrament of entrance or admission, baptism, has come to outrank for importance the sacrament of sustenance, communion. My progenitors, the Baptists, have paved the way for many others in preferring the initiatory to the continuing, the ceremony of the water that grows out of the emotional experience, to the orderly, repeated drama of food and drink at the table.

But the Stone-Campbell movement pushes that process in quite a different direction. You make much of both, but by and large treat both as ordinances to be obeyed rather than as sacraments that evoke emotional experience, preceding the event in the case of baptism and following in the case of communion. It is sometimes said that Churches of Christ religion is "joyless." Does "joyless" apply to the other two parties in the Stone-Campbell movement? In any event, there is little that you would describe as charismatic, Spirit-gifted and Spirit-expressive, and not much that is spontaneous or demonstrative. I have argued in print that the Stone-Campbell movement historically has rectified better than it has recruited—straightened out better than it has reached out.⁸ On this occasion I suggest that your tradition is better at proceeding in orderly fashion than in letting things run free, that is, run free while trusting the guidance of the Spirit of God. That there are dangers in both temperaments, orderliness and spontaneity, is clear to us all. In this setting let's see what happened to the Stone-Campbell movement, why those things took place, and how these developments were tied in with what was happening in American culture at large.

In 1791-1801, the condition of society out here in the West was phasing from frontier into rudimentary community. Frontier meant a condition where people were pioneers and settlers and were preoccupied with "defense and subsistence." In these parts two or three decades earlier the Anglo-American newcomers fought with the long-timer American Indians for their very lives and in order to claim the territory. They also contended with the soil, the forests, and animal life for physical survival. "Defense and subsistence" gets it right. While those forces had not been entirely tamed by 1791 and 1801, they no longer dominated. A new era was sweeping in, presenting as matters to deal with: "commerce, social order, and political unity."⁹ Think of the difference between Daniel Boone on the Kentucky River or the denizens of Fort Harrod, earlier, and Bourbon County, later. Building community had evolved to being the "new world order." Commerce: producing, bartering, enterprising, profiting, spending. Social order and political unity: working out arrangements by which families and individuals could cooperate, construct values, shared conventions, and institutions of law, government, and religion. In other words, the people about whom we think today were building a communal life and a civilization. Rugged individualism, so called, was yielding to hamlets and villages and towns, to county units, to preventing destructive behavior and to fostering concord. Bourbon County had mostly stopped being frontier and was a threshold toward community, citizens respecting and collaborating with each other.

Sometimes the old saying nails the point, Great minds run in the same channel. Historians Ellen T. Eslinger in 1988 and Paul K. Conkin in 1990, working independently, turned up the same dynamic as they studied the Bourbon County of the 1790s. Eslinger calls it "total environment" and Conkin refers to it as "something close to an urban neighborhood."¹⁰ Going to Cane Ridge and the camp meetings "literally became a way of creating temporary cities." The Greeks called this creation the "polis," the amalgam of people and institutions for the purpose of the common life, life in common, the commonweal. (I seem to remember that we call this the Commonwealth of Kentucky.) Anarchy must be forestalled in favor of an ideal community—never quite realized, of course, where people act as individuals in harmony with society.

Cane Ridge was a momentous happening, thus, for “political” reasons as well as “religious,” the two being inseparable, though of course distinguishable. Let’s be sure to see what was taking place on this spot: personal transformation in a public setting. Personal, thus, is not individual and private but social and public. The public setting helped generate personal conversion, but we need not patronize those earnest folk and attribute their expressiveness to “mob psychology” or “a quick fix” or “a search for a thrill.” The Christian life simply is not solo, me-myself-and-I, either as a person takes it on or as one lives it out. At Cane Ridge the intensely personal occurred in a proto-urban setting. Later Americans were to live with the fantasy that individualism is a possibility as well as a virtue. Not our ancestors here; they knew that life is, willy-nilly, lived in community. The events here stood as a “model for an ideal community where people acted as individuals in harmony with society.”¹¹

Jumping ahead, I remind you of Alexander Campbell’s strong sense of church and the unity of Christians; you who belong to the Disciples of Christ have been in the forefront of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century. Campbell brought this sense of churchmanship with him from the Scottish Presbyterian heritage, but it was doubtless reinforced by what the early American Stoneites had learned from a contextually-sensitive theology. God does work with individuals—no question about that—but regularly does so through others of his people as conduits and as co-beneficiaries and fellow servants.

Now to summarize this portion and highlight the issue of *context* in relation to it: Cane Ridge is a liminal event, on the threshold between frontier and town society. It happened the way it did because people had the means to congregate, and the occasion for congregating; that is, they had economic and political need to cluster. All of this, of course, was in addition to their being heirs to a theology of the Christian life practiced in community. The research of Eslinger and Conkin only localizes—to Cane Ridge—what Donald Mathews taught us 20 years ago in his study, “The Second Great Awakening as organizing Process.”

Please shift gears with me now—to the subject of human capacity or human agency. Barely in the background of the Great Revival was the old Calvinism of the dominant Scotch-

Irish population: God determines who are the elect to salvation and who are the elect to reprobation. That position, so theologically defensible and arguably biblical, ran athwart the “social reality” perceived by westward-moving Americans. Barton Stone had been averse to embracing it from early days; indeed in Conkin’s language, he was an “almost accidental Presbyterian.”¹² He certainly never was much of a theological Presbyterian.

Stone, then, also James McGready and some other western leaders, preached and promoted free will doctrine. Human beings possess the capacity to decide to receive Christ’s salvation. How else would a God of love create men and women? So, under the impact of powerful preaching, people would believe through vital experience—and believing would make it so. Nothing stands between God and people, certainly not original sin or innate incapacity. The human agent can do. The prescription for humankind’s malaise contains a loving God, a capacious person, and a social setting featuring preaching, communion, and others’ witness—a commonsensical compound. One that, from a different perspective, Alexander Campbell was to join Stone in affirming.

Words from Dwight Bozeman capture Campbell’s spirit on the subject of free will and human agency: “he professed to find no warrant in the normative period either for belief in the self’s congenital and disabling depravity or for the vision of a predestinating God regenerating his elect with irresistible infusions of power.”¹³ In plain talk: it’s up to each person to take advantage of the ways and means God affords us. We can and we must.

This kind of thinking implies some things about God, about human beings, and about the process by which they come together. A loving God; a morally, spiritually capable person; a series of logical steps. The Stone-Campbell movement, through Campbell especially, laid out the way to salvation. The route was not that of the old English and American Evangelicals, from awakening to distress and conviction, to deliverance, that is, in the conscious experience of conversion. But there was a route, the “Christian System,” baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the preaching of the gospel, and alluring the understanding and the affections. God is and does; we are, can do, and do; these factors make salvation possible.

This is demystification. Not much mystery, instead sure knowledge of reliable facts, the gospel, effective ability to choose and act, free humanity, and specified means of grace, centrally baptism and the Supper.

Compare the Stone-Campbell tradition with the teachings of the Real Presence in communion, believed in different ways by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and Lutherans. Much mystification, mystery, pulses there. Compare Campbell-Stone with classic Christian mysticism and spirituality; and with the sometimes subtle, sometimes plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face moving of the Spirit of God among Quakers or charismatics or Mennonites.

The Cane Ridge Preservation Project letterhead reminds us that what began here was and is "the first indigenous American Christian movement." Lots more were to follow, the Mormons, the Adventists, Christian Science, Pentecostalism, and so on; but this was the first home-grown new movement. What I need to stress today is that Stone-Campbell innovated, set the pace, for the demystification factor that is so characteristic of American Christianity. Liberals and conservatives alike can figure things out; declare human agency to be effectual; know the steps by which one moves toward God. Not much mystery except in the unsearchable depth of the divine love. Luther's revealed *and* hidden God, Calvin's inscrutable and trustworthy God, becomes in the Stone-Campbell movement and most popular American forms, a God so bent on revealing that he makes the way clear and plain for any to see and follow.

Probably you know that, in the main, Campbell overtook Stone. That evaluation is a commentary on the future course of what happened at Cane Ridge in 1801. Not for long afterwards did the demonstrative, expressive enthusiasm of the sacrament meeting here continue. Campbell's contribution was to co-opt the Stoneite heritage and rationalize it. You really can't have both communion and enthusiasm. Notice: Campbell kept communion, made it a weekly observance, exalted it as a major means of grace. Camp meetings, which Cane Ridge really was not—instead a sacrament meeting, became a principal form of the Christian life for Methodists and Holiness people. By and large they subordinated communion. Enthusiasm was its own means and end. Campbell

elevated the working of the Holy Spirit, teaching that it was a means of grace that “impressed the proposition that God is love upon the understanding and affections.” The later-camp-meetings-people experienced the Spirit; the Campbellites acknowledged the truth. In Newell Williams’s summary: people “become religious not by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, but by the Spirit working through the Gospel”—the gospel being the facts about Jesus.¹⁴

We must begin winding down. The point just made, about Campbell co-opting Stone, with the result that facts and propositions supplanted direct Spirit experiences that ranged from “tearful yet joyful” responses to “wild” manifestations such as physical falling and jerking, enlists our thinking on Cane Ridge as vector. Much from the past entered the American religious scene here; and much emanated from what took place here. We need to be careful and studious, both toward proper and justifiable celebration.

Catholics can make too much of Rome. Methodists can make too much of Aldersgate just as Lutherans can of Wittenburg. Christians can make too much of Cane Ridge. But in our celebratory mood on this notable occasion, we must avoid making too little. Do not even lust in your heart about building a tabernacle on this mount of transfiguration. The world is out there, where we study and understand, where we live with our families, friends, and communities, where we practice our vocation as servants of God and creation. Yet, this is sacred space. Being here can sharpen our perspective and “impress” divine propositions.

Cane Ridge made significant impact on the future of Christianity in this country. “Made in America,” it entered the widening stream of American culture. It contributed in some cases, it generated in others, it took on new coloration in still others as it came into contact with emerging social contexts. The Cane Ridge geometric icon is a vector, not a circle, not a straight line. Having incorporated and brought to climax so much, it opened out to the future, giving and receiving, shaping and being shaped. Briefly, here are three of those responses.

(1) The Stone-Campbell movement put constraints on the physical exercises of the earliest years. At first it underwent “routinization”; that is, the groaning and the physical

falling shifted from being spontaneous to being "learned."¹⁵ Bodily responses of those sorts came to be expected, a criterion for authentic manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This does not imply fakery, but it does bespeak the appearance of a check list and predictable, almost necessary, supernatural workings. By the 1830s and 1840s, physical exercises had receded and the worship gatherings of both Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ became more sedate, ordered, and regular.

(2) "Camp meetings" replaced "sacrament meetings"—but not in the Stone-Campbell movement where both gradually disappeared. The Wesleyan personality took to the camp meeting idea; it still has some life among Pentecostal and Holiness peoples. Variations on that theme appear as summer assemblies and city Expos sponsored by certain evangelical groups. In the Churches of Christ, lectureships were the successor. As for the sacrament meeting, Conkin says much with these few words: "evangelical Christianity in 1801 was much more sacramental than it would soon become . . ." ¹⁶

(3) The theme of restoration or Christian primitivism took solid root in the American churches. Campbell yielded on the point of exclusivism, opening the way for the ecumenical attitude, and movement. As William Richardson has put it: Campbell wanted his idea of church to be a pilot project for a completely united church. The catholic was in each church, therefore all should receive each and all cooperate in mission. Yet certain kinds of exclusivism persist in some of the Churches of Christ congregations, for example. Thus, restoration can mean exclusivism. It can also mean all together under the New Testament in a spirit of catholicity. Beneath these two interpretations lies the basic concern: to restore the primitive church. In no other Christian society has the Restoration principle been a general ideal. But here it has. Before Cane Ridge, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, and James O'Kelly so aspired. But Stone-Campbell brought it to the fore. Others have taken up the theme: the Mormons, Christian Science, the Landmark Baptists, and the Pentecostals. Nowhere is the Stone-Campbell legacy so distinctive and pervasive as in the Restoration ideal.

These three interactions between the Stone-Campbell movement and later American history hardly exhaust the legacy. Perhaps I can best summarize them all by returning

to the vector, actually the point in the center of the vector out from which there are openings to the past and the future. That center point reflects Cane Ridge's standing as a threshold. Before the years around 1800, the vigorous stirring within the American churches added up to revolt and transformation. The *ancien regime*, the old world order of Europe that had been transposed to this new society, took some throwing off. By 1800 the new world order was hovering near. Cane Ridge is a central event and the major symbolic event that led America toward crossing the threshold. Here, not revolt, not transformation; instead restoration and restitution.¹⁷

Heads turned away from dismantling the old to a new agenda, as bold as it was ancient, primitive. Cane Ridge did not make it all happen. You knew that before you heard me spell some of it out. But this was the symbolic event of that generative season in American history.

So we all take pride. We celebrate. We also sober up on the imperfection of that vision and all that we have done and failed to do since that time. Most of all, we devote, dedicate, renew, commit and trust in the Almighty to place in his eternal purposes what he led the Cane Ridge men and women to see and do, and is leading their spiritual descendants, you and me, to see and do.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1. Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 108.

2. *Ibid.*, 109.

3. Samuel S. Hill, "Campbell-Stone on the Frontier," *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788-1988*, (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 72.

4. Conkin, *Cane Ridge*, 16-25.

5. *Ibid.*, 18, 19.

6. *Ibid.*, 20.

7. *Ibid.*, 19.

8. Hill, "Campbell-Stone," 71.

9. Ellen T. Eslinger, "The Great Revival in Bourbon County, Kentucky" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1988), vii, 9.

10. Eslinger, "The Great Revival," 10; Conkin, *Cane Ridge*, 87.
11. Eslinger, "The Great Revival," vii, 10.
12. Conkin, *Cane Ridge*, 73.
13. T. Dwight Bozeman, "Alexander Campbell, Child of the Puritans?" in *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788-1988*, 13.
14. D. Newell Williams, "The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion" in *Lectures*, 137, 134.
15. Conkin, *Cane Ridge*, 106.
16. *Ibid.*, 169.
17. Hill, "Campbell-Stone on the Frontier," 73-74.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ROMANCE AND REALITY OF CANE RIDGE

By Howard E. Short

To stand at Cane Ridge today is to evoke not only the history of events two hundred years ago but also some of my own experiences in the more immediate past.

When I came to the Lexington Theological Seminary faculty 45 years ago, I soon learned that the seniors planned a retreat at Cane Ridge early in the fall. Sitting proudly in my newly acquired chair of church history I assumed that probably I would be asked to give the speech on that occasion. However, they asked someone else. I told myself that they probably had made their plans in the spring, before I arrived.

The next fall, still another professor was asked to speak. This was the pattern through the years. I was on the faculty twelve years. As we began what was to be my last year, the seniors invited the professor of church history to give the Cane Ridge retreat address. I have no recollection of what I said.

However, all had not been lost. I had been invited by another group to speak at a Sunday afternoon service, some years earlier. This was an emotional experience for me because that morning I had preached in the Beattyville church behind a pulpit from which Alexander Campbell had preached. To stand behind a Campbell pulpit and a Stone pulpit in the same day was quite exciting.

We are met on the Cane Ridge.

Here is a region rare and radiant. Hunt all merry England for vales of peace; search all New England for valleys of plenty, and there will not come to your finding such reaches of beauteous landscape. Gently descending from the Cumberland Plateau, which forms the western flank of the Kentucky mountain region, are numberless winsome hills and entranc-

ing valleys. In the heart of all this wondrous garden is the 'bluegrass' country. On its breast, like a noble rose or a lustrous jewel, rests the royal county of Bourbon.¹

These are the words used to describe this place in the poem of James R. Rogers' little book about the Cane Ridge Meeting House. While the language may sound overly romantic to some of you who have tilled the soil in this generation, nevertheless it pictures what proved to be an ideal setting for the beginning of a movement.

Much has been spoken and written in this year of celebration and one is hard put to find any theme that has not been explored, any avenue of approach that has not been trodden already. Rather than to attempt an academic discourse on the theology of Cane Ridge or on the reasons why the Presbyterians who established this congregation soon left the fold and formed a new grouping, my mind has turned toward a comparison and contrast of the romance of the story with the reality of what has happened. To develop such a theme, reference will be made to beliefs and practices, but not in much depth. I would not want to destroy the nice, pleasant thoughts we all have when we think of Cane Ridge and its influence on the American church scene. A look at the church today indicates that the reality is not quite what was wanted, or expected two hundred years ago.

First, let's talk a little bit about the early days. This area was said to be a favorite hunting ground of Daniel Boone. He was a native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. In his wanderings on the frontier he found the Cane Ridge. Somewhere he wrote, "On the Cane Ridge, the most game is there, the biggest sugar trees and the best corn grows there. . . . I gave it the name." We are indebted to our distinguished curator, Franklin McGuire, for his recent research which shows that Andrew McClure was the first minister of the Cane Ridge congregation. While little is known of his leadership here, the name of Robert W. Finley is quite prominent. He also was from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He was a graduate of Princeton in the days when John Witherspoon, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was president of that prestigious college in New Jersey. It gives us pause when we think how difficult it is for a small congregation in a rural setting

to find a resident minister today, when we think of such a minister as Finley in this meetinghouse.

Finley was licensed and began to preach in North Carolina, in 1777. His missionary work was interrupted by the victory of Lord Cornwallis at Camden, in 1780. But, after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Finley ran onto his old friend, Daniel Boone, who talked in glowing terms of the cane ridge. Finley came to see the place for himself in 1784 but he could not persuade his family to come to the frontier until the fall of 1788. He and a group came to Maysville, then on to Washington and settled near Flemingsburg, in 1789. Finally, his dream was realized and they settled on the cane ridge in Bourbon County, in the spring of 1790.

In 1791, the people of the community built this meetinghouse. A manuscript of Peter Houston, an itinerant minister, is quoted by his grandson, F. P. Houston, in the Rogers book. He wrote:

The timber was cut, hewn and notched where it fell, in the cane brake. The building, 50' by 40', ceiling 15' high, pulpit on north side, boxed up, elevated. Entrance from the west, aisle full length of the building.²

There are two other descriptions in the Rogers book. William Rogers, the author's grandfather, wrote in his records:

As I first remember this venerable building, in 1798, there was no chinking between the logs, no glass in the windows, the floors and the seats were puncheons smoothed with the broadax, no chimneys, no fireplaces, the roof and the pulpit being of clapboards; and yet large congregations of brave men and pious women, comely maidens and gallant young men, lads and lassies and infants in their mothers' arms, greeted Elder Stone those quiet sabbath mornings.

And the author, James Rogers, wrote in 1906:

Three immense girders, sixteen inches square, hewn with broadax, sixteen feet apart, tie the walls of the

building at the ceiling; and its alignment at the height of the square 115 years later has no apparent variation from the original lines.

So, here we are, gathered in and about this ancient building. The balcony has been reassembled from the resting place of some of its beams, together with replacements for those long rotted away. The romance is real and it is inspiring because we know that this reconstruction has been done on the original 1791 building, on its original foundation.

For me, it is also a romance that is real, to speak of this building as a meetinghouse. It is not the Cane Ridge church! We hold in sacred memory those pioneers who broke this soil and who became the Cane Ridge church. The church worshipped in a meetinghouse, in this meetinghouse.

This is the way I was raised. Our country church in Washington County, Indiana, was the Douglas Church of Christ. We met in the meetinghouse. I never heard the building called a church. We were the church. We never "went to church"; we went to "meeting." The church met in its meetinghouse.

That's the way it was here. We may imagine that our religion is more sophisticated than theirs and that our theology of worship is much more refined. But those people in 1791 and my parents at the turn of the century knew something, too. They knew that the church is a fellowship of "called out" persons, to translate the Greek word literally, and that bricks and stones, or hand-hewn logs, could never be a church.

It is a beautiful experience to worship in a magnificent house of worship. I have done so, in some of the world's great edifices: Notre Dame and Sacre Coeur, in Paris; Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, in London; St. John's and St. Patrick's, in New York, Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul; St. Peter's, St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore, in Rome; Washington National Cathedral and National City Christian Church, in our own capital. But I hope we never get too far away from Douglas and Cane Ridge and that the building always remains the place where the church meets.

There is romance about the great Cane Ridge Revival that took place here, August 7-12, 1801. In American church history, we look back upon it as the "Second Great Awaken-

ing." The first was the revival in New England that broke out in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1734 with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. It lasted perhaps a decade. These events are called "awakenings" because, in both instances, the churches had been concentrating on expounding the traditional theology of their respective groups, putting it out, as it were, for people to accept or be damned.

With Edwards and with the frontier preachers in western Kentucky and here at Cane Ridge, the emphasis turned suddenly upon the hearers. These awakenings were the beginning of the end of traditional Calvinism, the teaching that souls are predestined to salvation or damnation before they are born and there is nothing that can be done about it. The second awakening, which had its most glorious manifestation right here on this five-acre plot, added further evidence to Barton Stone's belief that persons are born free, have free wills and that they accept the call of Christ or reject it, as they choose.

The five-day revival here was a spectacle, a phenomenon, a never-seen-before series of events. It had been widely advertised over the state and in Ohio. The crowds came. I have seen estimates as high as 30,000 and none lower than 10,000. Even the lowest estimate would fill this spot pretty well, wouldn't it? And this was a grove then, with lots of trees. There was continual preaching—my, how they preached! Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian preachers came and everyone was on the same wave length (before that term was born): the need for individual repentance and the possibility that "whosoever will may come."

There was lots of excitement. Barton W. Stone, who had come to Cane Ridge as a licensed Presbyterian minister in 1796, was the planner and the leader of the meeting. When people "got religion" they showed it outwardly. Also, when they were seeking forgiveness and desiring the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they went through physical exercises which they hoped would induce the Spirit to come. Stone wrote that these "exercises," as he called them, included falling, jerking, barking, dancing, running, laughing and singing. It has also been written that small saplings were cut down, leaving a stump some three feet high, so that a person could hang onto it while shaking and not fall and be injured. I hope today is an equally happy experience and that we may

truly enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit although we probably won't engage in more than two of the earlier experiences, laughing and singing.

After the big meeting, life in this meetinghouse was never the same. It was obvious to synod officials that what transpired here was not in line with the accepted doctrines of the church. Stone and others were asked to explain their beliefs and they could not do so satisfactorily. It is said that Robert Finley, the second pastor here, then preaching in Ohio, opposed Stone's "new theology."

So, it came about that Stone and five others, decided to form their own presbytery. Here in this meetinghouse they organized the Springfield Presbytery in the fall of 1803. It was so named because one of the ministers was preaching in Springfield, Ohio, not the present Springfield but in a suburb of Cincinnati now called Springdale. I have never been able to figure out how they thought they could take matters into their own hand, organize a presbytery and still remain in the Synod of Kentucky.

The group must have had similar questions, for in less than a year they met again and all signed "The Last Will and Testament" of the Springfield Presbytery. They had been emphasizing a return to the New Testament for beliefs and practices, and they could not find this kind of church government in it. The date was June 24, 1804. Of several dates that might be taken as the birthday of the churches which have grown out of the Campbell-Stone movement, this one may be the keystone.

They were no longer Presbyterians, either in their own thinking or in the view of Presbytery and Synod. They were "not the only Christians but Christians only," to use a phrase favored by many in those days. Like the Campbells, a little bit later, they did not want to be "denominated." Of course, this hope was futile. Everyone is denominated; we all have names. The public and the churches were not about to let a group of people go around calling its members "Christians," as if they were an exclusive lot. But surely, the term Christian, used here at Cane Ridge and now widely used as a common denominator throughout the church world, is an indication that Stone and Cane Ridge were on the right track.

Since the Campbells have just been mentioned, this is perhaps the place to say something about priorities and

relationships. The public called these new church groups "Campbellites," more often than by any other name. "Stoneites" was a term heard here and there, especially in Kentucky. They were also called "New Lights," sometimes, as opposed to the "Old Lights," the Calvinistic churches. (When I lived in Kentucky, I heard that the name "New Light," had remained on, as denoting a certain little sunfish.) It goes without saying that Alexander Campbell became the single most influential leader of the new movement. But time-wise, Stone and David Purviance, the only one of the original signers of the Last Will and Testament to stay with Stone, were the first to venture outside the organized church.

It seems to me that I can hear an echo, even now, of a voice familiar to many of you: "Right here is where it all started!" It was Rhodes Thompson, Sr., speaking. Those of us who worked on the Cane Ridge Preservation Project that culminated in the dedication of this beautiful superstructure in June, 1957, will never forget Rhodes' constant admonition as he urged us on to raise the \$100,000 plus needed to complete the task of preserving this meetinghouse where the Christian Churches, the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ began.

There is a story I would like to relate because only three other persons heard it, originally. Some of you will remember my predecessor in the church history department at the seminary, Walter C. Gibbs. He had a counterpart at Bethany College, so far as our history is concerned, in Professor Irving T. Green. If I am not mistaken, they were classmates at Hiram College. I know that they were life-long friends—and enemies. That is, each had his favorite spot for the beginning of our movement. I did not know how serious they were until I had occasion to go to Bethany for a committee meeting.

During a free period, Wilbur Cramblet, president of the college, drove some of us around to see the historic spots—the Campbell mansion and the cemetery. And Professor Green was along as our guide. I sat in the front seat between him and Dr. Cramblet. Suddenly, Green leaned over, slapped me on the leg and said, "You know, Short, right here is where it all started." I sensed right away that he wanted to get a rise out of me because of Professor Gibbs' strong advocacy of Cane Ridge as our origin. So I said, "Perhaps so; but there are those

who would disagree with you." Green paused only a second before he said, loudly, "Yes, I suppose they would—but I'm still right!"

It was certainly inevitable, with the frontier still on the move, that these Campbell and Stone groups would run into one another and notice their similarities. Thomas Campbell landed in Philadelphia from the north of Ireland, May 13, 1807, and was a minister of one of the many-splintered groups of Presbyterians in that country. After being assigned to churches in Washington County, Pennsylvania, he was denouncing the authority of both presbytery and synod in September of the following year.

Alexander Campbell, the son, arrived in 1809, with his mother and siblings. In quick order these old-country Scotch Presbyterians were out of the church and had formed "The Christian Association of Washington." On May 4, 1811, that Association became the Brush Run Church. Like Cane Ridge, it was now the center of a new movement. And that was within seven weeks of being seven years after the Cane Ridge congregation became independent.

The Campbell movement attracted many Baptists in southern Ohio and in Kentucky. The Stone movement attracted mostly Presbyterians. When these new congregations came into contact they could see how much alike they were. Thus, the church in Georgetown, led by Stone, and nearby churches following Campbell's teaching, came together for a meeting, Christmas week, 1831. This was followed by the historic meeting in the Hill Street church, in Lexington, January 1, 1832, when Stone and John Smith, a former Baptist and now a follower of the Campbells, shook hands and agreed that their movements were now one. This year, that congregation, now known as Central Christian Church, is celebrating its 175th anniversary.

We need to remind ourselves again that our roots are Presbyterian, Scotch-Presbyterian. When John Knox was exiled from Scotland during a Catholic reign, he spent his time in Geneva, Switzerland. When he returned home, he brought Presbyterianism with him. The Reformed Church of John Calvin and of Huldreich Zwingli before him has remained one of the strong divisions of Protestantism since the Reformation days of the sixteenth century, when the Lutheran and Reformed (Presbyterian) movements went their sep-

arate ways following their inability to find a basis of unity at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529.

If there had been no Presbyterians there would have been no Cane Ridge Meetinghouse. There might have been something, some time, somewhere. But the fact is that Presbyterians built this house and met here for worship. I am delighted that they have been able to hold a meeting of celebration here this year.

There are three aspects of Barton Stone's ministry that point to his attachment to the past. The first is that it was always assumed that the Presbyterians were welcome to worship here. There is a document dated February 12, 1829, almost 25 years after the independence of the congregation was declared. It has to do with the purchase of three acres of land, including a cemetery and a church. Some 102 names are signed to it.

In addition to buying the property, the document continues: "and also for the purpose of repairing said house of worship for the cold as well as for the warm season of the year. Said house and lot to be conveyed to the Christian and Presbyterian churches, but free for use for other societies to worship in when not occupied by these churches." Only a few names among the signers remain from the original congregation. They include James Huston, the first church clerk. So, it is evident that the new generation has caught the spirit of the first. They were not the "only Christians."

The second point is that the congregation always practiced open communion. It may seem so commonplace to our congregations today that we fail to see what a radical view it was to many churches in that day. It is still an unacceptable practice to some churches today.

The third point is that Stone always advocated, and practiced open membership. Persons coming with a letter of transfer from other traditions were asked no further questions. The point was never fully resolved with the Campbell folks nor is it completely laid to rest today. Whatever our personal views may be, we all know that the practice began here, with Stone and this church.

Ideas which possess us usually seem so simple that we cannot understand why everyone doesn't readily accept them. Looking back and reading Stone's concept of the church, we can see that he believed the practice of his teaching would

restore the unity of the church to its New Testament purity. He was as exercised by the disunity of the church as he was by the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity.

As William West has written:

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 estate of religion existed than these continuous, widespread and riotous debates among the followers of Christ.³

The reality of what began here in this meetinghouse is not as happy a story as the romance of the big meeting and the early successes. As Professor Anthony Dunnavant has pointed out in his masterful story of Central Christian Church's 175 years, the unity that started with a handshake on January 1, 1832 "broke down within the Lexington congregation itself," on January 19. It took a year and a half to heal a breach that came over the question of whether "any person besides a preacher can administer the Lord's Supper."⁴

Another division arose in 1834 and still further controversy threatened to divide the congregation in 1837. Interestingly enough, it was Alexander Campbell who was able to assist the congregation in settling the latter problem regarding the ordination of the officers of the congregation.

What happened to that first united congregation of Campbell and Stone followers has happened scores of times through the years. It is natural, if a person or a group of people find what is believed to be the perfect New Testament pattern for the church that they tend to become restrictive. The church world today is full of absolutists. Just turn on your radio or TV and listen to them or buy their literature when they come to your door. The trouble is that if one is a doubter or rather loosely attached to some church, there is a question: "Which absolutist shall I follow?"

We have to be thankful for Barton Warren Stone and Cane Ridge. They never claimed to be the only Christians. They never excluded anyone from worship; they never "fenced" the communion table. But we have had our share of problems

despite this clear path to unity that our forbears have left for us to follow.

When the Department of the Interior began to plan for the first U.S. Census of Religions to be done in 1906, two members of our movement took it upon themselves to ask that numerous congregations not be listed with the "Christian Churches," but separately, as "Churches of Christ." This was done. Some general church historians list "Churches of Christ" as having been organized in 1906. Of course, this isn't correct. There were already a few thousand congregations that felt themselves sufficiently different in doctrine and practice from the Christian Churches that the government could identify them. We probably could have seen the beginnings of ultimate separation in congregations of the first generation.

In 1926, during the annual International Convention in Memphis, Tennessee, a rump convention was held in the Pantages Theater and the North American Christian Convention was organized. Again, there was a sufficient number of congregations, hundreds of them, which believed that the International Convention and its organized work, were straying from the New Testament norm. So, these churches became a separate body. More recently, these churches asked to be listed in the *Year Book of American Churches* as an undenominational fellowship of "Christian Churches and Churches of Christ." I recall having a visit in my office from the person who wrote the letter asking to be listed separately, and we both sorrowed at our inability to be "Christians only," without separating from one another and adding to the disunity of the universal church.

Stone's motto for his paper, *The Christian Messenger*, read: "Let the unity of Christians be our polar star." The reality is that the movement which still proudly quotes this ideal is strictly divided into three separate bodies of Christians, easily identified as three denominations by the rest of the church world. All are fully structured with colleges, two with seminaries, home and foreign mission work and easily identifiable in any community from one another. This isn't what the Cane Ridge congregation had in mind or could have anticipated.

Romance and reality! We cannot end this last of the Bicentennial celebrations of the erection of this meeting-house on such a gloomy note, can we? Is there no hope, no

light? Should we just have remained Presbyterians? After all, the three large Presbyterian churches in the United States have united into one church. The Methodists, who took part in the Cane Ridge meeting have united their largest bodies into one. Only the Baptists keep us Christians company—they remain in two large bodies and a host of smaller ones.

I do not foresee structural, or organizational unity among the followers of Stone and Campbell. We love our own peculiarities. My absolutism is better than your absolutism! However, I do see an increasing number of persons, organizations and churches being Christian toward one another. That is an improvement and it is reality. As a founding member and a 40-year trustee of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society I am proud that we organized, in 1941, to serve all the churches of our whole tradition. From that day to this we have never made any distinction as to who may use the building and its resources, or who may ask the staff for help. We preserve all the materials we can get from all the churches and accept financial help from all who will help us. Our board of trustees always has members from all three of the current churches.

The Pension Fund and the Board of Church Extension of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have been receptive to calls for help from the other churches. Here in Kentucky, the Christian Church Homes of Kentucky works with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches and Churches of Christ to maintain the benevolent work for children and the aged. Since 1930, we have had a World Convention of Churches of Christ. It attracts very little attendance from the 1906 group of Churches of Christ but the fellowship among thousands of members of the other two bodies every four years is really a beautiful experience. There may be yet other examples of some cooperation that I have not mentioned.

Perhaps Barton Warren Stone did preach some eternal truths here at Cane Ridge. Maybe this old meetinghouse can echo some of that common sense today so that we can go away a bit more tolerant, a bit more understanding of how impossible it is for every individual to see alike, a bit more Christian.

Jesus Christ surely died for us all. Even if we were perfect in every other aspect of our lives, we are still sinners when we keep his church divided. I have given a lot of my life

to the fellowship and understanding of all the churches of the world. I have also given countless days to unity discussions among our three groups. I do not believe it was a waste of time. I have not been rebuffed many times. There have been enough results to cause me to continue to the end of my days.

This, too, is reality. And this reality can be romantic. Try it! As these walls once echoed to the voices of Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians crying out, "Repent, while there is yet time," so let them echo our feeble plea at the close of the twentieth century: "O Lord, preserve us from bigotry, keep us from littleness, and send us forth resolved to be Cane Ridge Christians who do not boast of their exclusivism but who rejoice in being Christians."

Notes to Chapter Nine

1. James R. Rogers, *The Cane Ridge Meeting House* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1910.)
2. *Ibid.*, 31ff.
3. William Garrett West, *Barton Warren Stone* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 18.
4. Anthony L. Dunnivant, *Central Christian Church* (Lexington: Central Christian Church, 1991) 12.

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