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2004

### Discipliana Vol-64-Nos-1-4-2004

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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Volume 64 • Number 1 • Spring, 2004

Published by DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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*DISCIPLIANA* (USPS 995-060) is published quarterly for \$20.00 per year by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society which was established in 1941 "to maintain and further interest in religious heritage, backgrounds, origins, development, and general history of Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, Churches of Christ and related groups." Members of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society receive *DISCIPLIANA* quarterly, along with other benefits. Annual membership categories are: Sustaining - \$50 to \$249, Participating - \$30, Regular - \$20, Students - \$10.00, Non-U.S. - \$25. Life Memberships are: Life - \$250, Life Link - \$500, Life Patron - \$1,000.

Contributors to *DISCIPLIANA* should submit manuscripts on 3.5 floppy disk in Wordperfect 5.1 or "text" format. Electronic manuscript submission via "text only" formatted e-mail or attached file accepted at dishistsoc@aol.com. Postal mail should be addressed to: *DISCIPLIANA*, 1101 Nineteenth Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37212-2196.

Phone: (615) 327-1444. E-mail: mail@dishistsoc.org  
The Disciples of Christ Historical Society Home Page: www.dishistsoc.org  
Periodical postage paid at Nashville, TN.

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Indexed by Restoration Serials Index  
ISSN 0732-9881

Indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals, the Index to Book Reviews in Religion, Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBRR 1975- on CD-ROM, and the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: atla@atla.com, WWW: http://www.atla.com/

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DISCIPLIANA*, 1101 - 19th Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37212-2196. Please give both old and new addresses and attach a mailing label from an old issue. USA: Please provide nine-digit code (ZIP+4).

## — From the Editor's Desk

The era from the Civil War through World War I was characterized by remarkable social and economic changes in American society. These changes had a profound impact on the life of the churches and on the roles of women in American religious life. This issue of *Discipliana* examines the changing roles of Disciples of Christ women during this era.

Debra Hull's, "Disciples of Christ Church Women at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," describes the work of Disciples women in establishing church missionary societies, reform organizations and colleges. She also discusses the service of Disciples women as pastors and evangelists. Hull is careful to relate these developments among Disciples to broader developments in American social and religious history. Hull also draws on broader currents in American life, in particular on what historian Betty DeBerg has identified as a pervasive movement to "reclaim the church for men," in her account of the 1919 dissolution of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions.

The impact of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions on the role of women in the church is the focus of Douglas Foster's, "Feminism vs. Feminization: The Case of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions." Foster sees evidences of both feminism and feminization in the history of the CWBM. He argues that the growth of feminization in this most successful of Disciples mission organizations limited the role of women in the church and was a factor in the dissolution of the CWBM.

The articles by Hull and Foster are illuminating and provocative. Twenty-first century churches continue to struggle with meaning of gender in the life and witness of the church. These articles suggest the importance of further study of the history of gender in the Stone-Campbell Movement.

— D. Newell Williams

— From the President's Desk

"Amen" was the first word out of my mouth after reading the material for this issue of *Discipliana*. I was both cheering and praying.

Debra Hull and Doug Foster merit my cheers in their work which makes more visible the work and witness of women in our Stone-Campbell Movement. One of the growth points in our discipline of searching and sharing the treasures of the past is the opening to us of the story of women, marginalized persons and even ordinary folk that previous generations of historians have overlooked or taken for granted or simply failed to report. These articles further the commitment of the Society clearly seen in our museum (by the way, designed by Vicky Fuqua, a woman) to give more exposure to Mattie Younkin and Sarah Lue Bostick and Jane Errett along with those better known names of Thomas, Alexander, Barton and Walter. That course was also recently furthered in our changing exhibit (by the way, created by Elaine Philpott, a woman) for Black History month. She displayed material on Rosa Campbell, Ida Mallory Taylor and Rosa Page Welch.

My cheerleading was also praying . I prayed in thanksgiving for this staff of women who do such good work at the Society (by the way, only the custordian and I are male on this staff of seven.) I also prayed in thanksgiving for the women in my history who have made me what I am. Those names include Edith and Mildred who reared me, May Yoho Ward who gave me an enlarged vision of the church, and Lynne Morgan who daily surprises me with love, loyalty and practical wisdom.

Care to join me in a big "Yeah" to God for the women in your life!? After reading this issue of *Discipliana* you may be ready to remember the women in our big story and in your personal story.

— Peter M. Morgan

## DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CHURCH WOMEN AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Debra B. Hull\*

*She was born in 1850, the daughter of a Civil War general, died in 1927, and was remembered by her friends as one who "gave herself unreservedly to the cause of humanity . . . in her reading, in her thinking, in her planning, in her writing, and in her living."*<sup>1</sup>

She is probably best known for chronicling the work of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM), serving as its national vice-president from 1908-1920; as president of the Kentucky CWBM; as a college and convention speaker on mission concerns; and as a visitor to mission stations. She was also:

- centennial secretary for the 1909 Pittsburgh celebration (the only woman on the Centennial Committee),
- the first woman to receive the honorary degree Doctor of Laws from Transylvania University,
- the first woman to serve on the Lexington, Kentucky School Board,
- six times elected president of the Woman's Club of Central Kentucky and twice chosen president of the Kentucky Federation of Woman's Clubs,
- chair of the Woman's Democratic Party, and a volunteer for the Red Cross and YWCA.<sup>2</sup>

She, Ida Withers Harrison, embodies the story of Disciples church women at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Changes in American culture around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that made it possible for Ida Withers Harrison to live the life she did had a profound impact on the church as a whole. Diversification of employment opportunities, faster means of communication, greater availability of public and higher education, increased independence women gained during the Civil War, industrialization, improvements in medicine and health care, technological advances, and urbanization all played a part. As a result, a growing number of women had choices—about education, careers, marriage, motherhood, and the extent to which they wished to be independent from men. The choices they made led them into new areas and means for shaping church and community. In the Stone-Campbell Movement, women were particularly active in establishing church missionary societies, reform organizations, and colleges, and in serving as pastors and evangelists.

### Women's Organizations

#### Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM)

Women's organizations played a vital role in enabling women to enter public life and influence the course of church history. In the Stone-Campbell tradition, women established the CWBM in 1874 to improve the lives of women and children in the United States and abroad through practical assistance within a religious context. Supporting CWBM became the "grand passion" in the lives

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\*Debra B. Hull is Professor of Psychology at Wheeling Jesuit University, Wheeling, West Virginia.

of countless Christian women who devoted their spiritual, intellectual, and financial resources to its work. It was a grassroots organization, made up of a large number of small local church societies, supported with many small contributions (sometimes earned from selling spare butter and eggs), and sensitive to the need to educate women and children about mission concerns through mission publications.<sup>3</sup>

Stone-Campbell women were not alone; foreign missionary societies were established in 33 denominations and domestic missionary societies in 17 denominations in a 30-year period beginning in 1860. CWBM, however, was the first to serve both foreign and domestic missions, to employ both men and women, and to be managed entirely by women.<sup>4</sup> Sixty training schools, offering theological and practical education to their mostly women students aiming to become missionaries, were established in a number of different denominations.<sup>5</sup> The College of Missions, established by CWBM in 1910 in Indianapolis trained many mission leaders, both men and women, for the Stone-Campbell movement.

Initially, one reason for admitting African-American and Caucasian women to the professions of law and medicine and to missionary service was so that they could serve other women—legally, to represent women in cases of rape, adultery, and prostitution; medically, for gynecological care; and in ministry, to serve in countries where male missionaries were not allowed to interact with women.<sup>6</sup> In particular, missionary work gave professional women an opportunity to use their education and respond to their calling. Women who found it difficult to secure positions as preachers, teachers, administrators, or physicians in the United States could express their talents and faith in foreign mission service. Women-led missionary societies such as the CWBM dispatched single and married women into the mission field to establish churches, schools, and hospitals. For instance CWBM sent Drs. Olivia Baldwin, Arabella Merrill, Lillian Miller, Rosa Lee Oxer, Ada McNeil, and Mary M. Longdon to serve as physicians in India prior to 1900.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many women still had little access to educational opportunities. *Missionary Tidings*, published by CWBM beginning in 1883, helped fill the gap by including letters from missionaries, financial appeals, news of the organization, and home and church mission study materials. Children's mission societies were established in many churches and CWBM also published mission magazines for children—*Little Builders at Work*, *Junior Builders*, and *King's Builders*.

### **Other Women's Reform Organizations**

The common presumption of women's moral superiority—thought to be evidenced in stereotypical feminine characteristics of tenderness, sympathy, meekness, merciful hearts, and freedom from worldly concerns—ironically helped women move into various social reform arenas. “For when feminists argued that morally superior women should be allowed to reshape society, it was difficult for conservatives, despite their desire to restrain women's morality to the home, to disagree.”<sup>8</sup> Leaders of church women's organizations were often active in social and political reform, and leaders of social and political reform efforts were often church women. In fact, Glen Zuber has argued that hearing women speak in favor of temperance from a religious perspective in church pulpits prompted church

members to become more sympathetic toward the ordination of women.<sup>9</sup>

Voluntarism and social reform were the hallmarks of organizations devoted to such diverse concerns as cleaning up tenements, beautifying cities, promoting labor rights, establishing kindergartens, guaranteeing food and drug purity, and humanizing the penal system. Most organizations, including religious ones, embraced women's rights goals and many coalesced behind suffrage work. They continued their work despite strong anti-suffrage sentiment—emanating mainly from the liquor industry, political bosses fearful of losing power, and the Catholic church.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to missionary societies, reform organizations established by women at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century include the American Red Cross (1889), the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, later the American Association of University Women (1882), the Congress of Mothers, later the PTA, (1889), the Daughters of the American Revolution (1890), the General Federation of Women's Clubs (1890), the National American Woman Suffrage Association (1890), the National Council of Women of Canada (1893), the National Council of Women (1888), the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1873), the Young Women's Christian Association (1889).

Through their benevolent work, 19<sup>th</sup> century women entered the public arena and thereby increased their sphere of influence. While opening up leadership opportunities for women, though, their work sometimes reinforced class distinctions. Often women's efforts involved imparting middle class values and behavior patterns to the "worthy poor" and others viewed as "dependents." Tension inherent in the difference between benevolence (rooted in the power of class) and justice (rooted in self-determination) was played out within several of the reform groups (notably abolition, suffrage, and labor rights). Largely through their own experiences with benevolent fathers, brothers, and husbands, women came to realize that benevolence could come at the cost of self-respect.<sup>11</sup> This realization not only helped reformers understand anger and ingratitude on the part of some of their "projects" but also shaped later reform efforts, especially those related to civil rights.

### **African-American CWBM**

African-American women organized separate CWBM auxiliaries in their churches, the first under the notable leadership of Sarah Lue Bostick in Pea Ridge, Arkansas in 1896. Bostick was later appointed (and financially supported by the "white sisters of Little Rock") to organize more African-American auxiliaries. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African-Americans were holding a separate convention, the National CWBM, which later evolved into the National Christian Missionary Convention. Separate African-American and European-American CWBM organizations did work cooperatively. Contributions from both auxiliaries supported CWBM work, including the endowment of the Bible Chair at the University of Michigan and the work of Jacob Kenoly, an African-American missionary in Liberia.<sup>12</sup>

Many CWBM efforts were directed toward increasing educational and evangelistic opportunities for African-Americans. For instance, CWBM took over the management of the Southern Christian Institute (in 1900) at the request of the American Missionary Society, established Jarvis Christian Institute (later

Jarvis Christian College) in 1909, and contributed \$10,000 to Centennial Christian Church, a church that had been established by two sisters in St. Louis in 1903. Over time, African-American women such as Rosa Brown Bracy, Rosa V. Brown, Mary L. Mead, Eliza Graves, and Mrs. J. B. Parsons helped white CWBM women realize “that much of their devoted work for Negroes could be more effective and creative as work with Negroes.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Other African-American Reform Organizations**

Black women also founded women’s clubs that were federated in 1895 as the National Association of Colored Women to provide social services for blacks nationwide.<sup>14</sup> Black women traditionally have played prominent roles in their churches, as evangelists, preachers, singers, and deaconesses, although they also have had to fight for leadership roles. Generally, the mission of black churches has been more holistic—serving the physical and educational needs of the people as well as their spiritual needs—and this ministry has been likely to involve black men as well as black women.<sup>15</sup>

### **Education**

In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “the most rudimentary education was considered all that was necessary for a woman. Anything beyond that was considered indelicate and unwomanly, and was supposed to unfit her for the sphere to which God had assigned her.”<sup>16</sup> All that changed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, because boys were more likely to drop out of school to go to work, high school graduates were more likely to be girls than boys, and 80% of post-secondary institutions admitted women.<sup>17</sup> Several women in the Stone-Campbell Movement were instrumental in developing these education opportunities for women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup>

- Jane Campbell McKeever, daughter of Thomas Campbell and sister of Alexander Campbell, opened a home school for boys and girls in West Middleton, Pennsylvania, that evolved into Pleasant Hill Female Seminary, with a curriculum similar to that of nearby, all-male Bethany College, in about 1842. The McKeevers were also active in the abolitionist movement and Pleasant Hill Seminary was a stop on the Underground Railroad.
- Charlotte Fall, along with her husband Tolbert Fanning, established Franklin College and its associated girls’ school in 1845, and Hope Institute for girls and women in 1866, both in Tennessee.
- Mattie Forbes Myers Carr established a college for women with the founding of Carr-Burdette College in 1893 in Sherman, Texas.
- Together Luella Wilcox St. Clair Moss and Emma Frederick Moore combined to serve 40 years as presidents and co-presidents of two Stone-Campbell Movement colleges for women—Christian College in Columbia, Missouri, and Hamilton College in Lexington, Kentucky. Moss was also a leader in the suffrage movement.

Education gave women career choices; other historical events—in particular the Civil War, the growth of the economy, industrialization, and a great increase in the number of public schools—created needs and opportunities for women in the workforce. Consider the impact of these developments on women’s employment.

- During the Civil War, women who tended wounded soldiers learned nursing skills and women left at home learned to run farms and businesses. Once the war was over, newly confident and skilled (mostly middle to upper-middle

class) women had a basis for transition to peacetime work.

- As the American economy grew, there were not enough men to fill all the jobs; lower-class women and immigrants provided a cheap labor source, in the textile mills of New England, for instance.
- More public schools meant a need for more teachers, opening up positions for (unmarried) women.<sup>19</sup>

In 1840, women were concentrated in seven occupations—teaching, needle working, keeping boarders, setting type, working as servants, binding books, and working in cotton factories; by the 1890 census, there were only nine of 369 listed occupations in which there were no women reported.<sup>20</sup> During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, great numbers of working women moved from domestic work to factory work to office work to nursing and teaching to law, medicine, and the ministry.

Race and marital status had a profound impact on the employment of women. In 1900, 15% of nonimmigrant Caucasian women (less than 4% of married Caucasian women) and 43% of African-American women (25% of married African-American women) were working outside the home.<sup>21</sup> The racial difference probably occurred because it was more difficult for African-American than Caucasian men to find employment that would allow them to support a family, and because African-American women were not seen as being as fragile as Caucasian women. Interestingly, African-American women were more likely than Caucasian women to be physicians and attorneys, perhaps because clerical work, a chief occupation for Caucasian women, was generally not available to African-American women. In 1910, for instance, 6% of Caucasian physicians were women and 0.5% of Caucasian attorneys were women while 13% of African-American physicians were women and 3% of African-American attorneys were women.<sup>22</sup>

### **Ordination**

A number of churches began to ordain women in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Stone-Campbell churches among them. Historically, presiding at the table and other sacramental roles have been considered “priestly” functions open only to men. In churches where such functions were performed by pastors (Presbyterian, Episcopal, Anglican), ordination of women came later, in some cases not until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and sometimes not even as of today (e. g., Southern Baptist). In churches where elders performed priestly functions, such as in the Stone-Campbell tradition, women preachers were ordained earlier, but the acceptance of women as elders was delayed. Nineteenth-century women also were more likely to be ordained in congregationally organized churches that valued local church power and autonomy in making ordination decisions and in frontier churches located in sparsely populated regions where there were few seminary trained preachers—characteristics of the Stone-Campbell tradition (Zikmund, 1981). Pioneers in ordination include women who also were active in the CWBM and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Clara Hale Babcock is commonly identified as being the first woman ordained in the Stone-Campbell tradition, in 1888 or 1889. She served as an evangelistic preacher in Illinois and Iowa and is said to have baptized 1052 people. There are other women who were ordained earlier with ties to the Stone-Campbell tradition. For instance, Laura D. Garst, Mary L. Adams, and Josephine W. Smith were ordained by the General Missionary Society in 1883.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the fact that women were being ordained by individual churches and church organizations, strong and vehement opposition to women's ordination was evident in the pages of church periodicals, most notably in the *Christian Standard* in 1892 and 1893. Mary Ellen Lantzer found that the debate centered around the proper interpretation and application of scripture, the role of culture in church polity, the critical need for evangelists in the church, the presumed inherent status of women, and the authoritative function of preachers and evangelists.<sup>24</sup>

At the time, perhaps the best spokespeople for the ordination of women were Barbara Kellison, a member of the Iowa Conference who published a pamphlet on the subject in 1862 and Marinda R. Lemert who wrote in the *Apostolic Guide* in 1888. Their words attest to the depth of their convictions.

- Kellison: "You might as well try to convince me that I have no soul as to persuade me that God never called me to preach his Gospel."<sup>25</sup>
- Lemert: "The doctrine that seals women's lips in the church assembled . . . is a heresy . . . It impeaches the wisdom of God . . . and brings [woman] as a religious being down on a level with traditional animals."<sup>26</sup>

Although women in the Stone-Campbell movement were ordained earlier than in several other churches, they often were encouraged to enter non-pastoral positions, were asked to serve struggling churches, had lower salaries than men, received no guaranteed pensions, and were better accepted if they also were wives of pastors.<sup>27</sup>

Women called to preach could find another route outside the traditional church structure. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, women were quite active in founding non-mainstream, revivalist movements, their authority as preachers being derived from the charisma of their preaching rather than from official church credentials. The growth of evangelical and holiness churches greatly expanded religious roles for women. Even women who gained recognition as worship leaders in Stone-Campbell churches often did so through their work as revival leaders—sometimes even using the "trance speaking" style common in the 1850s and 1860s—and as singing evangelists. Their call was validated by the number of converts they received.<sup>28</sup> Even the most traditional churchwomen founded organizations outside official church structures, "where the divine could be construed differently and traditional clergy roles could either be de-emphasized or abandoned."<sup>29</sup>

By and large, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those churches that opened doors to women by allowing them to be ordained or become elders and to sit on church boards, that established leadership quotas for women (and minorities), and that developed inclusive-language liturgies, declined in membership and in financial contributions (although not in per capita giving). On the other hand, more conservative Protestant churches gained members although the reasons for that growth are surely complex and multi-dimensional. Among mainline church members, the strongest opponents of efforts to accommodate to social change and to compromise on literal interpretations of scripture also tended to be doctrinally the most orthodox, the most regular church attenders, and the largest financial contributors.<sup>30</sup> The dissolution of the CWBM may have reflected initial efforts to diminish leadership roles for women in the Stone-Campbell tradition and reassert male dominance in church leadership.

## **The Dissolution of CWBM and Changes for Church Women**

Various studies show that around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century women outnumbered men two to one as members of missionary societies, that about 60% of worshippers were women, that 90% of Sunday School teachers were women, and that (by 1893) 60% of missionaries were women.<sup>31</sup> In the words of a recent commentator on this situation, “[a] careful reading of the popular fundamentalist press indicates that at least one part of the fundamentalist agenda was to regain the church for men.”<sup>32</sup>

Certainly after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States culture became more secular. Many historians believe that urbanization, industrialization, changing gender roles, professionalism, specialization of knowledge, militarism generated by World War I, a consumer economy, secular public education, immigration, the labor movement, a decline in traditional values, and socialism all served to reduce the influence of the church in the culture.<sup>33</sup> Note that many of these developments are the very factors that gave women more influence in culture.

In response to the secularization and feminization of culture, churches tended to follow one of two paths—fundamentalism or modernism. From pulpits and in church publications, conservatives questioned women’s right to speak in church and to lead mixed meetings. Instead, they called for strong masculine and militaristic images in the church, in part reflected in these popular hymns of the time: *God of Our Fathers, Known of Old* (1903); *God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand* (1876); *God of the Prophets!* (1884); *Lead On, O King Eternal* (1888); *March On, O Soul, with Strength!* (1900); *Rise Up, O Men of God* (1911).

Perhaps one result of the attempt to “reclaim the church for men” (to use a phrase coined by DeBerg) was the dissolution of the powerful and effective church women’s missionary societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Women’s missionary work was rooted in the presumption that the tenets of Christianity led to the salvation of women and to respect and dignity for women on earth. “The fundamentalist-modernist controversy struck at the heart of the woman’s missionary movement by pitting the Bible against the ministry of women.”<sup>34</sup>

Fundamentalists opposed closer relations with other denominations (often important in mission work), and believed in biblical inerrancy.<sup>35</sup> The fundamentalists criticized women’s work in two areas—their right to speak the Gospel in public, and their emphasis on holistic ministry (education, medical care, and political lobbying, for instance) rather than solely on evangelism.

The paradox is, of course, that, nineteenth-century women had achieved some leadership roles in conservative, evangelical churches and admission to their training schools. Several explanations have been proposed to explain this paradox—that the spiritualist movement authenticated women’s spiritual gifts, and that women were needed to fill seats in conservative-established schools and to minister to rural churches.<sup>36</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, conservative churches backed off from their support of expanded roles for women—partly by linking women’s call for equal rights in the church to radical interpretations of feminism and to fringe religious movements.

DeBerg has argued that in the popular culture of the time, the issue that most concerned fundamentalist preachers and congregants was dispensational

pre-millennialism (the ungodly period prior to the second coming) evidenced by dancing, drinking, card-playing, divorce, contraception, and clothing styles. Changes in gender roles and behavior were seen as evidence for dispensational pre-millennialism. Then (as now), “morality [was] often just a code word for conventional gender behavior.”<sup>37</sup> “[Women’s] education, free-thinking, and prominence within the religious realm were considered evidence of social decay and the approaching apocalypse.”<sup>38</sup> The allegedly corrupt behavior of women and the failure of men to assert themselves were seen as resulting from a rejection of the word of God.

Modernists (adherents of the Social Gospel) believed that biblical principles could be applied to contemporary problems, that historical or higher criticism of the Bible (the view that the Bible needs to be understood in an historical/developmental context) was appropriate, and that recognition of and cooperation with other denominations would help efficiently spread the gospel.<sup>39</sup> But it would be a mistake to conclude that church women were treated more equitably by modernists than by fundamentalists. Modernists contributed to the loss of women’s independent church organizations in the name of efficiency, despite the fact that women’s organizations had lower overhead and more effective fund-raising than other church groups. The argument, though, was that women’s fund-raising efforts were taking money from other church endeavors, especially in the 1920s when local church giving declined. “Within American Protestantism, fundamentalists were not alone in their attempt to reclaim the church for men. Methods and rhetoric varied, but Social Gospel theologians and ministers supported the separate-spheres ideology, too. . . . Social Gospelers countered the feminization of religion by asserting the church’s role in the public, political world of men.”<sup>40</sup>

In Stone-Campbell churches, women and men had enjoyed a major success working together in the 1909 centennial celebration. As a result, and in the name of economy and efficiency, a committee was established to study the unification of gender-exclusive mission boards. The women representatives on the committee were Anna Atwater, Effie Cunningham, Josephine Stearns, Ellie K. Payne, and Daisy June Trout.<sup>41</sup>

One problem with this study was that women leaders who opposed the merger of their organizations did not always have the right to speak or vote in church meetings and/or were persuaded to accept compromises that led to the gradual loss of the autonomy of their mission auxiliaries. However, after years of study and despite the opposition, on October 20, 1919, the United Christian Missionary Society was formed from the merger of CWBM, the American Christian Missionary Society, the Foreign Missionary Society, the National Benevolent Association (although it later became a separate group again), and several other smaller groups. The bulk of the financial resources and most of the membership of the new organization came from CWBM. Unlike in some other denominations, the articles of agreement for the unified society included provisions that specified that equal numbers of men and women would make up the board of managers and the executive committee and that offices would be equally distributed between the genders.<sup>42</sup>

Initially the merger of male and female missionary societies worked well. “Some said that women had decided to join the church.”<sup>43</sup> Editorials in

the mission magazine, *World Call* in 1919 and 1920 were supportive of women's work in the church and of suffrage. The ballot was seen as a means for women to exert moral leadership, particularly during the war years, when suffrage and peace issues became intertwined. "While she mourns her sons who are gone, she has the ballot with which to decree that never again will such a holocaust occur."<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the church support for suffrage helped inspire women to raise large sums of mission money—\$541,733.64 in 1922—twice as much as men raised.<sup>45</sup>

Early enthusiasm and creative leadership structures soon gave way to more familiar and traditional gender roles. Ora Leigh Shepherd called the church the "last stronghold of conservatism," reluctant to give women an active part in policy making, especially with regard to financial matters.<sup>46</sup> "Later, some were to say that lessening the responsibility of women led to a corresponding loss in the use of their talents and abilities, which, in turn, was reflected in a weakening of the causes they had championed."<sup>47</sup> Hargrove, Schmidt, and Davaney argue that even in the churches where women initially were given significant leadership roles in the merged organizations, their power, influence, and numbers declined over time. In addition, they point to the closing (or mergers) of schools founded to train missionaries as another significant loss for women and for churches.<sup>48</sup> Some feel that the decline in independent women's organizations eventually was what inspired pressure for the ordination of women and admission of women to the eldership.<sup>49</sup>

There is an additional factor that probably also contributed to the decline in the influence of women's church organizations. As women gained access to education and the professions, they had other outlets for their talents; mission work was no longer their only option.

By the end of the Second World War, with a few exceptions, the woman's missionary movement had left the mainline Protestant churches, although her perfume continued to linger in the corridors. Ultimately it is unclear if she left because she was told to do so, or because she politely excused herself and went about her other business. Built on a fading legacy, multi-issue general women's groups [Christian Women's Fellowship, for instance] replaced the woman's missionary societies in the local churches, although they failed to capture the imaginations of mainline Protestant women to the extent that missionary societies had attracted their grandmothers.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusions

In contrast to men's groups formed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, women's groups were mostly founded out of religiously-based, care taking motivations, designed to help other women and children and to give women the power they needed to improve their lives. Women's organizations also differed in their structure, tending to be grassroots, inclusive groups, dependent on participation by and contributions from a great number of women. They were efficiently run with little overhead and a participatory management style, and the organizations enjoyed enormous success.

Ironically, the success of these organizations may have led to their dissolution. In the case of temperance (briefly) and suffrage groups, their efforts led to success and there was no reason to continue. The particular success of

church women's organizations that existed in parallel with, but entirely independent of, traditional church structures may have been threatening to the male-controlled churches. A few small mission societies scattered around the country might not have crossed the radar screen of the church hierarchy, but a strong organization (such as CWBM) succeeding in many areas where earlier male-run efforts had been disappointing, had to be dealt with. Consider the areas in which CWBM had succeeded, largely by creating new models rather than following traditional ways—financial management, fund-raising, organizational structure, membership and evangelism, outreach to children, publishing, and the establishment of educational and mission priorities. Eventually, CWBM ceased to exist. Although Disciples can be proud of the equal male and female participation written into the merger agreement, the end result was a loss of power and influence for women and, ironically, a loss of missionary effectiveness for the church.

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# KIRKPATRICK HISTORIANS' SEMINAR

**Cane Ridge, Kentucky**

**Seminar and other gala events celebrating  
The Bicentennial of the Signing of  
The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery**

**June 26, 2004**

**9:00 to Noon Seminar**

Papers:

The Last Will and Testament

from a Presbyterian Perspective

*James Moorhead,*

*Princeton Theological Seminary*

The Last Will and Testament

from an Ecumenical Perspective

*Paul A. Crow, Jr.,*

*Council on Christian Unity, Emeritus*

**Afternoon**

Pageant on the signing of the Last Will and Testament

*Terry Ewing, Director*

Presentation of the Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia

(see next page)

*Editors*

The celebration continues June 27, 28.

# **STONE-CAMPBELL ENCYCLOPEDIA**

**Unveiling and Dedication**

**June 26, 2004**

**Cane Ridge, Kentucky**

**In conjunction with the bicentennial celebration of the  
Signing of  
The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery  
(see previous page)**

Mid-afternoon

- Introductions
- Panel of Editors
  - Paul M. Blowers
  - Douglas A. Foster
  - D. Newell Williams
- Conversation with the Editors
- Presentation of the Encyclopedia and Prayer of Dedication
- Autograph Session

The presentation of the Stone-Campbell Encyclopedia is an historical occasion. This encyclopedia is the first in the history of the Movement. It was begun under the sponsorship of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society and the visionary leadership of its president, Dr. James Seale, Emeritus. Financial support was generated by the diligent effort of Dr. Seale.

Editors, contributors and boards of the project have been fully representative of the three branches of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

The work has been a fifteen-year project from inception to the unveiling in June, 2004. Special commendations go to Editors Anthony L. Dunnavant (deceased), Paul M. Blowers, Douglas A. Foster and D. Newell Williams. Dr. Foster as lead editor and Abilene Christian University merit special commendation for joining the Disciples of Christ Historical Society as full partners in the project.

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by

D. Duane Cummins

In this biography, commissioned by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, D. Duane Cummins crafts a picture of a remarkable church leader and chronicles a history of the way a significant religious body dealt with the ambivalences of its own existence, how missionary work developed into less paternalistic relationships, as well as how a church struggled between attempts to minister on the local scene and throughout the world.

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D. Duane Cummins was previously president of Bethany College and visiting scholar in history at Johns Hopkins University. In August 2004 he will become interim president of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. A meticulous researcher and careful historian, he is the author or coauthor of eleven books and numerous published articles.

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# FEMINISM VS. FEMINIZATION

## THE CASE OF THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S BOARD OF MISSIONS

Douglas A. Foster\*

### Introduction

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the growing desire of women to be active in the work of the church began to express itself more and more. One evidence of this phenomenon is the fact that from 1869 to 1874 women's missionary societies came into existence in the Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.<sup>1</sup> Many thousands of American women gave what amounted to millions of dollars to the missionary effort. In such figures as Mary Lyon or Ann Judson the women who stayed at home found "a projection, amplification, and sanctification of their own domestic duties as well as a vicarious release from them."<sup>2</sup>

The development of these separate religious service organizations for women had contradictory potentials. It could contain and isolate women's work from what would be viewed by society as the really important role of the clergy, and serve as a means of indoctrinating women to their acceptance of powerlessness and dependency on men. On the other hand, such structures could enable women to break out of the traditional roles prescribed for them by society so as to develop autonomous power and self-conscious sisterhood.<sup>3</sup>

The fact is that both tendencies can be seen at work in these organizations. There is a tension between the forces of feminism and the forces of feminization, of which the protagonists themselves appear, more often than not, to have been unaware.

It seems that many modern scholars interpret the forces at work in the nineteenth-century women's organizations to be largely feminist in nature, with perhaps some setbacks, but overall exhibiting slow but sure advance toward the eventual achievement of total women's rights. While this basic thesis is not to be denied totally, it would appear upon closer examination that an almost equally strong force was at work counteracting, and at times overcoming, the first. This force was not overt anti-feminism, but rather a more subtle feminization.

Feminization is at least partially defined by Ann Douglas as the attempt "to stabilize and advertise in women's work the values that cast their recessive position in the most favorable light."<sup>4</sup> Barbara Welter has labeled the promotion of this recessive position "the cult of true womanhood."<sup>5</sup> Modesty, domesticity, sensibility and piety were essentials for the so-called true woman.

This paper examines the clash between the forces of feminism and feminization in the Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM), the women's missionary society of the Disciples of Christ. As already suggested, this investigation does not reveal a direct clash of ideologies, as would a study of feminist and anti-feminist struggles. Often the most progressive thinkers in the CWBM used the language and images of the cult of true womanhood. The question is asked why did they use this language? Is it because they had been indoctrinated to accept that set of ideas as valid, or could it be that they used

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it merely as a vehicle to reach feminist goals with a minimum of opposition? Such questions are difficult to answer. However, an examination of the data pertaining to the relationship between the feminist and feminizing forces will perhaps allow us to reach some tentative conclusions.

The paper will proceed with a brief history of the CWBM. Examples of feminism and feminization within the organization will be examined, followed by some suggestions as to their impact, relationship, and relative importance in the history of the CWBM.

### **History of the CWBM**

In 1849 the Stone-Campbell Movement formed its first national missionary organization, the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS). A segment of the movement was opposed to any extra-congregational structure from the beginning, and following the trauma of the War Between the States, during which the predominately northern ACMS passed resolutions condemning the South, missionary work through the agency came to an almost complete halt. A compromise called the Louisville Plan was adopted in 1869 which provided that more of the funds would remain in the district in which the contributing congregations were located. However, the Louisville Plan did not revitalize the ACMS as had been hoped, and by 1873 the General Convention felt it necessary to pass a resolution urging the General Board to make the next convention a time for "reestablishing mission work."<sup>6</sup>

The initial push to form a woman's missionary society was mainly the work of Thomas Munnell (1823-1898). Munnell, an Ohio Disciple, was the corresponding secretary for the ACMS from 1869 to 1877. It seems that he first placed the question of women's missionary opportunities before the society in 1870. The annual meetings in 1870 and 1871 actually went on record as favoring a women's missionary society, but nothing was done to begin such a work. Whatever desire Munnell and the others had for the establishment of a woman's missionary board was blocked by the overwhelming problems of the ACMS.<sup>7</sup>

The men really did not seem to know what to do to change things. The resolution passed in 1873 to "reestablish mission work" was interpreted by some Disciples women as a call to them for help. It was a Disciples sister who finally instigated the formation of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions.

Mrs. Caroline Neville Pearre is described as a dignified school-teacher, the wife of S. E. Pearre, who in 1874 was the minister of the Christian Church in Iowa City, Iowa. She had been active in church work all of her life, and she viewed with frustration the inability of the ACMS to get on its feet and carry out its purpose. In an article written in 1899 for the Board's paper, *Missionary Tidings*, Mrs. Pearre relates her disappointment at the lack of mission work among the Disciples and how she came to be the catalyst in starting the woman's organization. Thinking about the general society's resolutions favoring such a movement she finally said to herself, why not?

Surely we could be led if we had a leader. This matter pressed upon my heart and would not down. Finally, upon the 10<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1874, about ten o'clock in the morning, just after I had finished my private devotions, the question came to my heart almost like a voice—"Why can not you do it?" With a great throb of joy, I said: "I will," and the turning point had come.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Pearre immediately began writing letters to influential people in the Disciples fellowship. Thomas Munnell replied, "This is the flame of the Lord's kindling, and no man can extinguish it."<sup>9</sup> The editors of the two principal church papers, Isaac Errett of the *Christian Standard* and J. H. Garrison of *The Christian*, both published articles sympathetic to the idea. In May Garrison published a letter from Mrs. Pearre telling of the formation of the Iowa City society, and added an editorial encouraging other groups to organize. In June Errett visited Iowa City to deliver an address at the University of Iowa. While there he stayed with the Pearres, and when he saw the work the local woman's missionary group was doing he hastily wrote an enthusiastic editorial entitled "Help These Women."<sup>10</sup>

We are in full sympathy with this movement on the part of the sisterhood in our churches. We see in it the dawn of a new era of activity and spiritual growth for Christian women—a bright promise of the development of an immense wealth of resources hitherto largely neglected, and a great increase of power in the church for high and grand achievement.<sup>11</sup>

This editorial is credited with being the major encouragement in helping the women organize. Errett proposed that the women hold a convention the following October at the same time as the General Convention in Cincinnati to discuss a national organization. The challenge was accepted.

On Wednesday, October 21, 1874, about seventy-five women from nine states met in the basement of the Richmond Street Christian Church. Not one of them had had any prior experience in public work. They were unsure of how to proceed, and did not even appoint a secretary to record the actions.<sup>12</sup> A committee was appointed to draw up a constitution with Mrs. Pearre as the chairperson. The committee was ready to report the next morning, and the proposed constitution was adopted article by article. The document followed closely that of the women's missionary organization of the Congregational Church, and it provided for the women to engage in both home and foreign missions. The society was to be under the complete control of women.<sup>13</sup>

That afternoon at two o'clock the women met with the regular session of the General Convention. Mrs. M. M. B. Goodwin read the address to the group entitled "The Unemployed Talent of the Churches." She was followed by Mrs. Pearre who spoke on "Women's Foreign Mission Work." In her speech Mrs. Pearre made it clear that while they did not intend to move out of a proper sphere for women, they were indeed going to move ahead with the work they felt the Lord had laid out for them.

...that which especially attracts our attention in this decade is the great stirring everywhere in the hearts of Christian women, and the cry coming up all over the land—all over the Protestant world indeed—What can we do? Some possessed of a zeal not according to knowledge have indeed run into excesses; but among the willing and wisehearted ways are opening up wonderfully, and the energies that for long have been lavished upon labor that satisfieth not are being directed into new channels which are changing the desert places of the world into the garden of our God. The Spirit of the age, then, is a preparation for the work. It only remains for us to be true to our purpose, and with unwearied zeal, and wise endeavor, and unwavering trust in the guidance and the help beyond us, to go forward. It is the Lord who hath set before us this open door which no man can shut.<sup>14</sup>

A resolution was offered to the Convention by Isaac Errett, the newly elected president of the ACMS, to approve and recognize the CWBM. It was adopted unanimously. The women met that same afternoon and decided that their first missionary would be sent to Jamaica to revive the mission abandoned there several years before by the ACMS.<sup>15</sup>

The Board's work grew quickly. Local auxiliary societies or mission bands began to be organized throughout the "brotherhood." Within a few months after the group's beginning, Mrs. N. E. Atkinson of Wabash, Indiana started a mission band called the "Willing Workers," the pioneer society in what became the Young People's Department of the CWBM.<sup>16</sup> W. H. Williams was chosen for the Jamaica mission and sent in 1875, and others were sent almost yearly thereafter as the women contributed their "mites" to do the Lord's work.<sup>17</sup>

Although some ministers ignored the pleas of the women to assist in organizing local societies, other joined in the work enthusiastically. A report published in *The Christian* in 1877 urged ministers to help the Board because "where the women are most active in missionary work, there the religious prosperity of the church is correspondingly increased."<sup>18</sup>

At first the society published its news in the *Christian Standard*, *The Christian* and other general church journals. In 1883, however, the women elected to publish a monthly paper of their own, entitled *Missionary Tidings*. This continued to be the Board's chief information and publicity vehicle until its dissolution in 1918.

The Christian Woman's Board of Missions continued to function for forty-five years, becoming the strongest and most active of all the Disciples agencies. At the time of its merger with six other denominational boards in 1919 to form the United Christian Missionary Society, its journal, *Missionary Tidings*, had a circulation of over fifty-four thousand. The mailing lists of all the other agencies' journals combined was less than thirty-six thousand.<sup>19</sup> A spirit of cooperation within the various societies had been sparked by the Centennial celebration of the Disciples in 1909 which commemorated the preparation of the "Declaration and Address" by Thomas Campbell.<sup>20</sup> This spirit developed into a push for union. The official reasons given for the merger included a desire to avoid duplication of effort and to streamline organization for more efficient operation. There can be little doubt that the CWBM had the most to lose in surrendering its autonomy. Remarks such as "the women have now decided to join the church" indicate that there must have been some jealousy on the part of the other groups toward the highly successful effort of these women.<sup>21</sup>

The women, however, voted for the merger, and in January of 1919 the CWBM and *Missionary Tidings* ceased to exist as autonomous entities, becoming part of the United Society and its new publication, *World Call*.<sup>22</sup> Article nine of the United Society's constitution provided that the Board of Managers and Executive Committee of the new organization were to be made up of equal numbers of men and women. Both men and women would be eligible to any office of the Society, and "so far as possible" offices would be equally distributed between men and women.<sup>23</sup>

### **Feminism in the CWBM**

Rosemary Skinner Keller has pointed out that the nineteenth-century

women's missionary societies became agents for expanding the vision of the world and of life for the women who joined them. For most of those women life was defined and encased within the home. The societies provided avenues of service for women outside of the home by creating bonds of sisterhood between members and women of "heathen" lands. For the first time women were gaining training and experience to plan, administer, and be responsible for organizations and wide-ranging programs.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Pearre, in her speech to the General Convention in 1874, uttered a line that would surely prove to be prophetic beyond the expectations of anyone present that day.

But why women's societies? Because women can and will do in their own way a vast deal that would otherwise be undone. Great resources have remained unknown to the church just for the lack of these developing influences. And the time will come when we can do more than now.<sup>25</sup>

It was primarily through the CWBM that women in the Disciples of Christ came to have a larger church and social role. By participating in the society women learned to organize missions, gained the courage to speak out on issues, and eventually secured at least in a limited way the right of pulpit preaching.

The women who began the CWBM were careful to provide that it would be under control of women. But it was not easy at first to stir Disciples women as a whole to action. Many articles were written and speeches made attempting to arouse the sisters out of apathy and to convince them that they had a real place in the church's work through the Board. The press of domestic duties was not an excuse for non-participation in the society's activities. In 1877 Bettie Glover wrote that women "may have to leave something undone at home. There are sisters who are folding in napkins the talents they possess, saying they can do nothing."<sup>26</sup> That same month Mrs. S. H. Benton urged each state to set up a fund to pay the expenses of sisters who were capable of going to other congregations to form new auxiliaries and strengthen weak ones.<sup>27</sup>

An article written by Emma Campbell in 1878 was a call for an expansion of woman's domain couched in the language of the cult of true womanhood.

Probably the eye that sees all things as they are, not as they seem, witnesses nowhere greater instances of true Christian heroism than are exhibited in the sacred privacy of home. It is noble to toil on year after year exerting an influence, often inappreciable and seldom estimated at its full value, upon those who may fill a much more conspicuous place in the busy world. Surely nowhere else is needed greater faith, and patience, and self-sacrifice. But the Great Teacher commended Mary, for sitting at his feet and drinking in the words of heavenly wisdom as they fell from his lips. Duty demands that we shall, with Martha, care for the family, but it is also our duty like Mary to choose the "better part." Every woman will be better, and accomplish more for occasionally banishing all thought of the wearisome round of domestic duties, and engaging in something tending directly toward the development of her spiritual nature, and bringing her into sympathy with Christ and universal humanity.<sup>28</sup>

All of the articles quoted above were published in general Disciples journals. When the Board began publishing its own *Missionary Tidings* in 1883 there seems to have been a bit more freedom felt by the women to express themselves. In 1884 Susan A. Carrier wrote a very bold article for Disciples circles in which she used the scripture "and your sons and daughters shall prophesy"

to indicate a biblical basis for women preaching. Although perhaps a bit over-optimistic in her assessment of the state of things, Carrier must have been reflecting some of the strong feeling among women in the CWBM that their role was expanding to the point of being able to do anything a man could do in the church.

The middle wall of partition which so long was built up over against a woman's sphere, has now fallen into disuse and decay. The limitation that narrowed her mental resources, and held her capabilities inert and dormant, have within this century, been to a great extent removed. She has somehow become in a very much larger sense than ever before a free woman in Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup>

The CWBM performed a consciousness-raising function which can be seen as the women tried to convince each other that it was right and necessary that they become involved. It can also be seen in the fact that when women did get involved, the work they were doing to improve the status of women in other countries eventually caused them to take a look at their own situation. One of the most outspoken of the early leaders in the CWBM was the first editor of *Missionary Tidings*, Mrs. Marcia M. B. Goodwin. In 1883 she published an article which extolled the popular idea of woman's work for woman. However, if one knows her strong sentiments concerning women's rights the words certainly imply more than might be seen on the surface.

Woman's most glorious work for woman is to carry to them the Gospel; knowing that its power is boundless, and a pure, scriptural, outgushing sympathy toward the enslaved millions of heathen lands leads her to desire, above all things, to emancipate those downtrodden, helpless, hopeless, ignorant mothers and daughters of idolatry.<sup>30</sup>

It was Mrs. Goodwin who had written a rather pointed parable in 1881 about a hen that had crowed one day because she was so full of joy at the beauty of the morning. It caused such a stir that a rooster met and censured her, ordering "Mr. Bantam" to make sure she did not do it again. As her rooster husband coaxed her to come home and make his supper, Mrs. Goodwin says:

I was certain that I heard Mrs. Bantam give a dreary sigh and mutter, rather rebelliously: "Makes me welcome to a supper my own labors procure, does he? Hen's rights! They are as scarce as their teeth. I mustn't desire anything higher than the inalienable right to scratch for my own living and that of my family! I haven't even the right to express the highest and noblest feelings of my heart in a modest little crow!"<sup>31</sup>

Goodwin's point was obvious to her readers. Disciples allowed their missionary sisters to "lecture" before mixed audiences from the beginning which was certainly more than had been done before. But a distinction was made between a woman exhorting the brethren on missionary responsibility from the lecture platform and her standing behind the pulpit and preaching the Great Commission. Even the conservative anti-society churchmen saw no difficulty with allowing women to give mission speeches, for not a voice was raised against it until after 1885.<sup>32</sup>

Mrs. Goodwin continued to lash out at the inconsistencies she saw in the Disciples' view of woman's role in religion as she answered critics of her earlier article. In June of 1881 she wrote in the *Christian Standard*:

A woman may live an idle, useless life, or devote her days to fashion and folly and she will be applauded for having kept her "proper sphere." But let the same

woman study the Bible and publicly proclaim its truth...and sneers and calumny are her portions.<sup>33</sup>

A discussion of the theological issues surrounding the ordination of women in the Stone-Campbell Movement has been omitted as somewhat beyond the limits of this paper. It is a subject that is important to this topic and deserves careful study. However, it is worthy of note here that the first women ordained by the Disciples were associated with the CWBM.<sup>34</sup> During the years 1891-1892 Persis Christian, an untiring worker for the Board, traveled extensively through the area from Missouri to Pennsylvania and from Illinois to Tennessee speaking on the importance of church missions. She also advocated woman suffrage and the right of women to preach.<sup>35</sup>

At the beginning CWBM leaders dreaded the tasks of public speaking and prayer and any kind of active service outside their homes. But by the 1890s it could be said, "this host of consecrated women have lost self-consciousness to hear their earnest prayers and their eloquent appeals at public gatherings."<sup>36</sup> This Disciples agency became the first woman's society to do both home and foreign work, to employ both men and women, to manage their own business, to choose their own fields of service, to own property and to raise and administer their own funds. Later they were pioneers in establishing Bible chairs at state universities and in funding in 1910 what became almost immediately a graduate-level training school for missionaries, the College of Missions in Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>37</sup>

Jessie H. Brown wrote an article in 1892 that summed up the sentiments of many Disciple women concerning the role of the CWBM in the movement.

If a wise observer were asked to tell what is the greatest thing accomplished by the Christian Woman's Board of Missions thus far, I do not think that he would point to the hundreds of thousands of dollars it has raised, to the churches and schools it has built, or even to the multitude of converts already won through its labors. I think he would point rather to what it has done as an educator and done in and for the individual women whom it has enlisted in its work.<sup>38</sup>

### **Feminization in the CWBM**

The Woman's Board was unquestionably the channel through which advances for Disciples women were made. But there were other complex forces at work during its existence that tended to hold women back, and even to cause ground that had been gained to be relinquished.

Initially, support from men had been gained for the CWBM by the women's appeal to the imagery of the cult of the true womanhood, which held that women were by nature religious. Key Christian categories such as sacrificial love, servanthood and altruism had come to be identified as characteristically feminine.<sup>39</sup> Since religion was considered complementary to woman's proper sphere, the home, middle class males found it relatively easy to accept a wider church role for their wives, sisters and daughters. Even with those women who actually left their native lands to live out missionary adventures most housewives could never attain, their appeal was that they apparently did so by realizing, not rejecting, their feminine role. They taught children, converted their maids, and gave to domestic work an air of religious discipline.<sup>40</sup>

Descriptions of the founders of the CWBM always accentuate the feminine. William R. Warren, first editor of the United Society's *World Call*, described them this way.

There are in every generation a few women of aggressive and revolutionary type, but it was not such as these who took the radical step of forming the Christian Woman's Board of Missions in 1874. On the contrary, all the leaders of the movement were gentle, retiring, womanly souls who shrank from every sort of publicity and pugnacity. They were the succession of Ruth, Esther and Mary the Mother of Jesus. It was only because of the overwhelming conviction that it was God's will that the gospel of his grace should be given to the women and children of all lands, and of all classes and conditions in their own land, that they volunteered an organized endeavor at world-wide evangelization.<sup>41</sup>

Caroline Neville Pearre was described as a woman of fine presence and great dignity.<sup>42</sup> It was said of Elmira Dickinson, a pioneer in organizing state missionary auxiliaries, that "her spirit was as humble and self-effacing as it was courageous and steadfast; she claimed nothing for herself and was ever generous in giving credit to others."<sup>43</sup> Photographs show Dickinson as the traditional old-maid schoolteacher. Persis Christian appears as a dainty little lady with delicate features, called by William R. Warren "distinctly feminine."<sup>44</sup>

The things that women could do for the cause of Christ were listed in an article by Bettie Glover in 1877. They could (1) organize local societies in their congregations, (2) give money, (3) interest those who had money in the work, and (4) pray for the work.<sup>45</sup> Even though there were sisters who were gifted and could "talk of Christ and his love to the edification of those they chance to meet," they were instructed to use this gift only "to influence friends and neighbors to contribute toward the support of missions."<sup>46</sup> A decade after the Board's founding, Mrs. J. Z. Taylor felt compelled to issue a disclaimer in a meeting that what she was about to say should not be regarded as a sermon, even though it was based on a scripture text.<sup>47</sup>

The idea that the women should be content with what they were being allowed to do is seen often from the pens of both men and women. J. H. Smart wrote in 1877, speaking of W. H. Williams who had been sent to Jamaica by the CWBM:

How it must rejoice the hearts of the sisters who have sent him there and sustained him, when they hear of the great good accomplished in that country. "I have helped to bring those lost ones to Christ," is worth more than a crown of gold, and the greatest honor of this world. Sisters, how those redeemed ones will rise up and bless your names, and how they will greet you in the world to come, is enough to fill your heart full of rejoicing and gratitude to God for permitting you to do such a noble work.<sup>48</sup>

The next year Emma Campbell wrote:

In this noble work, we, my sisters, are permitted to bear a part. We, who have been saved from the consequences of our rebellion against Omnipotence—we who have been redeemed from the bondage of sin and death, and adopted into the royal family of God. Nor is the work we are permitted to do unimportant.<sup>49</sup>

The importance of women giving their "mites" was stressed by Marcia Goodwin in 1883: "so the small mites gathered by careful hands will become a mighty power for good when the givers have forgotten the gift. No Christian woman who loves God and humanity will find it impossible to give something."<sup>50</sup>

It was the Presbyterian Board of Missions that popularized the phrase

“woman’s work for woman,” using it as the title for their monthly magazine. This was the distinctive feature of the woman’s mission movement and referred to the service the societies rendered in liberating oppressed females of non-Christian lands from the bondage and subordination to which they had been subjected by custom and religion.<sup>51</sup> This dimension, while allowing the women to do something, placed clear limits on the work they could properly perform. It is interesting to note that the first woman sent by the CWBM to a mission, a Miss Laughlin, was to establish a girls’ school at the Kingston, Jamaica site. The Board wrote their male missionary there, W. H. Williams, to ask him if he thought it would be appropriate to have a woman come to Kingston to establish the school. In other words, the woman’s society felt compelled to ask the man that they had sent and supported if it would be acceptable to him if they sent a woman to do what would surely have been seen as proper woman’s work!<sup>52</sup>

An Indianapolis Disciples minister, David Walk, preached in 1883 “the CWBM has demonstrated its right to exist, because of the wisdom and prudence with which it has administered the sacred trust committed to its hands.”<sup>53</sup> He went on to explain that that sacred trust was “leading in a great movement looking to the disenfranchisement and enlightenment of their sisters in heathen lands, themselves [the women of the CWBM] assigned to their true place and dignity in society.”<sup>54</sup> Another frequent theme was the elevated place to which women had been exalted by Christianity, particularly in their newly-allowed activity in the CWBM.<sup>55</sup>

While gains were made in some ways, the emphasis for women was still on domesticity. Bettie Ware gave her sisters a piece of advice in an 1883 article entitled “Duty.”

It is hard to give up a pleasant occupation—perhaps the reading of an interesting article in some periodical, when one wants so much to be a cultured woman—to sew the buttons on baby’s shoes, or go to the butcher for a steak. A heroic woman will do the little things of life, no matter what her aspirations are. It is more to be woman than scholar. If at any time you must choose between doing a womanly thing and a scholarly thing, choose the former.<sup>56</sup>

Over the years there was a strengthening of the process of feminization. This writer has made an examination of every volume of the Board’s paper, *Missionary Tidings*. From a four-page tabloid containing mostly transcripts of speeches and portions of letters, the journal developed into a forty-to-sixty-page monthly containing reports of the state and national meetings, treasurers’ reports, program information on foreign countries to use in local meetings, etc. There is seen, even among the reports, evidence of an increasing sentimentality.

A pleasing incident at one of our recent meetings was the presentation to our faithful and beloved corresponding secretary, Miss White, of a few articles for her comfort and convenience, from the resident members of the board. The gifts chosen were a pretty basket, lined with pockets marked with embroidery for the reception of letters from our various missionary points; a small table on which to arrange them for consideration at Board Meetings, and a handsome oak chair. The affection which prompted the offering, and the appreciation with which it was received, made the occasion a most happy one to all concerned.<sup>57</sup>

The type of stories that began to be printed after the turn of the century are typified by Anna Atwater’s “His Mother’s Apron String.”

A mother, living in the mountains, and realizing the dangers that surrounded

her home, tied her child to her apron string, which was made very long so as to give the little one a wide range for play and exercise. For a long time he was contented, but by and by, when he was tall enough to look out of the window, he began to long for freedom to roam way off in the mountains. As he grew taller and stronger this longing grew more intense. He saw a mountain stream come dashing down, and he longed to climb to where its dashing waters started out of the rock, far up the mountain side. One day, impatient, unable longer to endure the restraint, he snapped the apron string, and was away to the mountain. As he climbed, enraptured at the beauty all around him, joyous in his new-found liberty, he exclaimed: "How weak was my mother's apron string! I might have broken it long ago!" On he went, and on, lured yet farther by the hope of finding the river's source. Suddenly he came to a precipice. He had never seen such a place. Down the rocky sides moss and flowers grew, tempting his gaze. Eager, his foot slipped; he fell, it seemed to certain death. But no; something about him caught in the crevice of a rock and held him fast above the abyss. He turned and climbed by it back to safety. Regaining his footing, he exclaimed: "How strong, after all, was my mother's apron string!"<sup>58</sup>

Other typical entries include stories featuring the emotions of mothers whose daughters had decided to go into the mission field,<sup>59</sup> and girls who led others to conversion by inviting them to missionary society meetings.<sup>60</sup> Sentimentalism was used to convince women that being good mothers, being active in the local auxiliary, and perhaps allowing their daughters to do some mission work to help heathen women is the whole duty of woman.

Before the CWBM founded its Missionary Training School in 1910 it was very difficult for women who wanted to prepare themselves theologically for missionary service to do so. In 1904 Gustine Courson Weaver became the first woman allowed to attend the College of the Bible at Kentucky University. She was admitted only after agreeing to sit on the back seat, next to the door, to arrive after all of the male students were seated and class had started, and to leave quietly before the class was dismissed. She was strictly forbidden to speak to any of the male students.<sup>61</sup>

But even after the Board's school was begun things did not improve very much. The women themselves ruled out the possibility that any woman could be its principal. It was reported in the minutes of the Missionary Training School Conference that the chairperson, Mrs. Ida Harrison, announced that it was the opinion of the Executive Committee that the principal should be a man.<sup>62</sup> The Missionary Training School, which became the College of Missions, although conceived, built and funded by the Woman's Board, came to be run largely by males and to be populated by male students.

The end came for the CWBM in 1919 when, as mentioned above, it merged with six other denominational agencies to form the United Christian Missionary Society. This move lessened the responsibility of women in the denomination. This lessening of responsibility led to a corresponding loss in the use of their talents and abilities, which, in turn, was reflected in a further weakening of the woman's cause among the Disciples.

## **Conclusion**

Perhaps there was more to be gained by everyone by a streamlining of the church's work. However, it can be seen even from this brief examination that

there was a struggle going on between the forces of feminism and the forces of feminization throughout the history of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions. This struggle was often subtle and difficult to discern because it was under the surface of events. But it was there nonetheless. It appears that in the dissolution of the CWBM the forces of feminism were overcome, at least in part, by feminization.

The women were forced to use the images of the cult of true womanhood in order to open up any possibilities for themselves at all. When the missionary society first began there was a great advocacy for women to be involved in a wider role in the church's work. There was a spirit of optimism and advancement. There is little doubt that most of the women believed the model of true womanhood to be valid and right. But that model contains an inherent corrosive element. The continued use of that imagery with its basic idea of the home as the only proper sphere for women, to be seen in the increasing sentimentality of the *Missionary Tidings* articles, eventually overpowered the forces working for a balanced view of the rights of women.<sup>63</sup> Some women were ordained. The idea was accepted in theory. But in fact female ordination remained the exception rather than the rule.

This certainly was not a conscious process on the part of the women. Why would they want to sabotage their own advancement? It appears that they were caught in the middle, having to put themselves down in order to bring themselves up. The balance was a delicate one to maintain, and in the particular circumstances that developed among Disciples in the early twentieth century the balance was lost before the women realized it.<sup>64</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1975), 259.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 126.

<sup>3</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, gen. eds., *Woman and Religion in America*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), ix, x, xii.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas, *Feminization*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966), 151-74.

<sup>6</sup> McAllister and Tucker, *Journey*, 257-60.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Arthur Bailey, "The Status of Women in the Disciples of Christ Movement," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1979), 84-89.

<sup>8</sup> Caroline Neville Pearre, "Our Beginning," *Missionary Tidings* 17 (August 1899), 102-103.

<sup>9</sup> McAllister and Tucker, *Journey*, 261.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Isaac Errett, "Help These Women," *Christian Standard* 9 (11 July 1874), 220.

<sup>12</sup> Caroline Neville Pearre, "Ancient History," *World Call* 5 (May 1923),

12. See also Ida Harrison, *Forty Years of Service. A History of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions* (Indianapolis: Christian Woman's Board of Missions, 1914), 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> McAllister and Tucker, *Journey*, 261.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Neville Pearre, "Woman's Mission Work," *Christian Standard* 9 (21 November 1874), 369.

<sup>15</sup> M. M. Davis, *How the Disciples Began and Grew*, (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1915), 182.

<sup>16</sup> Harrison, *Forty Years*, 88.

<sup>17</sup> See S. E. Smart, "C.W.B.M.," *The Christian* 16 (5 December 1878), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs. S. H. Benton, "Annual Report of the Corresponding Secretary of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions," *The Christian* 14 (15 November 1877), 1.

<sup>19</sup> F. W. Burnham, Grant K. Lewis and Robert M. Hopkins, eds., *Year Book of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) 1919*, (Cincinnati: The American Christian Missionary Society, 1919), 50.

<sup>20</sup> Harrison, *Forty Years*, 102.

<sup>21</sup> Lorraine Lollis, *The Shape of Adam's Rib*, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1970), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Effie L. Cunningham, "1874, 1883-1918," *Missionary Tidings* 36 (December 1918), 291-294.

<sup>23</sup> F. W. Burnham, ed., *Year Book of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) 1920*, (Cincinnati: The United Christian Missionary Society, 1920), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Rosemary Skinner Keller, "Lay Women in the Protestant Tradition," in *Women and Religion in America*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century*, gen. eds., Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 245.

<sup>25</sup> Pearre, "Woman's Mission Work," 369.

<sup>26</sup> Bettie Glover, "An Appeal to Christian Women," *The Christian* 14 (1 November 1877), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Benton, "Annual Report," 1.

<sup>28</sup> Emma Campbell, "Our Work—Past and Future," *The Christian* 16 (3 October 1878), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Susan A. Carrier, "Christian Women of the Nineteenth Century," *Missionary Tidings* 2 (May 184), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Marcia M. B. Goodwin, "Shall We Possess the Land?" *Missionary Tidings* 1 (June 1883), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Marcia M. B. Goodwin, "From My Standpoint," *Christian Standard* 16 (2 April 1881), 107.

<sup>32</sup> Bailey, "The Status of Women," 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> Marcia M. B. Goodwin, "From My Standpoint," *Christian Standard* 16 (4 June 1881), 178.

<sup>34</sup> McAllister and Tucker, *Journey*, 263. See also Mary Ellen LaRue, "Women in the Ministry of the Church: A Disciple History," (M.A. thesis, The College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, 1960), 87.

<sup>35</sup> Bailey, "The Status of Women," 102, 104.

<sup>36</sup> Jessie H. Brown, "The C.W.B.M. as an Educator," *Missionary Tidings* 10 (December 1892), 28.

<sup>37</sup> Ida Withers Harrison, *The Christian Woman's Board of Missions 1874-1919*, (n.p., Foreward 20 June 1920), 147.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, "C.W.B.M. as Educator," 28.

<sup>39</sup> Ruether and Keller, *Women and Religion*, ix-x.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas, *Feminization*, 126.

<sup>41</sup> William R. Warren, "Remembering the Past We Build for the Future," *World Call* 4 (December 1922), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Harrison, *Forty Years*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>44</sup> Warren, "Remembering," 15.

<sup>45</sup> Glover, "An Appeal," 2.

<sup>46</sup> Goodwin, "Shall We Possess," 2.

<sup>47</sup> Mrs. J. Z. Taylor, "Missionary Work," *Missionary Tidings* 1 (March 1884), 3.

<sup>48</sup> J. H. Smart, "The C.W.B.M.," *The Christian* 14 (1 November 1887), 4.

<sup>49</sup> Campbell, "Our Work," 1.

<sup>50</sup> Goodwin, "Shall We Possess," 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ruether and Keller, *Women and Religion*, 243.

<sup>52</sup> Mrs. P. H. Jameson, "The Woman's Board of Missions," *The Christian* 16 (21 November 1878), 3.

<sup>53</sup> David Walk, "Sermon," *Missionary Tidings* 1 (November 1883), 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> See G. L. Brokaw, "Sermon," *Missionary Tidings* 1 (November 1883), 4; also Miss C. Maddix, "Why Should Women Especially Be Interested in Mission Work," *Missionary Tidings* 1 (June 1883), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Bettie Ware, "Duty," *Missionary Tidings* 1 (November 1883), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Annie B. Morrison, "Executive Meetings," *Missionary Tidings* 9 (November 1891), 3.

<sup>58</sup> Anna Robison Atwater, "His Mother's Apron Strings," *Missionary Tidings* 23 (March 1906), 371.

<sup>59</sup> Elisa E. Glasier, "To Whom Do We Render Tribute?" *Missionary Tidings* 23 (March 1906), 414-416; also Jessie Brown Pounds, "Her Mother's Diary," *Missionary Tidings* 29 (May 1911), 15-17.

<sup>60</sup> Minnie Watson, "An Angel's Charge," *Missionary Tidings* 23 (March 1906), 423-424; also Juliet W. McNair, "How Mrs. Brown Became a Missionary Woman," *Missionary Tidings* 34 (January 1917), 356-57.

<sup>61</sup> Gustine Courson Weaver, letter, Transylvania University Library Collection, quoted in Lollis, *Shape of Adam's Rib*, 20.

<sup>62</sup> Lollis, *Shape of Adam's Rib*, 22.

<sup>63</sup> A possible factor in this internal self-limiting process not directly considered in the paper might be seen in the very enterprise of sending women missionaries. Both the women who were sent and those who did the sending went on the assumption that the institutions of Western culture were superior to those of the target countries, at least partly because they believed that Western society was more in consonance with the Divine Will. As limited as women's role was in nineteenth-century America, it was vastly broader than that of most of the Arab, Oriental or African societies with which they came in contact. Thus the

assumption of the superiority and divinely inspired nature of their own institutions, coupled with the awareness of the greater sphere open to Western women, both of which were necessary elements of the missionary enterprise, could have worked to limit women's dissatisfaction with their condition in Western society.

<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note an almost parallel set of events in the Women's Boards among Presbyterians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the Presbyterian women were always under the auspices of the General Assembly's boards, the Woman's Executive Committee for Home Missions (later Woman's Board of Home Missions) was organized in 1878, began its own publication in 1886, the *Home Mission Monthly*, and in 1893 started a Department of Young People's Work. Pressure from the General Mission Boards brought mergers of regional women's foreign mission groups until they were unified in 1920. Although highly successful, both of the Woman's Boards were phased out of existence in 1923. See Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Breckinridge, *Presbyterian Women in America. Two Centuries of a Quest for Status* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press-Presbyterian Historical Society, 1983), 35-57.





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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Local Church Historians' Seminar**

at the  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society

Nashville, Tennessee  
February 10 - 12, 2005



Volume 64 • Number 2 • Summer, 2004

Published by DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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*DISCIPLIANA* (USPS 995-060) is published quarterly for \$20.00 per year by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society which was established in 1941 "to maintain and further interest in religious heritage, backgrounds, origins, development, and general history of Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, Churches of Christ and related groups." Members of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society receive *DISCIPLIANA* quarterly, along with other benefits. Annual membership categories are: Sustaining - \$50 to \$249, Participating - \$30, Regular - \$20, Students - \$10.00, Non-U.S. - \$25. Life Memberships are: Life - \$250, Life Link - \$500, Life Patron - \$1,000.

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Phone: (615) 327-1444. E-mail: mail@dishistsoc.org  
The Disciples of Christ Historical Society Home Page: www.dishistsoc.org  
Periodical postage paid at Nashville, TN.

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Indexed by Restoration Serials Index  
ISSN 0732-9881

Indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals, the Index to Book Reviews in Religion, Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBRR 1975- on CD-ROM, and the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: atla@atla.com. WWW: <http://www.atla.com/>

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DISCIPLIANA*, 1101 - 19th Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37212-2196. Please give both old and new addresses and attach a mailing label from an old issue. USA: Please provide nine-digit code (ZIP+4).

## — From the Editor's Desk

What we see always depends upon the perspective we employ. This is true of the founding document of the Christians in the West, *The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*. James H. Moorhead, "The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery from the Perspective of Presbyterian History" views this document from the larger history of the tradition of which the signers were a part. Paul A. Crow, Jr., with a view to the history of the Ecumenical Movement, looks at "The Ecumenical Significance of the Last Will and Testament of The Springfield Presbytery."

As the reader will discover, the views of this document presented by Moorhead and Crow are quite different. However, they are not contradictory. Both papers were presented to the 2004 Kirkpatrick Seminar for Historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement, held June 26 at the Cane Ridge Meeting House as part of the festive celebration of the 200th anniversary of the signing of *The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*.

With this number of *Discipliana*, the Editorial Committee bids farewell to Peter and Lynne Morgan, who have played critical roles in the publication of this journal. Peter, as president of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, has been responsible for the life of the organization that makes this publication possible. Lynne, though her name has not appeared on the inside cover, has been "managing editor" of the journal, mailing submissions to reviewers, putting the text on pages, and making sure that the editor stayed on schedule. Both Peter and Lynne have taken a keen interest in the content and form of *Discipliana* and have given much of themselves to its production. For this, and for their numerous other contributions to the understanding and appreciation of the Stone-Campbell Movement, they have our lasting esteem and appreciation.

D. Newell Williams

## — From the President's Desk

History is the drama of continuity and discontinuity. In this presidential election year two Disciples-related presidents are handy illustrations. Lyndon Johnson saw to the continuation of John Kennedy's presidency. Ronald Regan discontinued not only Jimmy Carter's work but more sweepingly discontinued the fifty-year legacy of Franklin Roosevelt. In November our politically-polarized United States may well be deciding on continuity or discontinuity, but that's another discussion.

Presidential continuity and discontinuity are much on my mind as Lynne and I exit our responsibilities at the Historical Society and enter retirement. This is my last column for *Discipliana*. You have given us an unforgettable sendoff after our nine years in Nashville. Thank you for the gala dinner in April and our Named Fund. We also had the grand celebration of the *Last Will and Testament's* 200th anniversary at Cane Ridge. On that occasion we dedicated the *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, a fifteen-year project for the Society. (See ad and order information, page 49.)

But what of continuity, discontinuity? What's next? The society is most fortunate in its next leader, D. Duane Cummins, who is president for a year. Dr. Cummins has been heavily engaged in the work of the Society for the last few years. He wrote for the Society the biography of A. Dale Fiers (TCU Press). He worked with Eva Jean Wrather on her biography of Alexander Campbell. After Miss Wrather's death he did the final editing of the first volume of that work. Due to his efforts, that biography is scheduled to be available in the fall of this year (also TCU Press).

Dr. Cummins comes to us from a distinguished career as an educator and church leader, which culminated in a fourteen-year presidency of Bethany College. He is an extraordinary fund raiser and an industrious leader.

I am handing off the baton. The race continues. I will be cheering.

Peter M. Morgan

**THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT  
OF SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY**

James H. Moorhead\*

In late June 1804, six Presbyterian ministers gathered at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, and took an extraordinary step. Five had already renounced the jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky the previous year when the synod sought to bring them into doctrinal conformity, and they had organized themselves as the independent Springfield Presbytery. On June 28, the five, now joined by another minister, completed their ecclesiastical revolt. They adopted *The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*. In this “whimsically phrased but deeply serious document,” the signatories declared: “We will, that this body die, be dissolved and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large.” In so doing, they renounced not only their Presbyterian identity but all party labels dividing Christians, and they turned away from every creed in favor of the Bible alone.<sup>1</sup>

*The Last Will and Testament* has been subject to numerous interpretations. Some have seen it as an example of the impact of the frontier and of emotional revivalism upon traditional Christianity. There is a point to the argument. Kentucky, in 1804 still a rawboned state only twelve years in the federal union, had recently been the scene of what many called the Great Revival, a series of sometimes raucous campmeetings, most notably at Cane Ridge itself in 1801. Some of the signers of the *Last Will* had been leading advocates and promoters of this evangelical explosion. Historian Nathan O. Hatch has cited the document as an instance of the great surge of populist fervor that remade politics, culture, and religion in the decades after the Revolution. And, of course, denominational historians have emphasized the place of the document—and especially of one of its signers, Barton W. Stone—in the formation of the Disciples of Christ or Christian movement.<sup>2</sup>

The document was all of these things, but it was also something else: it was an episode in Presbyterian history. Even though they were ostensibly rejecting their Presbyterian identity, the signers of *The Last Will and Testament* had been ordained as Presbyterian ministers and inhabited a theological world shaped by Presbyterian ethos and ideas. They may have repudiated the denominational name and the Westminster Confession of Faith, but they remained more Presbyterian than perhaps they knew. Historian Leigh Schmidt has demonstrated the Presbyterian nature of the Cane Ridge revival which set the stage for the “Last Will and Testament.” Those who summoned the meeting were Presbyterian ministers, and they were following a tradition more than one hundred and fifty years old. In the early 1600s among both Scottish Presbyterians and their kinfolk in Ulster, churches made celebrations of the Lord’s Supper into elaborate religious festivals. People came from a distance to participate in these events, and solemn spiritual purpose mingled with a carnival atmosphere. To

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give one notable example, at Cambuslang near Glasgow in 1742, one of the most famous sacramental seasons occurred. Perhaps as many as thirty thousand people gathered to hear evangelical preachers, among them George Whitefield. The emotional fervor later associated with Cane Ridge was already in evidence at Cambuslang as men and women cried out or swooned. In America, the Scots and Ulster Scots continued the sacramental seasons. Thus when Presbyterian ministers announced an observance of the Supper to be held at Cane Ridge in August 1801 they were honoring a venerable tradition. Similarly, in his definitive biography of Barton Stone, the best known and most influential of the signers of the *Last Will and Testament*, Newell Williams has shown how a “Presbyterian spirituality” was the greatest influence upon the latter’s theological development. At the heart of Stone’s faith was a sense of the grace of God, of the limits of humanity, and a sense that the overriding purpose of life was to glorify God—all convictions stressed by the revivalistic Presbyterianism in which he came to maturity.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than revisit issues that others have covered so well, I wish to stress the Presbyterian roots of another aspect of *The Last Will and Testament*: its rejection of creeds and of the authority of the church to impose them. Despite the fact that American Presbyterianism affirmed the Westminster Confession, its relationship to the creed was by no means straightforward. For at least a century, Presbyterians on both sides of the Atlantic had debated the advisability of adherence to creeds and had argued about the relationship of such formulae to the Bible. They had also debated the authority of church courts to make creeds binding upon ministers. To be sure, when the signers of *The Last Will and Testament* called for preachers to adhere solely to scripture, to be released from the power of ecclesiastical hierarchies, and to come out from bondage to creeds and “taste the sweets of Gospel liberty,” they intended to reject their past. As Barton Stone would put it many years later, “Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs on Christianity in the world.” But in reality, they were also products of that Calvinism and participants in a debate about creeds their Presbyterian forebears had initiated.<sup>4</sup>

## I

Creeds have always been an important part of the Reformed tradition of which Presbyterianism is one instance. “The Reformed community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was busy writing confessions of its faith,” noted the late John H. Leith. Unlike the Lutherans who have accorded premier status to the Confession of Augsburg (1530), the Reformed churches have never produced a single confession enjoying a similar standing. In fact, Leith contended, a “distinguishing feature of the Reformed confessions is their number and variety.” He counted at least fifty in the century and a half after the Reformation. This diversity, Leith believed, derived from the fact that

Reformed Christians generally rejected the notion of any universal Christian statement. They did not want to give final authority to any statement that they believed was limited by time and place as well as by human finiteness and sin. They were clear in their own minds that creeds were always subordinate to scripture and that no creed should have exaggerated pretensions.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Anglo-American world, the major Reformed confession was the one completed at Westminster in London (1647) during the English Civil War.

Because of political and religious fragmentation under the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell and then the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the Westminster Confession never became for England what its authors had hoped: the official statement of belief of English Christians. But it was adopted among Scottish Presbyterians in 1647, by their Ulster co-religionists in 1698 and 1705, and later by their American counterparts in 1729. Although that confession presumed to define the essential features of Christian thought with something approaching baroque precision, it nevertheless recognized (at least in theory) that no creed could claim to do so with absolute certainty. “God alone is Lord of the conscience,” the Westminster divines averred, “and hath left it free from the commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship.” Moreover, Westminster recognized that all ecclesiastical bodies attempting to define the faith “may err, and many have erred.” Scripture alone, “given by inspiration of God...[is] the rule of faith and life.”<sup>6</sup> What Westminster did was to claim to provide an authoritative exposition of Scripture even as it allowed that all such statements were fallible and provisional. In effect, the confession set the stage for an argument about the extent of its own authority and that of any creed.

In Scotland, the Confession was initially adopted, only to sink and then rise again in importance. Written with significant input from Scottish advisors, the confession was lauded by most Scots as reflecting the teachings of their own Reformation initiated by John Knox and others a century earlier. Yet the confession was largely ignored after the Stuarts returned to the throne in 1660 following the end of Cromwell’s dominance. But when William of Orange ousted the Stuart dynasty in the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, Scotland’s Presbyterian identity received new emphasis. In 1690, the Church of Scotland purged episcopacy, established Presbyterian polity once again, and renewed its adherence to the Westminster Confession. All ministers, elders, and candidates for the ministry were required to endorse the Confession. In 1711, a stricter formula of creedal subscription was enacted. Scottish candidates henceforth had to aver that they did “sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith...to be the truths of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments” and that they did “own the whole doctrine therein contained as the confession of...[their] faith.” Yet the apparent strictness of this subscription did not guarantee that Scottish Presbyterians would in fact adhere to a pristine version of the Confession’s theology. For example, John Simson, professor of divinity at Glasgow, was charged on two occasions with teaching false views. Without imposing penalties upon him, the 1717 Assembly found him guilty of “some opinions not necessary to be taught in divinity.” Critics later accused Simson of Socinianism and Arianism, and in several Assemblies in the 1720s he was suspended from the ministry but without having to give up his professorial work. According to a careful student of the case, Simson probably verged toward the rationalism of the era without fully succumbing to it or to the Deistic theology that was so often its manifestation.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that Simson’s wrists were in effect only slapped indicated that the church was moving toward a more lenient application of its theoretically strict requirement for subscription to Westminster. The church’s greater tolerance became apparent when in 1717 a candidate for ordination appealed—and won

against—the stringent doctrinal tests being imposed by the Presbytery of Auchterarder (Perthshire). The presbytery required these tests in order to guard against what it perceived as a departure from Westminster. Among the questions asked of ordinands was one requiring them to condemn as unsound any suggestion that one must first forsake sin before coming to Christ. The Presbytery feared that any hint of human cooperation in the process of salvation would vitiate Westminster’s teaching that God was the sole author of redemption. Subsequently, a minister in sympathy with the Auchterarder Creed recommended the previously obscure *Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645) which stressed God’s sovereignty. In the brouhaha that followed, the so-called “Marrow men” defended the treatise’s emphasis upon the priority of God’s action in salvation, but the General Assembly condemned it in 1720 as tending toward an antinomian view, that is, as undermining the importance of the moral law.<sup>8</sup>

Presbyterians in Ireland, where many Scots had settled as a result of the policies of the Stuart kings, likewise struggled over the question of adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith. In 1705, the same year in which the Synod of Ulster required the written subscription of ministers to Westminster, the Belfast Society was created. This voluntary organization, which counted as members a number of the brightest Presbyterian clerical lights in Ireland, devoted itself to the exchange and discussion of theological works of all sorts. Although unofficial in character, the existence of the group signaled a new theological inquisitiveness and openness that had the potential to loosen the strictness of adherence to Westminster. The issue of subscription was again joined in the wake of John Abernethy’s sermon *Religious Obedience founded on Personal Persuasion* (1719) which implicitly relativized creeds by asserting that “the Decisions of Men are not infallible Declarations” and by noting that submission to these decisions “will not be a sufficient Defense against the reproaches of our Consciences or the Displeasure of God.” In response, the Synod of Ulster passed the Pacific Acts (1720) which reaffirmed that candidates for the ministry had to subscribe to Westminster, but the acts also allowed them to express any reservations they might have about particular phrases in the document. As long as their presbyteries judged them sound, these scruples need not prevent ordination. The call of Samuel Haliday to be a pastor in Belfast also stoked the controversy. Accused of holding an Arian view that Christ’s divinity was less than that of God the father, Haliday became the occasion of a major escalation of the subscription controversy. Many pressed for a rigorous adherence to Westminster; but others, while maintaining that they were in substantial agreement with the confession, refused on principle to subscribe to any creed. By 1725, the Synod gathered all the nonsubscribers into one presbytery—the Presbytery of Antrim—and the following year the Synod expelled Antrim. Yet the schism was less severe than this action might suggest, and some historians have even seen it as amicable. The two groups, Elizabeth Nybakken, has contended, “continued to work together within a presbyterial system. They educated their students in the same schools, supplied each other’s pulpits, collaborated on joint projects such as a life insurance plan for ministers, and remained close friends.”<sup>9</sup>

The issue of creedal subscription also arose in England among the Presbyterians and Independents (Congregationalists) who had been reduced to the status of dissenting churches after the restoration of the monarchy. After

two congregations had ousted ministers for allegedly holding unorthodox views on the trinity, a number of ministers gathered at Salters' Hall, London, in 1719 to discuss the controversy. They considered what rights ministers, congregations, and church courts should have in such disputes. Some wanted all Presbyterian and Congregational ministers to indicate their doctrinal soundness on the trinity by affirming the appropriate parts of either the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles or the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The conference suggested procedures for resolving such disputes in the future but rejected, after heated debate, the principle of creedal subscription. English Presbyterians who were moving toward a greater moderation in theology were, by one historian's count, opposed to subscription by roughly two to one.<sup>10</sup>

From the foregoing, it is apparent that controversy over subscription took different forms in various parts of the British Isles. In Scotland where Presbyterians aspired to be—and after 1690, clearly were—an established church, the issue was seldom whether one should subscribe to Westminster but what subscription meant. Even those of growing moderate persuasion made no complaint about the desirability of adhering to the Confession, though they gave that act a different significance than did the "Marrow men." By contrast, English Presbyterians, perhaps because of their experience as one of several dissenting groups, were wary of efforts to force conformity of belief. Unlike the moderates in Scotland who employed subscription to push their own agenda, their theological counterparts in England feared that strategy. Presbyterianism in Ireland combined elements of both the Scottish and English situations. With most of their clergy trained in Scotland and with many other Scottish ties still strong, the Ulster Scots (or Scots-Irish as they would become known in America) felt considerable sympathy with the theological movements of their original homeland. Yet in many respects their situation was more like that of Presbyterians in England. They were dissenters suffering under civil disabilities as they faced a Church of Ireland that was officially Anglican and an even larger mass of Irish who remained Roman Catholic in sentiment. In this environment—in some ways, a hybrid of the Presbyterian situations in Scotland and England—it is not surprising that some of the most ardent arguments on behalf of subscription as well as some of the most passionate attacks upon it took place. This would prove to be a fact of considerable significance on the other side of the Atlantic, for the migration from Ulster, beginning in earnest in the 1720s, would soon place a significant Scots-Irish imprint upon a fledgling Presbyterianism in America.

Those who favored subscription did so in large measure because they believed it was a bulwark against the intrusion of religious error; and error, they feared, was infiltrating their ranks. They agreed that the Bible was the final religious authority but were anxious lest insincere or misguided people twist individual texts of scripture to support heterodox opinions. Thus they insisted that the church must mandate that its ministers affirm a definitive exposition of the doctrine contained in the Bible. None of the subscriptionists doubted that the Westminster Confession admirably filled this need. Nor did they have any doubts that Christ had invested his church with the authority to maintain the purity of the faith through such requirements.<sup>11</sup>

Opponents of subscription, denying that they held the errors alleged against them, objected on principle to subscription. They believed that Christ

had not given to his church the power to legislate on such matters, that efforts to do so smacked of the Roman tyranny against which Protestants had rebelled, that Scripture alone was the final court of appeal, and that aside from persuasion no other authority could bind the individual conscience. Or as Samuel Haliday declared when installed in his Belfast pastorate in 1720: The scriptures were “the only rule of revealed religion, a sufficient test of orthodoxy or soundness in faith and... to which nothing may be added by any synod, assembly or council whatsoever.” The nonsubscribers also believed that efforts to enforce subscription, far from promoting the peace and unity of the church, fractured the body of Christ and led to unnecessary controversy. Most of the Irish antisubscriptionsist would have undoubtedly echoed the sentiments of the speaker at the Salters’ Hall Conference who declared: “We saw no Reason to think that a *Declaration in other Words* than those of *Scripture* would serve the Cause of *Peace and Truth*; but rather be the Occasion of *greater Confusions and Disorders*....”<sup>12</sup>

One may debate the extent to which the nonsubscribers actively countenanced Arianism or Socinianism; most scholars tend to assume that they did not. Yet it is also clear that, apart from their acceptance or rejection of particular tenets, these people reflected a new theological mood quite different from the temper of the Westminster Confession. “A better explanation might be,” Marilyn Westerkamp notes,

that ‘Arian’ became a code word for heretic, a generic label for anyone who did not preach along traditional lines. Like the moderates of Scotland, Irish ministers were moving in Arminian directions, including subscribers as well as nonsubscribers. Most were preaching on moral virtue, paths of holiness, and the potential of humanity to satisfy an amiable, reasonable God....The nonsubscribers’ God was a different deity from Knox’s awesome, omnipotent, arbitrary God; their God was knowable, likeable, eminently reasonable.<sup>13</sup>

A contemporary described the transformation of theological mood in an often quoted passage. After hearing the young Francis Hutcheson, the future professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow, preach at his father church’s in Armagh in 1719, one annoyed elder later told the senior Hutcheson:

Your silly son Frank has fashed a’ the congregation for he has been babblin’ this hoor about a gude and benevolent God, and that the saul’s of the heathen will gang tae heaven if they follow the licht of their ain consciences. Not a word does the daft boy ken, speer nor say about the gude, auld comfortable doctrines of election, reprobation, original sin and faith. Hoots, mon, awa’ wi’ sic a fellow.<sup>14</sup>

The preaching of the man whom the Presbyterian elder thought to be a “silly son” was a sign of the Enlightenment, that major intellectual watershed in Western history which also changed the way in which many understood Christianity—and with it creedal subscription. The Enlightenment, celebrating unfettered reason, generally viewed God in terms of reasonableness, benevolence, and morality. It held a correspondingly high view of humanity’s capacity to know this reasonable God and to perform the moral duties enjoined by the divinity. At bottom, religion was neither complicated nor abstruse but simple and practical, consisting primarily in love to God and neighbor. With its heightened sense of humanity’s rational capacities, the Enlightenment had little use for a religion of dogmatism. People came to the truth, not through the unquestioning acceptance of authority but through that which persuaded their consciences. Even when those sympathetic to this outlook espoused particular tenets of the Westminster

Confession, their underlying assumptions were quite different from those of that document. The mentality of the latter was profoundly theocentric and accepting of the mystery of God's ways; the former was at bottom anthropocentric and convinced of the rationality of the divine.<sup>15</sup>

In the Enlightenment, a new conception of the church readily flourished. Perhaps John Locke in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* gave the most succinct expression of that view. "A church then," he declared in 1689, "I take to be a voluntary society of men joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls." The understanding of the church as a collection of individuals was, as Peter Brooke suggests in his history of Ulster Presbyterianism, one that nonsubscribers could readily employ as a justification for their position. For them, "the Kingdom of Christ was not a corporate body with an authority derived from Christ, but the kingdom of the individual conscience. Each man was individually accountable to Christ for his own spiritual life..."<sup>16</sup>

Even those who defended creedal subscription sometimes did so in a manner that conceded much to the non-subscribers' views. For example, Gilbert Kennedy argued in 1724 that subscription violated no one's conscience for those who believed the Synod of Ulster lacked the power to make such a requirement were at liberty to depart from Presbyterianism and espouse Congregationalism. Here again one hears the distinct echoes of Locke's view of the church and more specifically of his comment: "No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society....[I]f afterwards he discover any thing either erroneous in the doctrine, or incongruous in the worship of that society to which he has joined himself, why should it not be as free for him to go out as it was to enter?"<sup>17</sup>

Kennedy's argument demonstrated that creedal subscription was still being defended vigorously, but the battle was now fought on terrain not entirely favorable to the cause. Subscription had to justify why it was not an invasion of the now privileged realm of individual conscience. Moreover, it had to demonstrate why it was necessary at all if the fundamentals of Christianity were so clear that any rational person would perceive them. Moreover, the political and social function of the Westminster Confession had changed. Written in the hope that it would be the common expression of faith in the British Isles and a program for the renovation of Christendom there, it had become by the early eighteenth century, with the partial exception of Scotland, the creed of a party or denomination. What had been intended as a point of unity served instead as a manifestation of diversity or fragmentation among Protestant Christians. When these new realities born of religious pluralism and the new convictions associated with the Enlightenment combined with the traditional Reformed belief that confessions were always subordinate to Scripture, the arguments against creeds were potentially stronger. In a word, subscription was becoming more problematic.

## II

American Presbyterianism contained elements from Ireland, Scotland, and England. Beginning in 1630, the main body of the Puritan migration from England landed in the Massachusetts Bay area and eventually fanned out from

there. Although most of these settlers were Independents or Congregationalists, a few had Presbyterian sympathies—a fact that became more apparent when some New Englanders moved to Long Island where they founded Presbyterian churches. In any event, the lines between Presbyterians and Congregationalists were somewhat murky at the time, and the interaction of the two bodies would be a significant factor in Presbyterian life until at least the mid-nineteenth century. Others came from Scotland and settled in colonies such as New Jersey and North Carolina. By far and away, however, the largest single group to affiliate with colonial Presbyterianism were the Ulster Scots, most of whom landed in Philadelphia during the 1720s and later and moved from there into the hinterlands of Pennsylvania and ultimately down the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.<sup>18</sup>

Where these people settled was as important as whence they came. The first Presbyterian churches were, for the most part, in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. In these colonies there was a fair degree of religious diversity and no established church, except in the four lower counties of New York close to Manhattan. Unlike the Congregationalists in Connecticut and Massachusetts, the Presbyterians did not enjoy the privilege of state support. While the circumstances were not fully comparable, the Presbyterian situation in the middle colonies was closer to that of the Irish and the English experiences than the Scottish.<sup>19</sup>

The diverse elements of Presbyterianism were cobbled together in this environment in a somewhat haphazard fashion. Churches calling themselves Presbyterian existed at least from the late 1600s, but the first presbytery—the Presbytery of Philadelphia—was not formed until 1706. This body had neither a formal constitution nor an official confession of faith. Even after it grew sufficiently large to re-organize itself in 1716 as a synod containing several presbyteries, it still did not have a creed.

The first moves in that direction came in the 1720s shortly after the Salters' Hall conference in London and at the time when Scottish Presbyterians were debating the meaning of creedal subscription and Ulster Presbyterians whether they should subscribe at all. In 1721, the Synod passed a rather vague motion by the Scot George Gillespie who called upon any who had suggestions "for the better carrying on in the matters of our government and discipline," to bring their recommendations to the next annual meeting. This seemingly innocuous action, perceived by some as the entering wedge for mandatory creedal subscription, soon triggered a full blown debate. For example, John Thomson, pastor in Lewes, Delaware, asked pointedly: "Now a church without a confession, what is it like?" He replied that such a church was "in a very defenceless condition, as a city without walls" because it had "no bar provided to keep out of the ministry those who corrupt in doctrinals." Thomson believed that the danger was more than theoretical. The church found itself "surrounded by so many pernicious and dangerous corruptions in doctrine....When Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, Freethinking, &c, do like a deluge overflow even the reformed churches, both established and dissenting,...have we not reason to consult our own safety?" Thomson's image of the church as a city open to conquest because it had no walls possibly reflected the church's state in society as well as the condition of its theology. Surviving church records suggest that sessions, presbyteries, and the synod itself were deeply preoccupied

with the establishment of moral order amid the sometimes ill-defined boundaries faced by a young church planting congregations in newly settled regions. This fact has prompted one historian to argue that despite the fact that “subscription had its origins in Old World traditions, the push to impose the Confession...arose in response to the plight of frontier settlers reeling from poverty, drunkenness, and violence, searching for stability.” The proponents of subscription, however, would probably not have drawn a sharp distinction between theological and social concerns. Sound doctrine would lead to sound morals, they would have insisted, just as assuredly as a disordered society would be a sign of a disordered theology.<sup>20</sup>

As it had in Ireland and England, the call for subscription produced opposition. Jonathan Dickinson, the New England born pastor of the Presbyterian church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, sensed the import of Gillespie’s original call for greater Presbyterian discipline and fired off a salvo at the 1722 synod in a sermon investigating “the true boundaries of the church’s power.” He contended that the church could not go beyond Scripture in determining rules for doctrine or discipline; to do so would be “a bold invasion of Christ’s royal power.” When Thomson requested the synod to require subscription several years later, Dickinson stood in opposition, noting pointedly the “glaring contradiction” of requiring ministers to subscribe to a document which itself declared: “God alone is the Lord of the conscience.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1729, the Synod of Philadelphia sent Thomson’s proposal for subscription to committee. The committee was a balanced one including both Thomson and Dickinson and others of their respective persuasions. The committee’s proposal, enacted by the synod, required ministerial subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but it did so with important concessions to those who had opposed this policy. Subsequently known as the Adopting Act, the synod’s policy was an artful blending of two different positions. Since its ambiguities are vital to understanding the context in which seventy-five years later *The Last Will and Testament* was written, the act deserves to be quoted at length.

Although the Synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men’s consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction with and abhorrence of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the church, being willing to receive obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity. And do therefore agree, that all the ministers of this synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this synod, shall declare their agreement in and approbation of the Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the assembly of divines at Westminster, as being in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine; and do also adopt the said confession and catechisms as the confession of our faith....And in case any minister of this synod or any candidate for the ministry shall have any scruple with respect to an article or articles of said confession or catechism, 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 only to be about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government.<sup>22</sup>

This remarkable document involved considerable equivocation. On the one hand, it echoed the anti-subscriptionists who exalted individual conscience over

churchly authority and suggested a circumscribed role for ecclesiastical courts by disclaiming “all legislative power and authority.” On the other, the synod’s Adopting Act asserted that judicatories did have the responsibility to defend “the faith once delivered to the saints.” In fact, the document can be interpreted as a compromise between the two viewpoints that Peter Brooke sees at war in Ulster Presbyterianism in the same era: “the Kingdom of Christ...[as] a corporate body with an authority derived from Christ” versus the notion of “the kingdom of the individual conscience.” The careful balancing was also apparent in the kind of subscription that the synod mandated. Ordinands and ministers did not need to affirm every jot and tittle of Westminster, only its “essential and necessary articles.” But what were the articles so basic and essential that everyone had to give assent? The Adopting Act did not say. The determination of the matter was left for church courts to decide on a case by case basis. By drawing boundaries of uncertain scope and by allowing latitude in their interpretation, the synod’s action resembled the Pacific Acts passed by Irish Presbyterians.

In the decades after the Adopting Act, the issue of subscription was seldom directly contested. In 1736, a heresy trial led to the ouster of Philadelphia pastor Samuel Hemphill for departures from Westminster, but his views were deemed to be so far beyond the pale that even former anti-subscriptionists did not rise to his defense. The great controversies from the 1730s through the next several decades had to do with questions of ministerial education and revivalism—controversies which, in the midst of the Great Awakening, split the Presbyterian church for seventeen years. When the church reunited in 1758 and again when it adopted a formal constitution reorganizing itself under a General Assembly in 1789, it continued to require candidates for ordination to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Left undiscussed and undecided was the vexing question inherited from the Adopting Act: what were the essential and necessary articles of Westminster?<sup>23</sup>

### III

It was into this theological world that Barton Stone and his colleagues who would form the Springfield Presbytery entered. In the wake of the excitement generated by the Great Revival, Presbyterian Richard McNemar was accused by his presbytery of teaching views contrary to the Westminster Confession. The charges spiraled into a controversy involving others, and in 1803 the Synod of Kentucky suspended five ministers, including McNemar and Stone. After they renounced the jurisdiction of the synod, organized themselves into the short-lived presbytery that they themselves soon dissolved, the language they used to justify their actions echoed Presbyterian debates over subscription during the previous century.

In the *Last Will and Testament*, for example, the authors declared: “We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible....” Here was an echo of Jonathan Dickinson’s claim that for the church to go beyond scripture in framing doctrine was “a bold invasion of Christ’s royal power,” and also of the Adopting Act’s disclaimer of

“all legislative power and authority in the church.” Similarly, Stone repeated the claim of earlier Presbyterians who had equated subscription with papal tyranny when he recalled in his autobiography: “We insisted that after we had orderly protested and withdrawn, that the Synod had no better right to suspend us, than the pope of Rome had to suspend Luther, after he had done the same thing.” *The Last Will and Testament* itself implied that those bound by the confession were the “oppressed...[yearning] to go free, and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.” Once again the ecclesiastical choices implied here, to use Peter Brooke’s words again, seem to be “the Kingdom of Christ...[as] a corporate body with an authority derived from Christ” versus the notion of “the kingdom of the individual conscience.” Like anti-subscriptionists before them, Barton Stone and company decisively opted for the latter option.<sup>24</sup>

Also like previous expressions of anti-subscription, *The Last Will and Testament* managed to generate a familiar counter-argument. Presbyterians espousing the necessity of creeds had long contended that it was necessary to have an authorized exposition of essential scriptural tenets to prevent wily or misinformed people from perverting the teaching of the Bible. Thus after two of the original “witnesses” of *The Last Will and Testament of Springfield*, including Richard McNemar, converted to the Shakers, other signers began to have second thoughts. “Soon after this shock had passed off,” Stone recalled, “...another dark cloud was gathering, and threatening our overthrow.” Two of those who had abandoned Presbyterianism gave signs of wanting “to return to the house from whence they had come.... They began to speak privately that the Bible was too latitudinarian for a creed—that there was a necessity, at this time, to embody a few fundamental truths, and to make a permanent and final stand upon them.” In fact, the two returned to Presbyterianism. Like John Thomson more than seventy years earlier they had found a church without a creed to be “in a very defenceless condition, as a city without walls.”<sup>25</sup>

Yet defections notwithstanding, Stone’s Christian movement, soon to be amalgamated with similar ones, flourished. Most adherents of the new movement did not “return to the house whence they came.” While the sources of the movement’s appeal were many, its claim to have rejected all human inventions including creeds and to stand by the Bible alone was surely a major source of its attractiveness. Protestants, of course, had always professed to base their faith and practice on the principle of *sola scriptura*. Yet in many quarters, this commitment had coexisted with the espousal of creeds. Among Presbyterians that cohabitation was often fitful and filled with argument about the place of creeds. With the advent of the Christian movement, however, creeds no longer had an ambiguous or debatable place; they were rejected outright. For that portion of Presbyterianism that defected, the long argument about the place of creeds appeared to be over, and creeds had lost.

To explain why this event transpired would require considerably more space than a short essay permits. But the sketch of an answer might go something like this: Presbyterianism from the outset embodied an ambiguity about creeds. Reformed theologians affirmed the value, sometimes even the necessity, of such documents but at the same time were hesitant, in John Leith’s words, “to give final authority to any statement that they believed was limited by time and place as well as well as by human finiteness and sin.” This two-sided conviction almost

guaranteed further debate. In the eighteenth century, debate indeed raged among Presbyterians in England, Ireland, Scotland, and America. Now added to the original Reformed ambivalence about creeds were several intellectual, social, and religious movements that converged with potentially devastating impact for confessional traditions. The triumph of enlightenment convictions about the rationality of the divine truth, the human capacity to know it, and the privileged place given to individual conscience had already made many wonder whether creeds should be imposed by churches. In America, these beliefs triumphed with a vengeance in the Scottish common sense philosophy which became virtually ubiquitous in the antebellum era among any who had even a smattering of learning. That philosophy suggested that there were certain facts of human consciousness so self-evident that no sane person could doubt them. In due course, faith in common sense joined hands with the evangelical revivals that surged across America in the early nineteenth century and also, in many quarters, linked up with the populist impulses that were exalting ordinary people. The result was a world in which it was presumed that everyone could understand the Bible clearly and unambiguously for himself or herself. And in such a world, who needed creeds? Those documents could only be an impediment to those who wished the preaching of the Gospel, in the words of *The Last Will and Testament*, to be “without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world.”<sup>26</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The description of the document as “whimsically phrased...” is from Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1958), 108-09. The quotation from *The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery* is cited from the text as reproduced in H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, eds., *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*, vol. 1. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 577.

<sup>2</sup>Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 70. Although he wishes to suggest the civilizing effect of revivalism, for a classic account that puts revivals including Cane Ridge in the context of the frontier, see William Warren Sweet, *Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth and Decline* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944). Garrison and DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ* shows a largely denominational reading of the document. A useful general overview of the religious events in Kentucky is provided by John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, 2nd ed. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); See also Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 6.

“Last Will and Testament,” 578; John Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself: With Additions and Reflections* (Cincinnati: J. A. and U. P. James, 1847), 33.

<sup>5</sup>John H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of Being the Christian Community*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 133-34; John H. Leith, “A Brief History of the Creedal Task: The Role of Creeds in Reformed Churches,” in *To Confess the Faith Today*, ed. Jack L. Stotts and Jane Dempsey Douglass (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>6</sup>For a brief overview of the Westminster Assembly, see John H. Leith, *Assembly at Westminster: Reformed Theology in the Making* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup>A.C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk: Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1983), 9-10; Thomas McCrie, *The Story of the Scottish Church from the Reformation to the Disruption* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1988 [1875]), 450-52.

<sup>8</sup>David C. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy, 1718-1723: An Historical and Theological Analysis* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988).

<sup>9</sup>Peter Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism: The Historical Perspective, 1610-1970* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 63-92; Elizabeth I. Nybakken, “New Light on the Old Side: Irish Influences on Colonial Presbyterianism,” *Journal of American History* 68 (March 1982): 819.

<sup>10</sup>Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 77-80.

<sup>11</sup>For a succinct summary of the pro- and antiprescription arguments upon which I have drawn heavily, see A. W. Godfrey Brown, “A Theological Interpretation of the First Subscription Controversy (1719-1728),” in *Challenge and Conflict: Essays in Irish Presbyterian History and Doctrine*, (Antrim: W & G Baird Ltd., 1981), ed. J. L. M. Haire, 28-45.

<sup>12</sup>Haliday as quoted in R. Finlay Holmes, “The Reverend John Abernethy: The Challenge of New Light Theology to Traditional Irish Presbyterian Calvinism,” in *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800*, ed. Kevin Herlihy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 107; the Salters' Hall speaker as quoted in Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 80.

<sup>13</sup>Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 103.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Holmes, “Reverend John Abernethy,” 108.

<sup>15</sup>The literature on the Enlightenment is, of course, vast. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) remains one of the most solid and useful overviews of the subject.

<sup>16</sup>John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1990 [1689]), 22; Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism*, 90-91.

<sup>17</sup>Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 23; Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism*, 89-90.

<sup>18</sup>For information on the development of early American Presbyterianism, see Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 136-64; Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 15-37; Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the*

*Creation of a British Atlantic World, 169-1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 65-97; Ned C. Landsman, *Scotland and Its First American Colony, 1683-1765* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 99-191; Duane Meyer, *The Highland Scots of North Carolina, 1732-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), *passim*.

<sup>19</sup>My discussion in this paragraph and the next draws heavily on Trinterud, *Forming of an American Tradition*, 15-37; Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 136-47; and Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 133-38.

<sup>20</sup>*Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1706-1788*, ed. Guy S. Klett (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1976), 51; here and subsequently in citations from *Minutes* I have brought the capitalization and spelling into conformity with modern usage. Thomson as quoted in Maurice W. Armstrong, Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson, *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 28-29; Griffin, *People with No Name*, 123.

<sup>21</sup>Dickinson is quoted in Bryan F. Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson and the Formative Years of American Presbyterianism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 31, 36.

<sup>22</sup>*Minutes of the Presbyterian Church*, 103-04.

<sup>23</sup>The most notable former anti-subscriptionist to speak out against Hemphill was Jonathan Dickinson himself; see Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson*, 53-55. Sometimes historians have tended to press the continuity between the anti-subscriptionists and New Side and between the subscriptionists and the Old Side. One must be cautious in suggesting such a lineage. For example, the most ardent and best known of the New Side Presbyterian families—the Tennents—had not protested subscription; see Milton J. Coalter, Jr., *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder: A Case Study of Continental Pietism's Impact on the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 38. On the founding of the General Assembly, consult Trinterud, *Forming of an American Tradition*, 279-306.

<sup>24</sup>*Last Will and Testament*, 577; *Biography of Barton Stone*, 48.

<sup>25</sup>*Biography of Barton Stone*, 65.

<sup>26</sup>*Last Will and Testament*, 577. The triumph of the Scottish philosophy and its interaction with populist sentiments are described in two recent fine works: E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 173-96; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 367-85.

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**Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers,  
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Editors

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John 17:23

From Alexander Campbell's *Living Oracles*

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**THE ECUMENICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF  
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT  
OF THE SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY**

Paul A. Crow, Jr.\*

This lecture is dedicated to Dr. Peter M. Morgan  
who served with distinction as President of the  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society from 1995-2004.

We are here on sacred ground to recall, celebrate, and exegete for the church in our times *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, a nineteenth-century document that transformed the church and its unity in America. We are also here to confront our heritage and to renew our spirits to pursue the yearning for Christian unity that defines our tradition. At its appearance on June 28, 1804, *The Last Will and Testament* represented a unique ecumenical vision of the church amid an unevangelized, fragmented and contentious frontier. For many simple folks this vision was good news to a divided church attempting to bring the gospel to an emerging part of America.

Despite the glowing acclaim we might give to the ecumenical vision of Barton Warren Stone and his partners, when the first volume of the celebrated *The History of the Ecumenical Movement* was published in 1954—with funds provided by the Disciples of Christ—the chapter on nineteenth-century witnesses to Christian unity had a regrettable omission. In the section on “The Unitive Contribution of the Disciples of Christ,” the distinguished church historian who wrote that chapter focused entirely on Thomas and Alexander Campbell and made only one brief reference to Barton Stone, listing him with Elias Smith of New England and James O’Kelly of Virginia and North Carolina, each of which “contributed ‘Christian’ movements to the American denominational map.”<sup>1</sup> This is not the first time Father Stone has suffered from undeserved obscurity. Fortunately Dr. D. Newell Williams’ exceptionally important book *Barton Stone; A Spiritual Biography* has brought Stone fully into our present historical memory.<sup>2</sup>

Such a shameful diminution or omission of Barton Stone lives even today among his divided heirs who ply our ways in the twenty-first century under the label of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Some of us will recall the moment in 1991 when together we celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the Cane Ridge Meeting House. Central to that bicentennial event was a symposium at Lexington Theological Seminary under the theme of “Barton W. Stone in the Historical Memory of the Stone-Campbell Tradition” at which leading historians from the three divided traditions were asked to reflect upon the image of Barton Stone in their tradition. It was a feast of academic reflections. Two of the scholars reported honestly of the diminished, almost non-existent, awareness of Barton

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Stone in their tradition's life today.

Dr. Paul M. Blowers of Emmanuel School of Religion, speaking as a member of the Independent Christian tradition, confessed that within his churches there is "Stone Silence," by which he meant there is "a relative lack of substantial interest in Stone, as contrasted with an ostensibly much greater fascination with the figures of Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott." Stone is known primarily "by anecdotes and cherished folklore, with the result that most people operate with only a superficial grasp of his significance."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. C. Leonard Allen, then professor at Abilene Christian University and a member of the a cappella Churches of Christ, confessed—with equal candor—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 is revered by some."<sup>4</sup> Within that tradition Alexander Campbell and his Restoration plea also reign in its historical memory and current teaching.

Dr. Anthony L. Dunnivant, the late and beloved professor of Church History at Lexington Theological Seminary and refreshing catalyst of studies about Barton Stone, Cane Ridge, and the ecumenism reflected in *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, humbly proclaimed a significant, continuing interest in Stone within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This prominence, he said, is, "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." In the popular Disciples mind, he pointed out, Barton Stone has become an "ecumenical icon," the sacred image of Christian unity among the Disciples.<sup>5</sup>

These differing perspectives of Barton Warren Stone will undoubtedly affect the nascent ecumenical dialogue among these three churches as well as our assessments of the ecumenical significance of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. Hopefully we can all agree—at the least—that this classic nineteenth-century visionary document is germane to our participation in today's ecumenical movement.

The roots of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* lay in the Great Revival of 1801 at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, which historian Paul K. Conkin calls "America's Pentecost," an epoch-making event in American religious history.<sup>6</sup> It is not my intention on this occasion to focus upon the excessive emotionalism at Cane Ridge, marked by penitent cries to heaven, shouting, fainting in spiritual distress, and raptures of joy. All of this fervent agitation caused one worshiper to remark, "The noise was like the roar of Niagara [Falls]."<sup>7</sup> The central essence of the Cane Ridge Revival was that Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and those of no particular denominational affiliation sang hymns and listened to the scriptures together, paid heed to a variety of preachers together, shared in celebrating the Lord's Supper in a "sacramental meeting," and experienced Jesus Christ as their common Lord and Savior. The prayerful enthusiasm of this frontier ecumenical moment spread, remarked Barton Stone, "like fire in dry stubble driven by a strong wind."<sup>8</sup> As he later reflected, "All appeared cordially united in it [the revival]—of one mind and one soul, and the salvation of sinners seemed to be the great object of all."<sup>9</sup>

Twenty-five years later Stone reflected on the ecumenical significance

of the Cane Ridge event in these words:

The doctrine preached by all was simple, and nearly the same. Free and full salvation to every creature was proclaimed. All urged faith in the gospel and obedience to it, as the way of life. All appeared deeply impressed with the ruined state of sinners, and were anxious for their salvation. The spirit of partyism [disunity], and party distinctions were apparently forgotten. The doctrines of former controversy were not named; no mention was made of eternal unconditional election, reprobation, or fatality. The spirit of love, peace, and union were revived. You might have seen the various sects engaged in the same spirit, praying, praising, and communing together, and the preachers in the lead. Happy days! Joyful seasons of refreshment from the presence of the Lord!<sup>10</sup>

What impacted Barton Stone so tremendously about the revival and its aftermath was the compelling experience of Christian unity. It was no accident that by the preaching of the Gospel “without sectarian intentions” people were converted to Christ by the hundreds. Evangelism was the goal, and unity among all Christians was requisite to drawing people to Jesus Christ. Cane Ridge gave evidence that the full evangelization of the world depends upon experiences of the unity of the Church.

In the early years of his ministry Barton Stone had expressed his hesitancy with classical Calvinist theology. At his ordination on October 4, 1798 at Cane Ridge he was asked, as were all ordinands, “Do you receive and adopt the [Westminster] Confession of Faith?” Having conferred with two members of the presbytery prior to the service, he answered -- drawing on a provision of the Presbyterian Adopting Act of 1729 -- “I do, as far as I see it consistent with the Word of God.”<sup>11</sup> That this answer was accepted and Stone was ordained reveals a certain ambivalence regarding subscription to creeds in the Transylvania Presbytery. Despite his theological reservations Stone was extended a call and took his place among the revivalists or “New Light” Presbyterians.

Among the New Lights or pro-revival preachers five were especially drawn together as friends and ministerial colleagues. In addition to Barton Stone the group included Richard McNemar, John Thompson, John Dunlavy, and Robert Marshall. Later David Purviance joined them. Since they are largely unknown today by ministers and members of the three branches of the Stone-Campbell movement, let me offer a brief sketch of each of these pastors who, with Barton Stone, reflected the common commitments of religious freedom, a theology rooted in the Bible open to all people, and an ecumenical sense of the Church. All became outstanding leaders of the New Light Presbyterians. Among them were ministers who belonged to the Washington Presbytery and the West Washington Presbytery. The newly formed Synod of Kentucky was the ruling body of both presbyteries.

John Thompson (1772-1858) was ordained into the Presbyterian Church in 1800 at the Springfield, Ohio congregation. The preacher at his ordination was John Dunlavy, one of the ministers related to Stone’s movement. Like John Marshall, the lack of structure and theological focus of the Christian Church eventually disturbed Thompson. He and Marshall returned to the Presbyterian Church, co-authored a denunciation of the Christian Church, made a formal act of repentance, and in 1811 were received back into the Presbyterian Church. In 1812 he was reinstated as the minister of the Springfield Presbyterian Church. Eventually he moved to Crawfordsville, Indiana where he died at the age of 87.

John Dunlavy (1769-1826) was born in western Pennsylvania, then

moved to Kentucky in the 1790s. Three years later he moved to Ohio to serve the church at Eagle Creek. In 1805 when Shaker missionaries came to Kentucky and Ohio with their “full gospel” and the intention to convert people of whatever tradition, Dunlavy joined The United Society of Believers, as they called themselves, and took thirty families from the Eagle Creek congregation with him. Eventually Dunlavy became an important leader among the Shakers, and wrote one of the major texts on Shaker theology, *The Manifesto or a Declaration of the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Christ*. Dunlavy died in 1826.

Robert Marshall (1760-1833) was born in Ireland and at age twelve moved with his parents to western Pennsylvania. He fought in the Revolutionary War, and in 1791 moved to Kentucky and became a missionary of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Among the churches he was known for his great eloquence in preaching and the gift of statesmanship. Marshall became the first stated clerk of the Synod of Kentucky when it was formed in October, 1802. As the pastor of the Bethel and Blue Springs congregations he became a staunch advocate of believers’ baptism by immersion and played a role in convincing Barton Stone of this mode of baptism. In a private letter to Stone he interpreted the theological significance of believers’ baptism so effectively that Stone was convinced for the first time that immersion was the primary New Testament practice. Eventually Marshall also returned to the Presbyterian Church, was reinstated and appointed the minister of the Bethel Presbyterian Church.

Robert McNemar (1770-1839) came to Kentucky from western Pennsylvania with Robert Finley, the Presbyterian minister at Cane Ridge before Barton Stone. In 1795 he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Transylvania and served churches in northern Kentucky. He was then called to the congregation at Cabin Creek, Kentucky. McNemar’s affirmation of the emotional excesses at the Cane Ridge revival—in which he participated—created controversy among the Presbyterians. In October, 1802 the Presbytery of Cincinnati accused him of preaching Arminianism, the belief that individuals have the free will to affect their salvation. No one is predestined by God’s will, he said. McNemar also preached often about the imminent coming of the millennium, the one thousand year reign of Christ on earth, described in Revelation 20:1-8. It is not surprising that when the Shaker missionaries came in 1805 to his congregation at Turtle Creek in southern Ohio, he, along with thirty families from the congregation became Shakers. This group became the nucleus of the first organized Shaker community in the West. For many years it was assumed that Barton Stone was the author of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. However recent research now leaves no doubt that Richard McNemar was the author.<sup>12</sup>

David Purviance (1766-1847), the sixth witness to *The Last Will and Testament*, was born in North Carolina and in 1791 moved to Sumner County, Tennessee, then to Kentucky. While a serious Christian, his dream was to become a statesman not a preacher. After moving to a farm just three miles south of Cane Ridge, he became an elder in the Cane Ridge Presbyterian Church and was elected to the Kentucky legislature. As the Revivalist controversy with the Synod developed Purviance was attracted to Barton Stone’s vision and teachings. Indeed, he became what one historian calls “Stone’s best lieutenant.”<sup>13</sup> In 1807 he moved to Preble County, Ohio, where he served several terms in the Ohio legislature. Under Stone’s influence Purviance eventually gave up his political

career and devoted the rest of his life to the Christian ministry. Among those who signed *The Last Will and Testament* only David Purviance and Barton Stone remained in the Christian Church. Purviance died in 1847 at the age of eighty-one.

Among the revivalist ministers Richard McNemar provoked the first formal opposition by the Presbyterians. Among the charges brought against him were his teaching that “Christ has purchased salvation for all the human race, without distinction” and that “a sinner has power to believe in Christ at any time.”<sup>14</sup> In September, 1803 the Synod of Kentucky decided that McNemar’s preaching was “dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interest of true religion.” In a letter of condemnation McNemar’s teachings were said to be inconsistent with the Word of God and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church. On September 6, 1803, the newly-formed Synod of Kentucky meeting in Lexington brought formal charges against McNemar and John Thompson. Within the synod there were those who tried to lure the dissenters back into the Presbyterian Church. David Rice, the moderator of the synod, warned his colleagues on the synod that “every departure from Calvinism was an advance to atheism.”<sup>15</sup> When the synod took a vote, seventeen delegates voted to censure McNemar and Thompson; six voted in the negative. The six “nays” came from ministers of the revival school.

During a recess of the synod that ominous day the five went aside to a private garden to assess their situation. After ardent prayers they decided that “as long as human opinions were esteemed as the standard of orthodoxy, we had little hope of redress.” They therefore returned to the synod session and declared themselves “no longer members of your reverend body, or under your jurisdiction or that of your Presbyteries.”<sup>16</sup> The synod then officially suspended these honor-bound dissenters.

Immediately the emerging Christians formed an independent Springfield Presbytery, that is, independent from any church control. The name Springfield was chosen after the community of Springfield, (later Springdale) Ohio, some eleven miles south of Cincinnati, where they had shared many positive experiences in their ministry. Over twenty years later Barton Stone recalled that all of the dissenters, not only McNemar and Thompson, felt vulnerable to the charge of heresy: “We saw the arm of ecclesiastical authority raised to crush us, and we must sink, or step aside to avoid the blow.”

In January, 1804 these five ministers published *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*, a document of greater significance than is usually granted.<sup>17</sup> Robert Marshall wrote the first part, stating the reasons for their inevitable withdrawal from the synod. Barton Stone wrote the second and most important part, entitled “A Compendious View of the Gospel,” in which he critiqued the doctrines stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith and offered new theological insights; John Thompson wrote the third part, affirming the sole authority of the Bible over against the authority of the creeds. In Barton Stone’s assessment the *Apology* “had a happy effect on the public mind; not only to soften their [the synod’s] prejudices against us, but also to convince many of the truth, of which they became zealous advocates.”<sup>18</sup> The Springfield Presbytery had won its churchly independence.

For good or ill the Springfield Presbytery lived only nine months. By

1804 fifteen “regular societies” or congregations were part of the new Christian movement, seven in Ohio and eight in Kentucky. This number represented rapid growth on the nineteenth-century frontier. However the consensus among the five, especially Barton W. Stone, concluded that the Springfield Presbytery was in reality another structure that denied the unity of the church. As Stone reflected, “It savored of a party spirit.”<sup>19</sup> They all came to believe that their presbytery was in essence a divisive expression and a contradiction of their vision of the oneness of the church. To formalize and interpret to other Christians this act of dissolution they publicly proclaimed on June 28, 1804, a declarative statement entitled *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. Six persons signed this ecumenically-intended document: the original five and David Purviance who by this time had become a major presence in the movement.<sup>20</sup> Although written to interpret a particular act in a particular context, this document captured the attention and inspired many Christians outside their circle. It became a time-honored ecumenical document that teaches a unique sense of the church’s nature, mission, and unity.

Now let us listen to this celebrated ecumenical testimony. With a touch of facetious humor *The Last Will and Testament* is cast in the format of a will, a legal document. The introduction quotes four scriptural texts which teach that death is necessary in order for Christians to receive the gift of life; or in legal jargon the death of the testator is necessary before the testament is legally in force. The four texts are Hebrews 9:16-17; I Corinthians 15:36; John 12:24; and Hebrews 12:26-27. The first paragraph makes certain that the readers understand that the Presbytery of Springfield is “in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily, and in perfect soundness and composure of mind and knowing that it is appointed for a delegated body to die, we in that spirit make this last Will and Testament.”

The first paragraph is the most central and the most widely quoted by those who care about the unity of Christ’s church. It is called the *imprimis*, a legal term that identifies the first and most important statement. This may be one of the most lyrical and important ecumenical statements ever made:

We will, that this body [Springfield Presbytery] die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.<sup>21</sup>

This paragraph is the essence of their ecclesiology and ecumenical vision.

Separate, divided churches are a scandal to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Division must be reconciled if the unity for which our Lord Jesus Christ prayed is to come on earth. The church is called to be a visible expression of the unity God wills for the world. All Christians must work to overcome the denominational system that others accept as comfortably normal. The implications of their witness is clear: no one tradition or denomination can represent the whole, universal Church, pretending to embody the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one tradition—Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, or whomever— can ever be the one, universal Church of Christ. True diversity can live only within a diversity that embraces all who accept the redeeming grace given by the one God—Father/Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

The phrase “sink into union with the body of Christ at large” is a

powerfully significant ecumenical intention. It speaks of a concept of Christian unity far different from most models. It is the opposite of a superchurch or any model of unity in which one tradition is dominant to the diminishment of others. In an authentic “sinking into union with the body of Christ at large” the gifts of each tradition are received and contribute to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Barton Stone and his followers were called “schismatics,” but in reality they were “catholics,” those whose vision and ultimate commitment was to the whole gospel and the whole church.

There is a magnificent ecumenical insight in the *imprimis* of *The Last Will and Testament*. It is that the authentic, biblical expression of Christian unity can come only through the cross, the dying to self and self-serving. How have we missed this point in all of our ecumenical conversations? Smug, isolated, self-serving, feuding, divided churches will never fulfill the prayer of their Lord “that they all may be one.” Unity can occur only if they walk the way of the cross, dying to the old patterns of contention and division in order to be raised in newness of life. This biblical insight was spoken on November 7, 1954, when the cornerstone was ceremonially laid for the superstructure that now covers the Cane Ride Meeting House. On that occasion Dr. Lin D. Cartwright, editor of *The Christian-Evangelist*, the Disciples of Christ journal of that generation, gave the primary address under the title “Unity by the Way of the Cross.” His claim for our Disciples tradition and for the hope of the whole ecumenical movement was thoroughly biblical, but not what most folks wanted to hear—then or today. He said:

The Cane Ridge reformers set before the whole Christian world a new and as yet untried method of attaining the unity of the church. It is a unity achieved by the way of the Cross, the way of death, death to all littleness, parochialism and provincialism; death to all lesser compelling loyalties other than loyalty to Jesus Christ and the Universal Body of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

This biblical concept is embedded forever in the ecclesial lives of those who grant any authority to the vision of *The Last Will and Testament*. I believe this is the major ecumenical significance of this document: reconciliation comes only through sacrificial self-giving; new life in Christ comes when we place our traditions on the cross, thus understanding that only such humility can bring reconciling love to a hurting, divided world.

Beyond the *imprimis*—the most critical point to be made—*The Last Will and Testament* made eleven affirmations about the internal life of the church. (1) The title of reverend or any other designation that exalts one member over another should be forgotten. (2) The power of making laws in the church and giving power to execute them to delegated authorities, especially presbyteries and synods, should “cease forever.” No judicatory can bind the conscience of Christians. (3) Candidates for the gospel ministry should study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer and “without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men or rudiments of the world.” (4) “The church of Christ should resume her native right of internal government,” e.g., examine candidates for the ministry “as to their soundness in faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and to admit no other proof of their authority, but Christ speaking in them.” (5) Every congregation has the right to call its own minister and to support him or her by a free will offering, (6) The people should take the Bible “as the only sure guide to heaven . . . for it is better to enter

into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell;” (7) Preachers and people should “cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less;” (8) Those “weaker brethren” who were tempted to make the Springfield Presbytery “their king,” that is, the center of their allegiance, should stay focused on the Rock of Ages and follow Jesus Christ not a church authority. The last two points are made partially in jest. (9) Let the Synod of Kentucky keep examining every member and suspending those who are suspect in doctrine, so those “oppressed may go free and like them, taste the sweets of gospel liberty”, that is, become members of the Christian movement. (10) Finally, “we encourage our sister churches, especially the Presbyterians, to read their Bibles carefully that they may see their fate determined and prepare for death before it is too late.”

There is one misrepresentation which some Stone-Campbell folks have made about these actions taken by Barton Stone and it needs to be clarified. Newell Williams and others point out that it is a misrepresentation to say that the intention of *The Last Will and Testament* was to reject the Presbyterian concept of ordination and the pastoral office. As Dr. Williams’ insightful study on *Ministry Among the Disciples*—one of the preparatory theological studies that led to the major book, *The Church for the Disciples of Christ*<sup>23</sup>—shows that these six preachers disclaimed “those aspects of the Presbyterian judicial practice which the Christians had come to see as lacking in biblical warrant and as a hindrance to the union of all Christians.” However, careful examination of the four items in *The Last Will and Testament* that relate to the calling and authority of the ministry reveals that “the Christians did not reject their Presbyterian understanding of ministry.”<sup>24</sup>

To *The Last Will and Testament* the signers appended “The Witnesses’ Address,” which explains their reasons for dissolving their presbytery. They were deeply concerned about the divisions and party spirit caused by creeds and controlling forms of church government. But in a short while they found it impossible to suppress the idea that the Springfield Presbytery itself was “a party separate from others.” They even confessed they were tempted to engage in competition with other churches. However their main intention in *The Last Will and Testament* was to cultivate a spirit of love and unity with all Christians, saying, “We heartily unite with our Christian brethren of every name, in thanksgiving to God for the display of his goodness in the glorious work he is carrying on in our Western country, which we hope will terminate in the universal spread of the gospel and the unity of the church.”<sup>25</sup> We heirs of Barton Stone should have no doubt that the primary commitment of *The Last Will and Testament* was to be an instrument of the full unity and reconciliation of all Christians.

The test of the truly ecumenical significance of the *The Last Will and Testament* can be seen by the fact that it has inspired the participation of Stone’s heirs in ecumenical causes and decisions from 1804 until today. It is not within the realm of this paper to fully chronicle the countless times their self-effacing action has inspired our participation in diverse movements and efforts to reconcile the people of God by engaging in common mission and attempting to reconcile Christians of different traditions. Barton Stone certainly expressed hope for and commitment to several ecumenical proposals that appeared in his

lifetime. In the mid-1830s Lyman Beecher, the renowned Congregational preacher and educator, called for a conference of representatives of all Protestant churches in America to seek unity and cooperation in world evangelism. In 1835 Barton Stone enthusiastically endorsed this ecumenical proposal in his journal the *Christian Messenger*, saying;

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 over every name have been sighing and praying—THE UNITY OF CHRISTIANS.<sup>26</sup>

In 1841 Stone heard of another forthcoming ecumenical conference, and expressed his pleasure: "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?"<sup>27</sup> We dare not extrapolate too much from these cordial responses to the ecumenical proposals of other church leaders. Stone's focus upon unity was mostly upon bringing into union individuals and congregations who "have the spirit of Jesus." Those who have this spirit "would flow together, and strive to save the world. . . . This spirit restored will be the grand cause of union."<sup>28</sup>

Disciples of Christ leaders in every generation have been motivated by the ecumenical vision of *The Last Will and Testament* and by Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* (1809) which members of the Stone-Campbell movement will surely celebrate at Bethany, West Virginia in 2009. In response to this vision countless men and women, ministers and lay people have led Disciples in the twentieth century to participate in all sorts of ecumenical relationships: the historic World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland (1910), the Federal Council of Churches (1908), the World Council of Churches (1948), the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (1950), and innumerable local, state, and regional councils of churches. *The Last Will and Testament* was quoted with authority when Disciples joined church union efforts such as the Philadelphia Plan for Union (1918-1920); conversations with the Northern (American) Baptists (1940-1952); the Greenwich Plan (1946-1958), whose visionary document proposing union was drafted by Charles Clayton Morrison; the Ecumenical Partnership between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ), and the Consultation on Church Union (1960-2002) which in 2002 resulted in significant visible unity as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).

Peter Ainslie, the passionate ecumenist and first president of the Disciples' Council on Christian Unity once wrote of the source of the passion for Christian unity that is integral to the faith and mission of the Disciples of Christ: The authority for our participation in nearly every expression of the ecumenical movement lies, Ainslie believed, in *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* and the *Declaration and Address*.

[They reflect] the passion for Christian unity that led Barton W. Stone in his ecumenical work and Thomas and Alexander Campbell in their interdenominational work . . . Because the times were intolerant they did not slack in their advocacy of the necessity for the unity of Christendom. It is the genius of their message. Take unity out of the message of the Disciples and there is less reason for their existence than any communion in Christendom."<sup>29</sup>

However, I want to name another link between Barton Stone, *The Last*

*Will and Testament*, and the modern ecumenical movement that has hardly been acknowledged among those of us who share in the Stone-Campbell Movement. It is the irrevocable link between the calling to visible church unity and the calling to witness to social justice, especially racial justice. Unknown to most of our members and ministers, this witness is within our heritage and our common calling to be the Church of Jesus Christ. While it may not be widely known by the present generation, it should not surprise us that Barton Stone's family owned slaves. Yet long before this evil became a public issue, Stone decided to free his family's slaves and to deliberately accept the heavy financial losses this act involved. Indeed after this brave act Barton Stone lived a life of near poverty. The report of this moral action deserves to be remembered and become a stimulus for reflection among us. He wrote:

I have emancipated my slaves from a sense of right, choosing poverty with a good conscience, in preference to all the treasures of the world. This revival cut the bonds of many poor slaves; and this argument speaks volumes in favor of the work for the movement. For of what avail is a religion of decency and in order, without righteousness.<sup>30</sup>

While few interpreters of Barton Stone are aware, his theology was based on a New Testament ethic of justice grounded in the biblical promise of the Kingdom of God. And Stone believed this ethic would provide the foundation on which all Christians would unite.<sup>31</sup> He therefore made a link, if I may use contemporary language, between the disunity of the Church and racism, and between the unity Christ wills for the Church and the struggle for human community. Surely Barton Stone's costly witness against slavery and for liberation anticipated what was spoken by the seventh assembly of the World Council of Churches, at Canberra, Australia, in 1991: "The calling of the Church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, color, and to bring all people into communion with God."<sup>32</sup>

This same spiritual truth led the World Council of Churches in the late 1960s to create the Program to Combat Racism. This program has been controversial in its methods, but is rooted in the gospel. It is a sign of hope for oppressed people everywhere. Poverty, racism, and other forms of oppression deny God's gift in creation and redemption to those who suffer injustice. These denials keep God's oppressed people from experiencing the love and unity which God has given to all God's people in creation and redemption. Barton Stone's action of freeing his slaves was a witness not only to freedom but to reconciling love, the love that is the sign of the unity God has given to the world, the human community.

Possibly closer to the life of our congregations is the hope for a united church represented in the Consultation on Church Union and its recent fulfillment in Churches Uniting in Christ. In its forty-year pilgrimage toward a united church "truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed," COCU wrestled mightily with church-dividing issues such as sexism, handicapism, and racism. The presence of three predominantly African American Methodist churches forced the other COCU churches to confess and confront the reality that institutional racism is a sin and one of the most divisive issues in American life.<sup>33</sup> Therefore at the heart of this ecumenical pilgrimage is the calling to confess our involvement in the perpetuation of racism in our churches and our American society, and to work for a unity of the Church that overcomes such barriers to authentic koinonia,

true fellowship. It is time for those who follow Barton Stone's witness "to free the slaves," to oppose racism in the churches and society and to become truly racially inclusive churches. As the language of COCU/CUIC mandates, "Authentic unity requires racial justice within the life of the churches and of the society."<sup>34</sup>

Now let me conclude my lecture by recalling a modern ecumenical moment at Cane Ridge. In 1965 the fourth plenary of the Consultation on Church Union met at Lexington, partly hosted by Lexington Theological Seminary. Among the preparations the COCU officers made an intentional decision to take the delegates of those churches and the observer-consultations to Cane Ridge for a celebration of the Lord's Supper, a "sacramental meal." Those present at that communion service were the delegates of the then six participating churches—including lay people, pastors, theologians, denominational leaders, and youth. Also worshipping in the Cane Ridge Meeting House on that day were an international group of observer-consultants—Roman Catholics (including then-Monsignor, later Cardinal, William Baum), Eastern Orthodox, Church of the Brethren, Reformed Church in America, Southern Baptist (in the person of Dale Moody), the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany, representatives of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and the World Council of Churches. Such diversity has never graced this simple sanctuary ever before or since that day. During the communion service George G. Beazley, Jr., my animated predecessor as president of the Council on Christian Unity, was the preacher. Elders from the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Paris offered the eucharistic prayers at the table. It was an over-powering experience in the tradition of Cane Ridge. After the service I found myself walking across the grounds with my friend Eugene Carson Blake, the courageous prophet whose dramatic sermon in the Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco had launched COCU. As we walked together he joked about the fact that the Cane Ridge Meeting House had once been a Presbyterian Church and that no financial compensation had ever been given to the Presbyterians since we took it over. We laughed, and then with seriousness he said, "What happened here at Cane Ridge in the early 1800s was a promissory witness toward the fulfillment of Christ's prayer 'that they all may be one.' (John 17) Surely in God's providence the day will come soon when the ecumenical vision of Cane Ridge will become a reality among all the churches that confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." Dear friends, that is the hope that marks this place and this day.

On this celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* the hope and vision of the one people of God remain God's mandate and our calling. We are called by the gospel to will the death of anything within us that separates us from other Christians, and in so doing we will bring to fruition the unity for which Christ prayed. Let all those who believe that say "Amen."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Don Herbert Yoder, "Christian Unity in Nineteenth-Century America," *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1817-1948*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967, pp. 236-241.

<sup>2</sup>D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone; A Spiritual Biography*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.

<sup>3</sup>Paul M. Blowers, "Nearly 'Stone Silence': Barton W. Stone in the Memory of the Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ," *Cane Ridge in Context; Perspectives on Barton W. Stone and the Revival*. Edited by Anthony L. Dunnivant. Nashville, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1992, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>C. Leonard Allen, "The Stone That The Builders Rejected; Barton W. Stone in the Memory of Churches of Christ." *Cane Ridge in Context*, op.cit., p. 44.

<sup>5</sup>Anthony L. Dunnivant, "From Precursor of the Movement to Icon of Christian Unity: Barton W. Stone in the Memory of the Christian Church" (Disciples of Christ), *Cane Ridge in Context*, op.cit., p.14.

<sup>6</sup>Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge; America's Pentecost*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin, 1990.

<sup>7</sup>Strickland, Finley Autobiography, pp. 166-167; quoted in Newell Williams, op.cit., p. 61.

<sup>8</sup>*The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself, with Additions and Reflections by Elder John Rogers*. Cincinnati: Published for the Author by J. A. and U. P. James, 1847, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>10</sup>Barton W. Stone, *Christian Messenger*, 1 (February 24, 1827).

<sup>11</sup>*The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>See Robert Marshall, *A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian Church, or as it is Commonly Called The New Light Church*, printed in Levi Purviance, *The Biography of Elder David Purviance*. Dayton, Ohio: B.F. and G.W. Ellis, 1848; reprinted 1940, pp. 263-266.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Crossfield Ware, *Barton Warren Stone; Pathfinder of Christian Union*. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1932, p. 123.

<sup>14</sup>"*An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky, To which is added a Compendious View of the Gospel, and a few remarks on the Confession of Faith*," in *The Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., pp. 149-150.

<sup>15</sup>*The Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., p. 47.

<sup>16</sup>Barton W. Stone, *Christian Messenger*, 2 (March 24, 1827), p. 97, and Barton W. Stone, *History of the Christian Church in the West*. Lexington, Kentucky: The College of the Bible, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>*An Apology*, op.cit., pp. 61-67.

<sup>18</sup>*An Apology*, quoted in D. Newell Williams, op.cit., p. 94.

<sup>19</sup>*The Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>20</sup>For the full text of *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, see *The Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., 51-55. This text has been published in countless places.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>22</sup> Lin D. Cartwright, "Unity by the Way of the Cross," *The Christian-Evangelist*, Vol. 92, No. 49 (December 8, 1954), pp. 7-9, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Paul A. Crow, Jr. and James O. Duke, eds. *The Church for Disciples of Christ; Seeking to Be Truly Church Today*. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> D. Newell Williams, *Ministry Among Disciples: Past, Present, Future*. St. Louis: Published for the Council on Christian Unity by the Christian Board of Publication, 1985, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *The Biography of Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Barton W. Stone, "Remarks," *Christian Messenger*, 9 (December, 1835), pp. 282-283.

<sup>27</sup> Barton W. Stone, "Christian Messenger, 11 (March, 1841), p. 247.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Ainslie, *Working with God, or The Story of a Twenty-five Year Pastorate in Baltimore*. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1917, p. 303.

<sup>30</sup> *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*, op.cit., p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> See Richard T. Hughes, "Why Restorationists Don't Fit the Evangelical Mold; Why Churches of Christ Increasingly Do," *Re-Forming the Center; American Protestantism from 1900 to the Present*. Edited by Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger, Jr.. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1998, p. 196.

<sup>32</sup> "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," in *Signs of the Spirit; Official Report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February, 1991*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman, 1991, p. 172.

<sup>33</sup> See "Erasing Racism: A Strategy Paper for COCU's Quest for a Racially Just Unity," *Mid-Stream*, Vol. 37, Nos 3-4 (July-October, 1998) pp. 357-372; Gerald F. Moede, *Oneness in the Church; The Quest and the Questions*. Princeton, NJ: The Consultation on Church Union, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> See "Call to Christian Commitment and Action to Combat Racism," *Mid-Stream*, Vol. 41, Nos. 2-3 (April-June, 2002), pp. 36-40.



# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## —From the Editor's Desk

Perspective is critical in the writing of history. Joe Blosser's "Agitator of Identity: The Effect of the Campbell Institute on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)" is written from the perspective of a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who sees the Institute as having made a positive contribution to the Disciples tradition of free and open dialogue. Historians associated with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have typically offered a less positive appraisal of the Institute, viewing it as a significant contributor to the division of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Kent Ellett's "Jeffersonian Evangelical: Christian Liberty in the Life and Letters of Barton W. Stone" views Stone's ministry from the perspective of Jeffersonian Republicanism. Other perspectives that have been employed to elucidate Stone's ministry include his commitment to the cause of Christian unity and the abiding influence of his Reformed or Presbyterian spirituality. These articles should remind readers familiar with other interpretations of these topics that multiple perspectives enable us to see more than we can see from any one perspective.

This issue of *Discipliana* marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. Following the excellent leadership of Peter Morgan, Duane Cummins became interim president of the Society in August, 2004. Dr. Cummins is a noted historian and educational leader, having served both as president of the Division of Higher Education (now Higher Education and Leadership Ministries) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and as president of Bethany College. On the following page, as befits his training as a professional historian, Dr. Cummins sets the articles by Blosser and Ellett in the context of one of the major interpretive constructs of American religious history, the democratization of American Christianity. On behalf of the Editorial Committee of *Discipliana*, I am pleased to welcome President and Professor Cummins to his new responsibilities.

D. Newell Williams

## —From the President’s Desk

The single most important institutional development of post revolutionary Christianity was the shift of religious authority away from the state and toward religious bodies ranging from congregations to denominations. Central to understanding the development of American Christianity and the nature of leadership within it is this post-revolutionary theme of *democratization*. For American Christianity in general and the Stone-Campbell movement in particular, the years of the early 19th century are the most crucial in revealing religious populists as social and theological pioneers, as the creators and shapers of a new kind of religious culture. Gordon S. Wood called the early republic, “the time of greatest religious chaos and originality in American History.” W. R. Ward wrote of that period as the “most important single generation in the modern history of the whole Christian world.” And church historian Nathan Hatch observed, “American Protestantism has been pushed and pulled into its present shape by a democratic or populist orientation rooted in the social and political turbulence of the early 1800’s.” The Stone-Campbell movement espoused a profoundly democratic spirit, a spirit of individual freedom and personal liberty.

Robert Richardson, writing in the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1840, noted, “the leading trait of our movement is to regard the Christian religion as a system addressing itself in the first place to reason by its evidences, and secondly to the heart by its principles.” Stone and Campbell, along with their early followers, believed that true faith was fully reconcilable with enlightened thought. They defined faith by using traditional sources, Hebrews 11:1 and Romans 10:17; and faith came by hearing the word of God. Evidence of reason as the true means of coming to faith was illustrated most forcefully to these 19th century followers of Stone and Campbell by the response to the Apostle Peter’s Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:37-38: *when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘what should we do.’* This, declared the followers of Stone and Campbell, was the way to faith. In the two generations after Campbell, the reasonable faith defended by him began to unravel. In the second generation, Robert Milligan and J.W. McGarvey placed traditional faith in a rational frame. The third generation, Edward Scribner Ames, through the Campbell Institute, was representative of another approach in which faith was replaced by reason. What began in the first generation as a synthesis of faith and reason was by the third generation tending toward a rationalistic faith among conservatives—and faith in reason among liberals.

Attempts to establish some internal denominational authority and structure clashed with egalitarian values and democratic or congregational polity—a tension that has been forever present within the Stone-Campbell movement. And the movement has not completely recovered from the early 20th century theological debate on the subject of faith and reason. So we are grateful to Kent Ellett and Joe Blosser, two very promising young scholars, for shedding light on these two historic and lingering issues in the culture of the Stone-Campbell movement.

D. Duane Cummins

**AGITATOR OF IDENTITY:  
THE EFFECT OF THE CAMPBELL INSTITUTE  
ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

Joe Blosser\*

The Campbell Institute emerged during the years of transition and conflict between the death of the Movement's founders and the 1960s restructuring of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Finding its purpose in the example of Alexander Campbell, the Institute became a forum for debating issues of Disciples ecclesiology. Though the group itself lacked formal power to shape the Movement, the scholarship, dialogue, and fellowship it engendered helped its members become prominent ministers, editors, and leaders. The group and its members faced much opposition from others in the Movement who opposed their liberal publications and progressive bent. However, the debates and controversies ignited by the Campbell Institute pushed Disciples to a greater understanding of their identity as an evolving church that encourages open and free dialogue.

The Campbell Institute was the brainchild of five men studying at Yale University in 1892. One of these men later noted that they were "drawn together by common religious interest and acquaintance and also by the fact that they were all westerners making their first adjustment to the New England academic environment."<sup>1</sup> In the next few years, most of them matriculated at the University of Chicago where the Disciples Divinity House began in 1894. Finding "kindred spirits" at Chicago, these young men laid the foundations of what would soon become the Campbell Institute. The Institute officially organized at the National Convention of the Disciples of Christ in Springfield, Illinois on October 19, 1896.<sup>2</sup> Fourteen charter members forged the Institute: Edward Scribner Ames, Burriss Jenkins, Hiram Van Kirk, C.C. Rowleson, O.T. Morgan, Clinton Lockhart, George A. Campbell, Levi Marshall, C.A. Young, J.D. Forrest, Herbert L. Willett, Leslie W. Morgan, W.E. Garrison, and the first female member, A.A. Forrest.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout its existence, Article II of the Institute's Constitution guided the organization. In its original form (only slightly altered over the years) it read:

The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To encourage and deepen and keep alive a scholarly spirit and to enable its members to help each other to a riper scholarship by the free discussion of vital problems.
2. To promote quiet selfculture and the development of a higher spirituality both among the members and among the churches with which they shall come in contact.
3. To encourage positive productive work with a view to making contributions of permanent value to the literature and thought of the Disciples of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The Institute sought to encourage scholarship, fellowship, and dialogue to

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\*Joe Blosser is a student at Vanderbilt Divinity School. This article was the winner of the Historical Society's 2003 Lockridge Ward Wilson Student Essay Award.

increase ecclesial spirituality and self-understanding that would result in action. The first president of the Institute, Edward Scribner Ames, wrote in his autobiography that “[t]he great purpose of the institute is to gain some insight into all the human needs of the world, and also to find and apply so far as possible whatever alleviating and curative remedies are available through any agency, human or divine.”<sup>5</sup> The unique character of the Institute’s purpose derived from the members’ integration of the ideals of the Movement’s founders with the reality of a changing world.

### **The Founders’ Influence on the Institute**

The founders of the Stone-Campbell Movement were influenced by Enlightenment philosopher John Locke’s view of the reasonableness of Christianity and the later Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. By “common sense,” the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796) meant that people universally accept the data provided by the senses they share with all humans as reliable signs of external reality. Both Locke and the Common Sense philosophers supported the view that readers can understand the scriptures. Eugene Boring observes that Barton Stone believed “the prerequisite to authentic biblical interpretation is not specialized theological training or ecclesiastical traditions, but ‘common sense.’”<sup>6</sup> Stephen Sprinkle notes that “[a]s a child of the Lockean Enlightenment, [Alexander Campbell] had high confidence in the reasoning ability of common Christians.”<sup>7</sup>

In June of 1820, Alexander Campbell established a precedent for future Disciples by publicly debating Presbyterian minister John Walker. Alexander’s five public debates between 1820 and 1843 affirmed his belief that “orderly discussion on clearly stated propositions was one of the ways by which biblical truth might be advanced.”<sup>8</sup> These debates set forth public dialogue as a path to religious truth and understanding for the Movement.

Following the death of Alexander Campbell in 1866, tensions, change, and division beset the Movement. The unity for which Stone and Campbell had struggled was elusive, but Campbell’s confidence in reason and debate continued to mark the Movement. Leaders of the second generation followed the ideologies of the founders but in a new context: Charles Darwin had offered a different explanation for the origin of life, higher biblical criticism developed, and the missions movement brought about contact with other world religions.<sup>9</sup>

The way members of the Movement responded to these changes would shape the Movement well into the twentieth century. “As an intellectual leader, Alexander Campbell had no successor” therefore, Eugene Boring argued, “[w]ith the death of Campbell, the glue that held the movement together had departed, and the leadership shifted to the Editor Bishops, the colleges, and the Campbell Institute.”<sup>10</sup> Without a charismatic leader to usher everyone along the same path, Disciples began to explore alternative possibilities. Some believed most in the founders’ desire to restore the New Testament Church. Others embraced progressive movements like the new science and biblical criticism. This paper focuses on progressive Disciples associated with the Campbell Institute. These progressive Disciples often sought education outside of the Movement’s colleges where they encountered a rapidly changing world of scholarship. In these ecumenical educational environments, they began the difficult task of

dialoguing with others and reforming their understanding of scripture, religion, and the world.

Bridging the academic, progressive, secular world and their life of faith proved difficult for these Stone-Campbell Christians, but they found strength in community. Though it took several years for the Campbell Institute to organize officially, the group became a home for many Stone-Campbell Christians struggling with the nexus of academic and church life. Several of the founding members epitomized this life of struggle, and their influence still permeates the Disciples stream of the Movement. The Campbell Institute largely owed its existence and influence to three powerful personalities.

### **Guiding Personalities**

Among the Campbell Institute's formative leaders stands Edward Scribner Ames (1870-1958). After completing his B.D. at Yale, Ames moved to Chicago where he became the Head Resident of the Disciples Divinity House while he worked on his Ph.D. at the University. Called the "*first* professional philosopher-theologian" among the Disciples, Ames has been described as a radical, modernist, humanist.<sup>11</sup> Though professionally a scholar, Ames' influence on the Institute reached beyond his academic career. He was elected the first president of the organization, edited the Institute's journal for nearly 20 years, was Dean of the Disciples Divinity House from 1927 to 1945, and ministered to Hyde Park Church of Disciples (later known as the University Church of Disciples of Christ) during these same years.<sup>12</sup> This "God-damn good [preacher]" helped guide a new wave of liberal Disciples into the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

Like Ames, Herbert Lockwood Willett (1864-1944) received his B.D. at Yale and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Shortly after moving to Chicago in 1893, Willett became the first Dean of the Disciples Divinity House and pastor of the Hyde Park church. Willett's influence, however, stemmed from his ability to interpret scripture: "A protégé of William Rainey Harper, the noted Old Testament scholar and first president of the University of Chicago, Herbert Lockwood Willett was the most influential and articulate Disciples spokesperson for the scientific study of the Bible in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."<sup>14</sup> As an editor of *The Christian Century*, he argued for a critical approach to the Bible, a liberal theological understanding of God, the centrality of Christ, and Christian unity. Willett despised creeds and believed that "the only practical plan for union was to accept the ideals of the teachings of Jesus and those of his apostles expressed in the New Testament: an emphasis on love, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and joy in service to God."<sup>15</sup> Willett's critical/scientific hermeneutic challenged the way Disciples read the Bible.

Perhaps more than any other Institute member, Winfred Ernest Garrison (1874-1969) constructed a new vision of what it meant to be a Disciple of Christ. Never a philosopher like Ames nor a biblical scholar like Willett, Garrison was a church historian. He received his undergraduate degree at Yale and his B.D. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Garrison served as the Dean of the Disciples Divinity House between Willett, who retired in 1920, and Ames, who began his tenure in 1927. An editor as well as a professor, Garrison worked for his father J.H. Garrison's journal, *The Christian-Evangelist*. He edited the

Campbell Institute's journal, and following in Willett's steps, Garrison became an editor for *The Christian Century*. As a historian, Garrison is best-known for his books *Religion Follows the Frontier* and *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, which he co-authored with fellow Institute member Alfred T. DeGroot.

Garrison's notoriety came with his historical work that integrated the Disciples worldview with that of other religious and secular cultures, but his theological work also affected the Movement. As Sprinkle argues, "[r]eligious movements which develop a noncreedal, nonhierarchical ethos naturally lift a historian to a high position of status and influence. This has been especially true of the Disciples of Christ, since their theological strategy was essentially based upon an ongoing conversation in congregation with the canon."<sup>16</sup> Garrison pushed the Disciples to expand their canon from believing the Bible was the sole source of authority. He argued that authority rested in the individual as he or she sought to discern truth through the lens of personal experience. This progressive theological shift from biblical inerrancy to individual experience sought to change the restoration identity and ecclesiology of the Movement. The Campbell Institute began to take shape and gain influence under the leadership of these three men.

### **The Life of the Institute**

One of the organization's first decisions concerned the admission of new members. Article III of the *1896 Constitution* merely notes that new members "shall be recommended by the executive committee and approved by a unanimous vote of those present at the regular annual meeting."<sup>17</sup> Interest in the organization soon demanded more detailed requirements. Membership was divided into four categories. "Regular Members" had to possess a B.D. or Ph.D. until 1920 when the constitution was amended to allow "any college graduate in sympathy with its purposes" to join.<sup>18</sup> The other categories of membership were "Associate Members," which included students studying for the ministry, "Co-operating Members," who were professionals sympathetic to the movement, and "Honorary Members." By 1906 the Institute boasted 101 members. This number increased by approximately 100 members per decade until the height of the Institute in the late 1940s when it reached a membership of 700.<sup>19</sup>

Though Albertina Forrest was the first secretary-treasurer, the Institute did not allow other women to join its ranks for many years. In 1936 *The Christian-Evangelist* reported that close to a third of the participants at the last Institute meeting were women, but "they may not become members." The journal chided the supposedly liberal organization, noting that "it joins company finally only with those few American die-hards who make a test of fellowship the Pauline injunction, 'Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection!'"<sup>20</sup> The Institute quietly dropped its restriction against women the following year.

Though comparatively small in membership, the Campbell Institute made its presence known throughout the world of Disciples. Hoping to become an academic force, the organization began with yearly meetings in Chicago that facilitated fellowship and the reading of academic papers. The bulletin for the 1908 annual meeting included addresses on "The Difference between Liberal Orthodoxy and Unitarianism," "The Best Training for Ministry Today," "My Sermon Topics during the Past Year," "Some Neglected Elements in Modern

Liberal Preaching,” and “The Union of Disciples and Baptists. Does it make for Progress?”<sup>21</sup> Contrary to most impressions, the membership included mainly ministers and focused almost exclusively on issues relating to the life of the church. These meetings became the Institute’s time of refueling. By its twentieth anniversary, however, the organization conceded that its “chief shortcoming . . . is that we have done so little in the way of productive scholarship.”<sup>22</sup> Rather than harping on this, the Institute reoriented its mindset to be one of fellowship, dialogue, and support for Disciples thinkers.

As a house of fellowship, the Institute found its niche. Though Institute members were prolific writers, the Institute itself functioned less as a publicist and more as an energizer. The most famous Institute gatherings were its lively midnight meetings following the annual International Convention. These meetings became notorious because of their “frank discussions,” lively topics, and engaging speakers.<sup>23</sup> *The Christian-Evangelist* noted that “[t]he popularity of these informal, wit-clashing discussions on controversial matters has grown through the years and many ‘sightseers’ crowd into the meeting place along with the members.”<sup>24</sup> In the spirit of open dialogue and debate forged by Alexander Campbell, the difficult issues of the church were addressed. Metaphysical or theological issues rarely made the agenda; rather, issues of baptism, social action, unity, and biblical interpretation topped the bulletin. These lively sessions fed members new ideas and arguments for future study and brought tensions in the church to light.

These debates exemplified the Institute’s motto: Freedom and Truth.<sup>25</sup> All members were free to hold their own position, but their duty to the truth demanded that they support it rationally. The Institute claimed members from a wide variety of theological positions, and the members rarely reached agreement. Wrote Willett, “[t]he Institute contains many scholars and many varieties of opinion. It is not a school of thought but a school of thinkers.” Just as Alexander Campbell believed that an historical (or, dispensational) and literary interpretation of the Bible, coupled with a teachable Christian spirit, would result in agreement regarding apostolic practices, Institute members believed that everyone eventually would come to the same truth if they were free to express their opinions. One Institute member asserted that the truth would make itself known and “[required] no special nurse.”<sup>26</sup> Though this belief may seem as naïve as Campbell’s position on the perspicuity of scripture, the Institute’s methods for achieving this goal continue to permeate the Disciples’ quest for understanding and consensus.

The Institute sought to remain an open forum for debate and dialogue. The group as a whole avoided ascribing to a unified truth by placing the sole responsibility for all publications on the author alone—the entire membership never claimed ownership of a particular argument or position.<sup>27</sup> This concept of individual responsibility for one’s work applied to the Institute’s journals. Published first in 1903 as *The Quarterly Bulletin of the Campbell Institute*, the organization’s journal changed names many times, was published monthly, quarterly, and irregularly, and even appeared for many years as a page in another publication known as *The Christian*. However, the journal title most associated with the Institute is *The Scroll*. Like the Institute itself and the *Bulletin* before it, early editions of *The Scroll* were divided into “Chambers.” Though changing

in emphasis over the years, specialized groups of members studied and wrote in areas like: Old Testament Biblical Theology; New Testament Biblical Theology; Church History, Missions, and Comparative Religion; Philosophy, Theology, and Education; Practical Theology, Polity, and Sociology.<sup>28</sup> Each chamber published an article in every journal until *The Scroll* changed format, but these emphases continued to pervade the group's publishing.

### Dealing with Controversy

Liberal articles in *The Scroll* drew a flurry of controversy to the Campbell Institute. Perhaps the most adamant opponent of the Institute and its publications was J.W. McGarvey, the president of The College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky. McGarvey expressed his conservative understanding of the Bible through frequent articles in the *Christian Standard*. This journal once had been considered progressive under the leadership of its first editor Isaac Errett, but it became the voice of conservative Disciples by the 1900s. As such, it launched a vigorous attack against *The Scroll*, arguing that “[m]embers of the Institute may say that they are not responsible for the constitution and that editorials only express individual views, but the fact is the Institute publishes the constitution and *The Scroll*, and is therefore responsible for their expressions and their teaching.”<sup>29</sup> The *Standard* charged that the Institute had “split churches, wrecked [sic] colleges, shattered the faith of young people whose lives were dedicated to the ministry, deprecated the work of our missionary societies, and kept the entire brotherhood in a state of ferment.”<sup>30</sup> Angered by the influence of the Institute members on the church at large, the *Standard* published the members' names so local congregations could be aware of the “evil” in their midst.

With major figures on both sides of the debate, the issue of biblical criticism seemed particularly divisive. While most Institute members embraced higher criticism and argued from there over how to interpret the text, many conservatives upheld the founders' use of text criticism to uncover the authoritative New Testament pattern. Top-flight biblical scholars epitomized both positions. Conservative J.W. McGarvey and liberal H.L. Willett were well-educated Disciples who thought theologically about the biblical text, but their differences were intense. While McGarvey opposed a scientific view of the Bible, “Willett accepted the theory [of evolution] and interpreted the Bible in relation to it.” This led to his progressive understanding of revelation, as opposed to McGarvey's belief “that biblical revelation be understood in positivistic, static, factual terms.”<sup>31</sup> The notion of a changing divine plan did not mesh with McGarvey's system. Frequently in the *Standard*, McGarvey charged that Willett and the Institute “had been inspired by the three evil spirits of evolution, higher criticism and the new theology.”<sup>32</sup> The continual criticism of the *Standard* had detrimental effects on the Institute.

Under duress from these attacks, the Institute suspended the publication of *The Scroll* in 1908. In its 1917 twentieth anniversary book, *Progress*, Ames noted that the suspension of *The Scroll* occurred when “*The Christian Century* came under its present editorial management, giving more frequent and more popular expression to the same general views.”<sup>33</sup> *The Christian Century* quickly noted the end of *The Scroll* and affirmed the Institute's purpose: “The basis of

their fellowship in the organization is declared to be not similarity of thought, but a desire to know the truth and to seek it with an open mind and by the methods of scholarship."<sup>34</sup> Many of the Institute's goals and members guided *The Christian Century*. This journal held strong against "the dogmatic atmosphere of the *Christian Standard*."<sup>35</sup> It published Willett's articles on biblical criticism, many pieces like "Social Duty, Education, and Religion," and even an article integrating Darwin's beliefs with the Christian system.<sup>36</sup> This openness to progressive ideas helped make *The Christian Century* an influential liberal Protestant magazine.

Less openly supportive of the Institute than *The Christian Century*, *The Christian-Evangelist* served mainly as a spectator informing its readers about the Institute's happenings. The first mention of the Institute in *The Christian-Evangelist* occurred in 1907. Because of "misrepresentation concerning the purpose and work of the Institute," a list of participants and part of the constitution were printed to clarify the group's intent.<sup>37</sup> This journal at times challenged the Institute's "liberalism" over issues like the exclusion of women and its "high-browed" requirement of a college education.<sup>38</sup> But for the most part, the journal rarely made editorial comments about the Institute. *The Christian-Evangelist* published minutes of the meetings and announcements of future gatherings. It affirmed the Institute's open style of debate and noted that "[n]obody except a bigot or a moron wants to hear exactly his own views aired from the platform year after year world without end. The Restoration fathers did not always agree among themselves and certainly were willing to listen to opposing points of view."<sup>39</sup> The journal also supported global mission work, social justice, and unity. All of these were issues of interest to Institute members. In 1906 J.H. Garrison, editor of *The Christian-Evangelist*, was "declared an honorary member of the Institute."<sup>40</sup> This fueled the fire of McGarvey and the *Standard* who accused *The Christian-Evangelist* of being in consort with the Institute. J.H. Garrison replied that while he admired the young men in the Institute for their "character and ability. They understand quite well that we to [sic] do not share all their views, for we have met with them once or twice and have contested their positions."<sup>41</sup>

The Institute endured the anger and contempt of the *Standard* and the conservative faction it represented. A conservative perspective was pronounced by a contributor to the *Standard* who remarked upon hearing that *The Scroll*, like *The Christian Century*, would be published in Chicago: "It is published in Chicago! Can any good thing possibly come out of Chicago?"<sup>42</sup> At one time, the attacks of the *Standard* grew so intense that Institute member Herbert Moninger was asked to resign from his job with the Standard Publishing Company. Writer and member Stephen J. Corey noted that the *Standard* continued its attacks on the Institute "with unabated zeal" for over fifty years: "[the Institute] has been held up to view by the *Christian Standard* as one of the main reasons for division among the Disciples of Christ."<sup>43</sup> The *Standard* alleged that the Institute was using its power and "well-intrenched [sic] propaganda to encourage unsound teachings in our colleges and to force upon our congregations the 'open membership plan.'"<sup>44</sup> The Institute drew fire not only for its progressive mindset, which included its members' embrace of the new science and higher biblical criticism, but also for the way these views began affecting the ecclesiology of

the movement.

The Institute and its publications may not have caused such a stir if it were not for the prominence of Institute members throughout the leadership of the church. Writing for the *Standard*, Ralph Clark sought to expose what he saw as the Institute's underhanded attempts to control the movement. After noting that Campbell Institute members composed only 6.42% of people listed in the Year Book, Clark created a chart showing their disproportionate claim on leadership positions. This small group of individuals constituted 47% of the executive committee for the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ, 75% of the officers for the Board of Higher education, 75% of the officers for the Association of the Promotion of Christian Unity, and 60% of the officers for the Commission on Budgets and Promotional Relationships. These statistics and others like them proved for Clark "that the strength of the Campbell Institute in the agencies reporting to the International Convention is entirely out of proportion to the numerical strength of its members." A major threat posed by the Campbell Institute to Clark and others aligned with the *Standard* was that it "does not represent the historical position of the Restoration movement, and possibly because of their influence, the International Convention and many of its affiliated agencies no longer maintain our historic position."<sup>45</sup> It was true. If one identified the historic position of the Disciples with a conservative view of the restoration of New Testament Christianity, the progressive members of the Campbell Institute were seeking to redefine the Disciples church.

Part of the Institute's vibrancy came from its understanding that someday it would dissolve. As early as 1919, the Institute published an entire edition of *The Scroll* by the title "Shall the Campbell Institute Disband?" Though the strongest it had ever been, the group questioned whether the good it provided outweighed the controversy it caused. Seeing no other organization like it, the journal argued that "[t]he Disciples began their history in free discussion," and the Institute was needed to continue this tradition, enlighten believers, and foster unity. After all, the Institute, like the founders, believed more unity was found in free expression than in suppression. The Institute's power "will not be found in its size but in its freedom." Knowing that "[w]hen an organism ceases to be of value it goes its own way," the Institute fought and advocated its values for over half a century.<sup>46</sup> However, its close association with specific personalities, philosophical ideologies, and a single educational institution "ill equipped it for survival when the early leadership passed from the scene."<sup>47</sup> Continually in financial trouble from the 1940s on, the Institute even stopped meeting for a time in the early 1950s.<sup>48</sup> In 1953, president S. Marion Smith wrote in a letter to the members that "[t]he Campbell Institute is not dead. It has been hibernating and is now emerging full of vim and vinegar – ready for a new era."<sup>49</sup> The new era was brief. Though occasionally active with a few popular editions of *The Scroll*, the Institute slowly dwindled until 1975 when its members voted to disband at the San Antonio Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The last issue of *The Scroll* was a historical essay on the Institute's influence published in the spring of 1978. After writing this last chapter of its life, the Institute followed the words of Barton Stone and "[sank] into union with the Body of Christ at large."<sup>50</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

The influence of the Institute contributed to controversies that likely intensified the already growing divisions within the Disciples. The Institute, however, engendered a free spirit of debate that joined many Disciples in fellowship, faith, and purpose. For decades, the Institute argued for the individual's freedom of belief and the pursuit of truth. Ames wrote in his auto-biography that "[n]o one could be associated with these men in their meetings, or share their thought in any way, without feeling their sincerity and unselfishness."<sup>51</sup> The passionate language of both the Institute's publications and the *Standard* illustrates the degree of conviction on both sides. It truly is remarkable that within one movement people freely expressed such divergent positions. On a smaller scale, Institute meetings epitomized the type of open, scholarly, church-centered debate that many Disciples yearn for today.<sup>52</sup>

Institute members epitomized strength amidst criticism, and it was this strength, not agreement on specific issues, that unified them. In the contemporary quest for wholeness, Disciples cannot afford to lose this strength. Their identity resides in the power of the covenantal quest, not in specific theological agreement. The Campbell Institute taught the Disciples a new style of being church, a style that involved confronting adversity through scholarship, fellowship, and dialogue. As a seeking church, a strength of the Disciples lies in its ability to facilitate its members' continual struggle for "Truth and Freedom."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Edward Scribner Ames, "History of the Campbell Institute," in *Progress: Anniversary Volume of the Campbell Institute on the Completion of Twenty Years of History*, edited by Herbert L. Willett, Orvis F. Jordan, and Charles M. Sharpe (Chicago: Christian Century, 1917), 42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Biographical information on the Institute was compiled from the following sources: Herbert L. Willett, Orvis F. Jordan, and Charles M. Sharpe, eds., *Progress: Anniversary Volume of the Campbell Institute on the Completion of Twenty Years of History* (Chicago: Christian Century, 1917), 35-43; Edward Scribner Ames, "Introduction," *1896 Constitution and Prospectus of the Campbell Institute* (1896): 1; Samuel C. Pearson Jr., "The Campbell Institute: Herald of the Transformation of an American Religious Tradition," *The Scroll* 62, no. 2 (spring 1978).

<sup>3</sup>"This is a Scoop!" *The Christian-Evangelist* 76, no. 42 (October 20, 1938): 1140.

<sup>4</sup>Disciples Historical Society, File on the Campbell Institute, "Article II," *1896 Constitution and Prospectus of the Campbell Institute* (1896).

<sup>5</sup>Edward Scribner Ames, *Beyond Theology: The Autobiography of Edward Scribner Ames*, ed. Van Meter Ames (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959), 202.

<sup>6</sup>M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1997), 23.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen V. Sprinkle, *Disciples and Theology: Understanding the Faith of a People in Covenant* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 23.

<sup>8</sup>Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1975), 125.

<sup>9</sup>Charles Harvey Arnold, "The Illuminati: The Origins of Liberalism Among the

Disciples of Christ," *Encounter* 43, no. 1 (winter 1982): 3.

<sup>10</sup>Boring, 115.

<sup>11</sup>Arnold, 13, 18, 15. Ames was responsible for raising over \$10,000 for the house, which with much help, he did (Ames, *Beyond Theology*).

<sup>12</sup>Boring, 218.

<sup>13</sup>Arnold, 20.

<sup>14</sup>Leo G. Perdue, "The Formation of an Intellectual Tradition," in *A Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism: The Disciples' Relation to American Culture, 1880-1989*, edited by D. Newell Williams (St. Louis: Chalice, 1991), 72.

<sup>15</sup>Perdue, 84.

<sup>16</sup>Sprinkle, 55.

<sup>17</sup>Disciples Historical Society, *1896 Constitution*.

<sup>18</sup>Pearson, 33.

<sup>19</sup>Membership statistics compiled from Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board, 1948), 381; McAllister and Tucker 374; Willett, Jordan, and Sharpe, 49; and numerous articles in *The Christian-Evangelist*.

<sup>20</sup>"If This Be Emancipation..." *The Christian-Evangelist* 74, no. 45 (November 5, 1936): 1436. This article led into the Pauline injunction language by stating that "[a]pparently the Campbell Institute is not only ungallant, harboring a masculine superiority complex which some of our intelligent women must find rather galling. It is also in some ways thoroughly fundamentalist" (Ibid.).

<sup>21</sup>Disciples Historical Society, File on the Campbell Institute, "The Annual Meeting of the Campbell Institute," Hyde Park Church of Disciples, Chicago, Ill., July 21-24, 1908.

<sup>22</sup>Willett, Jordan, and Sharpe, 46.

<sup>23</sup>"Many Participate in Campbell Institute Sessions at Denver," *The Christian-Evangelist* 76, no. 43 (October 27, 1938): 1196.

<sup>24</sup>"Institute Draws Sightseers Again: Lively Discussions Cover Theological and Other Issues; Two Joint Sessions with D.P.F.," *The Christian-Evangelist* 79, no. 20 (May 15, 1941): 597.

<sup>25</sup>Ellsworth Faris wrote that the Institute's motto was "Freedom and Truth" in his chapter of *Progress*, edited by Willett, Jordan, and Sharpe, but Edward Scribner Ames noted in his autobiography that "[w]hen we designed a seal for the *Scroll* and for other publications of the institute, it was fun to discover how I could fit into a cross, the great Christian symbol of love and righteousness, the Greek for our motto, 'The truth shall make you free': ALHQEIA ELEUQERIA" (*Beyond Theology*, 195).

<sup>26</sup>Willett, Jordan, and Sharpe, 51.

<sup>27</sup>Ames, *Beyond Theology*, 199; Willett, Jordan, and Sharpe, 9-11.

<sup>28</sup>A combined list from the original *1896 Constitution* and a revised c. 1919 Constitution, both found at the Disciples Historical Society in the File on the Campbell Institute.

<sup>29</sup>"Who Is Responsible?" *Christian Standard* 42, no. 50 (December 15, 1906): 1917.

<sup>30</sup>"The Campbell Institute," *Christian Standard* 52, no. 48 (September 1, 1917): 1406.

<sup>31</sup>Boring, 238, 243.

<sup>32</sup>J.W. McGarvey, "The Scroll," *Christian Standard* 42 (October 20, 1906): 1579. Colby D. Hall, a professor and Dean at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, once said, "I studied under [Professor McGarvey] for three years; the only books he ever referred to were the Bible and the *Lands of the Bible*. Never did he suggest that we use the college library" (Stephen J. Corey, *Fifty Years of Attack and Controversy: The Consequences Among Disciples of Christ* [St. Louis: Committee on Publication of the Corey Manuscript, 1953], 49).

<sup>33</sup>Ames, *Progress*, 40.

<sup>34</sup>“The Campbell Institute,” *The Christian Century* 25, no. 40 (October 1, 1908): 528.

<sup>35</sup>“Outgrown Ideas of Mr. Moninger’s Book,” *The Christian Century* 25, no. 42 (October 17, 1908): 567. The *Standard* believed *The Christian Century* to be the “mouthpiece” of the Institute (“Adequate Interpretation of the Disciples,” *Christian Standard* 54, no. 28 [April 12, 1919]: 677).

<sup>36</sup>“Social Duty, Education and Religion,” *The Christian Century* 26, no. 8 (February 20, 1909): 271; “Charles Darwin,” *The Christian Century* 26, no. 8 (February 20, 1909): 273.

<sup>37</sup>“Who Are Members of the Campbell Institute,” *The Christian-Evangelist* 44, no. 8 (February 21, 1907): 246.

<sup>38</sup>“The Campbell Institute,” *The Christian-Evangelist* 74, no. 43 (October 22, 1936): 1381; “Emancipation,” 1436; “Campbell Institute Sessions Attract Hundreds of Visitors,” *The Christian-Evangelist* 75, no. 44 (November 4, 1937): 1412; Frederic D. Kershner, “As I Think On These Things,” *The Christian-Evangelist* 82, no. 45 (November 8, 1944): 1073.

<sup>39</sup>Kershner, 1073.

<sup>40</sup>Pearson, 19.

<sup>41</sup>J.H. Garrison, “Bro. Garrison’s Answer,” *Christian Standard* 43, no. 3 (January 19, 1907): 96.

<sup>42</sup>Pearson, 14.

<sup>43</sup>Corey, 19.

<sup>44</sup>“The Time Has Come For Action,” *Christian Standard* 53, no. 51 (September 21, 1918): 1523.

<sup>45</sup>Ralph Clark, “Campbell Institute Influence in ‘Brotherhood Organizations,’” *Christian Standard*, 80 (October 20, 1945): 663.

<sup>46</sup>“Shall the Campbell Institute Disband?” *The Scroll* 15, no. 6 (March 1919): 128, 134.

<sup>47</sup>Pearson, 42.

<sup>48</sup>Always in good spirits, Institute financial secretaries became legendary for their poetry. Fiscal poetry contests even arose, including fabulous ditties like: “A preacher whose first name was N8, / Persisted in paying dues L8, / His procrastination / Caused our printer starvation, / Oh! What a horrible F8!” (by Frank N. Gardner), and “With Liberalism on the rocks / Back-stabbed by Neo-Orthodox— / With “God is Dead” stinking up the heavens, / And theologs at sixes and sevens— / What can the average person do? / Phew! // He puts his money on the line, / ‘Three dollars!’ Says Paul Crow, ‘Or six, or nine!’ / *The Scroll* goes on, and stumbleth not, / But perilously avoids dry rot. / Non-payer, the Treasurer on you doth cry / Fie!” (Disciples Historical Society, File on the Campbell Institute, Personal Correspondence).

<sup>49</sup>Disciples Historical Society, File on the Campbell Institute, Letter from S. Marion Smith to the Institute Members, 1953.

<sup>50</sup>McAllister and Tucker, 78.

<sup>51</sup>Ames, *Beyond Theology*, 194.

<sup>52</sup>The entire Disciples denomination now is responsible for the open debate and dialogue that once took place within the Institute. The church today faces difficult problems brought about by a rapidly changing culture. One current solution is the process of discernment, which feeds on the Institute’s model of open dialogue. This process intends to engender open, informed debate, and, like the Institute, it draws a great deal of controversy. Discernment, however, is limited in scope. Dialogue, reason, and free expression must pervade all aspects of church life.

**Joe and Nancy Stalcup**  
**Local Church Historians' Seminar**  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society  
Nashville, Tennessee  
February 10 - 12, 2005

Speakers Include:

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**Richard Harrison**, Senior Minister, Seventh Street  
Church of Christ, Richmond, VA

**Sara Harwell**, Director of Library and Archives,  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society

**Carol Roberts**, Director, Preservation Services,  
Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville

**Margery Sly**, Deputy Executive Director, Presbyterian  
Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA

**Bill Sumners**, Director of Library and Archives,  
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**JEFFERSONIAN EVANGELICAL:  
CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IN THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF BARTON W. STONE**  
Kent Ellett\*

There was a revival in the age of Jefferson. The religious excitement which overtook the western reserve at the dawn of the 19th century was shaped by and in turn furthered a distinctly Republican view of civil and religious liberty. Barton Stone and his "New Light" Presbyterian cohorts who promoted the revival were, as Ronald Byars points out, initially motivated by a passion for Christian liberty<sup>1</sup> Only three years after his departure to the Shakers, Richard McNemar described the fledgling "new light" church as a "new republic," and confessed that he, even in 1808, found it "difficult to paint the zeal for liberty, and just indignation against the old aristocratic spirit, which glowed through every member of this new confederacy."<sup>2</sup> The theology of Stone and of the Christians as a whole was consonant with the republicanism that dominated moral and political discourse at the time.

Of course this is not to imply that Jefferson, himself, exerted some direct influence on Stone's thought. Stone was educated in a revivalist, not a rationalist setting. Though widely suspected of infidelity and to a large degree misrepresented by his Federalist and Congregational enemies, the President was very guarded about disclosing his religious views.<sup>3</sup> The President regarded a multiplicity of sects as desirable, but the news of Cane Ridge would hardly have suited him.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Ongoing Revolution**

Nonetheless, the revival took place in the age of Jefferson, and it effectively responded to or embraced the Republican ethos of the time. Richard McNemar believed that the reexamination of Scripture which took place among the Christians before and during the revival was a response to deism.<sup>5</sup> The revivalists self-consciously were furthering what they considered to be many elements of Jeffersonian democracy while wresting these from their deistic foundations.

Thomas Paine had been the most widely read author in early Kentucky. His *Age of Reason* was very popular, and answers to it were widely circulated. During the 1790's Democratic societies in support of the French Republic rose up in Lexington, Georgetown and Paris.<sup>6</sup> Yet Dumas Malone notes that by 1801 deism was not as much in fashion as it had been a generation earlier. If that is true it is largely because men like Stone effectively developed an approach to Scripture more consistent with Enlightenment rationality and embraced a Republican ethos that won the day for evangelicals. Even the most bitter Presbyterian opponents of the revival confessed that however much confusion and heresy reigned, the number of avowed rationalists, deists, and skeptics shrunk toward zero after Cane Ridge.<sup>7</sup> Yet many evangelicals who rejected Jefferson's deism, still deeply shared in his egalitarian moral vision. Difficulty with the Kentucky Constitution and land titles contributed to an obsession with law, politics and the Enlightenment's conception of human liberty.<sup>8</sup> When Spain showed signs of resisting the acquisition of Louisiana, business stopped, recruitment began, and the "spirit of 76" flamed in the woods of western America, for nothing would stop the expansion of Jefferson's "empire for liberty."<sup>9</sup>

Stone, who grew up during the Revolution, even hearing the roar of cannon at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, confessed in his biography late in his life, "I drank deeply into the Spirit of liberty."<sup>10</sup> He called his withdraw from the jurisdiction of the

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Kentucky Synod a “declaration of independence,” and requested that the *Apology of the Springfield Presbytery* be included in his biography.<sup>11</sup> J.A. Gano, a student of Stone and always a little more over-stated than Stone, himself, called the *Apology* the first declaration of religious freedom in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>12</sup> Robert Marshall, who wrote the piece for the new Presbytery deliberately borrowed language from the Declaration of Independence. It is a piece beginning with a statement of “causes of separation” and ending with an appeal to a “candid” reader and a “pledge” of continued service.<sup>13</sup> In it Marshall describes how McNemar, Stone, Dunlavy, Thompson and himself were deprived of due process under the Presbyterian constitution. “They saw the arm of ecclesiastical authority raised to crush [them].”<sup>14</sup> Marshall continues, “It is the inalienable right of every moral agent to withdraw from that society, when the rights of conscience are invaded. If the Presbyterian Church deprives its subjects of this privilege, it must be tyrannical.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the Newlight or Christian Church was the product of a Revolutionary generation, consumed with individual liberty. As Robert Marshall and John Thompson declared in 1811, the *The Apology and Last Will and Testament* were an “exercise of our liberty of conscience as free Americans, and as free members of the Newlight, or Christian Church.”<sup>16</sup> Stone called the struggle of the Christian connection a “struggle for Christian liberty,”<sup>17</sup> and as John Rogers pointed out in an 1828 discourse recommended by Stone, civil and religious liberty were “intimately connected”—they had to “stand or fall together.”<sup>18</sup> If President Jefferson could affirm, “that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion...was a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all religious liberty,”<sup>19</sup> then the Christians would affirm that the same was true of suffering the same intrusions from the Synod of Kentucky. Stone would write in his fights against creeds, “if [a creed] be not supported by civil power; but by ecclesiastical authority alone; still the [tyranny] is not altered. The non-believer of the creed suffers the pain of being excluded from the society of his heart... and must bear the reproach of a heretic.”<sup>20</sup> Stone and the signers of the *Last Will and Testament* saw themselves as extending the same kind of religious liberty and toleration within the church that the Constitution had provided for citizens of the state.

The language of the *Last Will and Testament* bears a striking resemblance to the first chapter of the *Form of Government* of the Presbyterian Church entitled, *Preliminary Principles*. This introductory chapter was added by the Synod in Philadelphia in 1788 after the passage of the United States Constitution and during the debate about its adoption. In this chapter, the Presbyterian synod was unanimously of the opinion that they did not wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power. Each denomination should maintain its own system of “*internal government*” where it elected the persons who would exercise religious authority from within that particular religious society. And all authority that would be exercised within a denominational structure was “*delegated authority*”—authority given to it by the members of that society as governed by the principles of Holy Scripture. Thus, in the Presbyterian *Form of Government* there was a call for all religious societies (denominations) to exercise “*mutual forbearance*” towards each other.

McNemar in writing the *Last Will and Testament* made clever use of this language, extending its use to the congregational and individual levels. He rejected the notion of “*delegated authority*” altogether, writing that “each particular church ...should henceforth never delegate her right of government.” Although no presbytery ever formally had any power to make church law, its “*delegated*” “*right of judging*”<sup>21</sup> which laws are and are not made in Scripture, in the view of Stone and others, had been abused. The *Last Will and Testament* accuses Presbyterians of doing just what the *Form of Government* expressly prohibited them to do, namely, “make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the same “*mutual forbearance*” and toleration of diversity that the *Form of Government* called for when it called for the equal

and common standing of all denominations in the eyes of the civil power, the Christians were now asking "the preachers and people" in general to exercise within the church.<sup>23</sup>

There were, of course, social and environmental factors that made such a crusade for freedom of conscience seem necessary. First, there was the revival itself and the diversity of the population on the Western Reserve. Scotch-Irishbyterians were losing their social homogeneity. Compact ethnic communities were quickly broken down as Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian families all took up land contiguously on the frontier. Revivals such as Cane Ridge only exaggerated such pluralism so that the exercise of liberty of conscience among such a diverse community was needed. Stone, perhaps more than others, was aware of this need, and when the operations of the Spirit at Cane Ridge happened among "every class of people,"<sup>24</sup> he and others were sure that God was calling the church to practice a new unity in tolerant diversity in order to perpetuate the revival. For the rest of his life, liberty and union would be inextricably intertwined themes.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Progress of Light**

Yet, Stone's acceptance of ecstatic and emotional experience should not be mistaken as an unbridled emotionalism. Stone shared a Jeffersonian confidence in reason. The Revolution seemed evidence of what common sense could do in creating political liberty. In Jefferson's words the Revolution was a signal to arouse men to "burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves." Light had restored "the free right to unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened or are opening ...."<sup>26</sup> At nearly the same time Stone would write about Christians in America, "they are breaking the man-made fetters by which they have been long bound."<sup>27</sup>

The early Republic widely believed it possible to transcend one's schema in order to peer objectively into truth. Stone was contending for "the Bible alone, and liberty from the [creedal] shackles of men."<sup>28</sup> Marshall and Thompson knew too well that escaping one's subjective paradigm was easier said than done. By 1811 they had come to fear Stone and "the Christians were every bit as involved in a new system, as any were in an old one."<sup>29</sup> But Stone, although always careful to avoid what he often called the "spirit of infallibility," still believed that creedal formulations could be avoided and the gospel could be perceived "untrammelled by the systems and notions of men."<sup>30</sup> When this was accomplished, "how soon the dark clouds of error [would] fly before the rays of truth! How soon would the divided flock of the great Shepherd, hear his voice and flow together unto him!"<sup>31</sup>

If the French Enlightenment was confident of rendering mysterious understandings of the world superfluous, in America, evangelicals like Stone, influenced by 18th century rationalism, sought to discredit mysterious understandings of Scripture. As long as the light of God was obscured "under the impression that it is a book of mysteries, understood only by a few learned ministers," Christians would remain devoted to their sectarian allegiances, with their liberty lying "prostrated at the feet of ecclesiastical demagogues."<sup>32</sup> But the light was dawning. If in France the Enlightenment undermined Scripture, on the frontier evangelicals influenced by rationalism were seeking to properly explicate it and give it to the people. Either way, great liberating change was on the horizon.<sup>33</sup>

And so, the revival itself fit in with the millennial expectations that were already present in the Republican culture at large. Jefferson could write in 1801, "We can no longer say that there is nothing New under the sun. For this whole chapter of the history of man is new. The great extent of our republic is new. Its sparse habitation is new. The mighty wave of public opinion which has rolled over it is new...."<sup>34</sup> Cane Ridge only increased this sense of heightened expectation. Stone would later publish in his *Reply* that his exhortations to the people to labor after the spirit of Jesus as the

only bond of union was “not vain imaginations for God is now about to take the earth.”<sup>35</sup> McNemar wrote of this time among the Christians: “In a word, all nature seemed to be impregnated with a new and spiritual quality, which rendered every object and every transaction presented to the mind, whether sleeping or waking, susceptible of some signification....”<sup>36</sup> Stone was not quite so pronounced in expressing his expectation, but the exercises and transformations of character which took place on Cane Ridge seemed to mark for him a new working of the Spirit which would bring about Christian liberty and union. After the dust had settled a few years later, Marshall and Thompson didn’t like the new libertine order that had been created, and in seeking a reconciliation with the Presbyterians admitted that they had “confidently thought that the Millennium was at hand, and that a glorious church would soon be formed....”<sup>37</sup> Undoubtedly the early Newlight Christians thought they were reigning in a new era where the “oppressed could go free and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.” Those who didn’t see the changes as liberating were merely told to “behold the signs of the times.”<sup>38</sup>

### A God Common Sense Could Love

In the years following the revival Stone further developed his theology and conception of human liberty. Above all, true freedom was loving Jesus Christ, and knowing that one is loved by him. As long as the attentions were fixed upon divisive issues they were not fixed upon the saving Christ. In a discourse of which Stone heartily approved, John Rogers asked, “under the preaching of such a sermon [bent on winning the doctrinal argument] did you ever see a congregation bathed in tears? Did you ever hear a sinner exclaim “what must I do to be saved?””<sup>39</sup> Stone’s churches deliberately sought to break through divisive arguments about abstract divinity so people would be freed to respond to Christ.

The light of the Bible, when not distorted by “polemic and obscure divinity which disturbed the mind,”<sup>40</sup> was capable of freeing the mind and the soul to love God. The enlightened common sense popularized by the American Revolution was in deep conflict with the divinity that had not troubled previous generations of evangelicals. Calvinism was a “labyrinth” for Stone<sup>41</sup> because it contained paradoxical, or in his view, contradictory truth claims that left him “bewildered” in a spiritual crisis. Stone could not reconcile the doctrine of the trinity with his version of enlightenment rationality. Stone set about dismantling Calvinism because it embarrassed the mind and portrayed God as an arbitrary wrathful tyrant whom no rational person could love.

In many ways, the New Light Christians were putting a democratic spin on the gospel. If Stone’s God was not different from the God of Jonathan Edwards, at least he was now openly sympathetic to republican sensibilities—a God most good Democrats could embrace.

“Christ comes, not with a rod of iron...threatening instant destruction to the contemner of his laws; and thus coercing subjection to his government. But he comes in mercy, and in accents of love and pity, by mild but powerful persuasiveness, he addresses himself to the understandings, the consciences... and thus destroys their opposition, and leads them joyful captives of his holy will.”<sup>42</sup>

In a *Compendious View of the Gospel* Stone rejected the Calvinist doctrines of election and reprobation not only because God’s love for all was rationally inconsistent with damning the better part of humanity, but because such a picture of God made it impossible to love him. He asks, “Could God damn a soul for not having faith when he had it in his own power to give or withhold at sovereign pleasure? With equal propriety he might damn an individual for creating a world. For, according to the theory, the one is as much above the power as the other.”<sup>43</sup> If a person was unable to believe the scriptures and love God it was either because the scriptures were incredible or that the sinner has no capacity to believe. Either way for God to still condemn them for what

they are unable to do “is to make him a God of matchless cruelty, tyranny and injustice.”<sup>44</sup>

By making conversion dependent on faith and making faith dependent simply on the power of the testimony of the New Testament witness, Stone believed he had freed people to believe in God “*now*.” The rapid conversions at the revival led him to believe, despite the objections of the Calvinist divines, that the Westminster Confession “subjected many of the pious” who wanted to believe but had no basis for believing they had been joined with Christ, to a “spirit of bondage.”<sup>45</sup> They, in other words had no “foundation or real grounds for faith.”<sup>46</sup> Stone, himself, had gone through an agonizing period where he sought God’s assurance, and could not find it. This was unnecessary, for God loved all sinners—not a few. For Stone this was a much more lovable God, and the heart that was touched by such a message was completely free to embrace God and be assured of its saved condition. This view of the gospel set people “free from bondage, fear, and condemnation” and brought them the security of the marriage union with the “second husband.” Before this they were all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death, but “seeing Jesus pass through death they lose all their fears and like Stephen, they look up into heaven and rejoice.”<sup>47</sup>

In addition, the early Christians believed Calvinism also “strengthened sinners in unbelief.”<sup>48</sup> Frontier preachers were often repulsed by sayings like these, “if I am saved, I shall be saved,” and “I await the effectual call.”<sup>49</sup> Stone believed his biblical doctrine of faith was cutting through such excuses in order to free all people to believe and love the God who loves all sinners.

Subsequently, his rejection of substitutionary atonement was motivated not so much by adherence to Lockean rationalism as much as it was motivated because these doctrines were thought to be divisive interpretations of biblical language, not themselves in the text, and because Stone’s own sensibilities were offended by the notion of “proxy” suffering. “These heart-chilling; soul revolting; God dishonoring; infidel making things are not once found in the Bible...”<sup>50</sup> And since it was only a view of the “holiness, goodness, love and free, unmerited grace and mercy of God which produces true conviction and true repentance, and which humbles the heart and makes him willing to depart from all iniquity,”<sup>51</sup> the task of theology for Stone was to present a biblical vision of Jesus Christ “untrammelled by the doctrines of men” so the soul might fall in love with God.

### **Freedom of Conscience**

But to do that Stone and his Arminian cohorts had to have freedom of expression within Presbyterian circles—something the majority in the Synod were unwilling to tolerate. But Stone, McNemar, Dunlavy, Marshall and Thompson all found in the political discourse of the period ample resources with which to wage their crusade for freedom of conscience primarily among frontier Presbyterians. Jefferson had written, “The rights of conscience we never submitted, we could not submit. We are answerable for them to our God... Constraint may make [the dissenter] worse by making him a hypocrite, but it will never make him a truer man. It may fix him obstinately in his errors, but will not cure them. Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. Give a loose to them and they will support the true religion.... What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half of the world fools and the other half hypocrites....”<sup>52</sup>

All of these elements of Republican dogma show up in the writing of Stone against creeds. For Stone the truth or error of “speculative opinions was not the great cause of the lamentable divisions.” The real problem was of more vital importance: “It is a contention for the right of conscience, on the one hand, and a flat denial of that common right on the other.”<sup>53</sup> Forcing people out of a fellowship because they could not subscribe to a creed Stone thought an “unwarrantable intrusion upon the prerogative of Jesus

Christ.”<sup>54</sup> If the Jeffersonians sought to protect liberty with the doctrine of strict construction, Stone refused to add any requirements on the conscience that were not found in the Bible. Citing the Westminster Confession in a way that had to gall most Presbyterians, Stone said Christ alone was the “Sovereign Lord of the conscience.”<sup>55</sup>

He concurred with the popular Jeffersonian assumption that efforts to coerce opinion were inevitably counterproductive. Stone, too, believed creeds made men “slaves or hypocrites.” The fear of banishment “prostrates ones liberty and drives him into base hypocrisy.”<sup>56</sup> Creeds and debate had the tendency to fix a person in his error, but if a person were kept in a tolerant and loving community, his sin would be “smiled from existence.”<sup>57</sup> Stone observed that the nearest thing to unity of opinion he had observed “appeared in those societies in which no effort was made to be of one opinion; in which they allowed the greatest liberty of opinion and boasted more of the glory of the great [gospel] facts.”<sup>58</sup> But Marshall and Thompson, perhaps not without good cause, were frightened by the experience of diversity within the Christian Connection, and had “changed their minds about the propriety of every denomination having a specific statement of their sentiments.”<sup>59</sup> Stone however did not waver. He replied in his *Address* claiming his rejection of creeds was in the liberating tradition of the Protestant reformation:

One great objection to receiving the Bible alone without human helps or creeds is that men will think and believe so differently, that they can never enjoy Christian union among themselves. This objection is of great antiquity. It was this that induced the Popes to take the Bible from the laity, and cause them to submit to their own canons and decrees. It was this that caused so many sanguinary laws to be made in the state as well as in the church to enforce uniformity. It is this, which is yet the cause of so much altercation among Christians. But all the creeds in the world will not prevent a free man from thinking his views of truth....<sup>60</sup>

There is perhaps another reason why Stone did not waver. For as important as this tolerance was in enabling him to keep his dream for Christian unity alive, his opposition to Creeds went even deeper. In Stone’s view the creeds generally explained away the “spirituality of the Scriptures” and made orthodoxy a matter of intellectual assent. The proponents of the creed and helps would receive people as orthodox even when there was “no satisfactory evidence of real, living religion.” Confessional Christians for Stone ignored the “cementing power of living religion” in an attempt to artificially force a carnal conformity. Put bluntly, while creeds were meant to be helps that would promote unity, obscure divinity and “confessions of faith actually kept the soul away from the word of God.”<sup>61</sup> The creeds developed paradigms that blinded men to saving truth and enslaved them to a phony religiosity. If Jefferson had declared “eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the human mind,”<sup>62</sup> Stone had declared war on the creeds in order to give the heart and mind free, “untrammelled” access to the Bible.

### **Deliverance from “Power and Priestcraft”<sup>63</sup>**

It needs to be noted that Stone believed that the doctrines of Calvinism were in fact “calculated to involve the mind in mystic darkness and cool the ardor of [Christian] devotion.”<sup>64</sup> These doctrines may have been sincerely believed, but in the mind of Stone, these doctrines were “calculated” to shut down the revival, and he bluntly rebelled against such ecclesiastical authority. From the very beginning Richard McNemar said that the spirit of the Cane Ridge revival was a democratic one. “It had the tendency to put down that ministerial authority by which creeds and parties were supported and set the people at liberty.”<sup>65</sup> Later in life, for Stone the difference between Roman Catholics and

Protestants was that Rome had one Pope while the sects had many! The five points of Calvinism were tools of powerful churchmen with which they could exercise control over the church, and if the people did not cease from these “ecclesiastical demagogues” then the “schisms of the body of Christ would continue with all their attendant evils.”<sup>66</sup> While in Stone’s case he was not rebelling against all religious authority, he was rebelling against controlling structures and about the time of the *Last Will and Testament* began searching for a more liberating system of governance revealed only in the Bible.

### Limited Government

Stoneite Christians admitted that the Kingdom of God was an absolute monarchy with Christ as its head; “nevertheless,” it was argued, “so far as the administration of the affairs of the kingdom upon the earth, by human agencies, is concerned it is quite democratic.”<sup>67</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss Stone’s view of church government in any detail, but it is safe to say he came to believe some formal meetings beyond the congregational level were inherently dangerous to Christian liberty. This is what prevented very close ties with the Eastern Christians in 1826. The Eastern brethren were dazzled with the “pomp of a general conference”<sup>68</sup> which would be “drawing up *Resolves*, what the churches must do, and what the preachers must do.”<sup>69</sup> One of the reasons Stone would urge congregations to support their own evangelists was so that this would preclude the necessity of annual meetings which did nothing to promote vital piety.<sup>70</sup>

James North feels this aversion to anything but congregational church polity is observable in the *Last Will and Testament*.<sup>71</sup> Certainly McNemar, its author, had come to such convictions. His Turtle-Creek congregation had passed a minute in April before the *Last Will* was issued in June of 1804 in which the “eldership was not to form a separate body distinct from the church itself.”<sup>72</sup> It is not so clear that the other five signers of the *Last Will* were quite as sure about their rejection of Presbyterian polity in 1804. Certainly when the signers willed that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government, they were using phraseology which Presbyterians had for years used in insisting that each denomination be free from civil interference. Presbyterian churches had always chosen their own ministers, and thus the *Last Will and Testament’s* exhortation that each “church choose her own preacher” does not necessarily reflect a change in church polity. What is more, the ministers said they would “continue to assist in ordaining elders” and “in the exercise of these functions which belong to us as ministers.”<sup>73</sup> There is also the curious phrase in the *Witnesses’ Address* attached to the *Last Will* in which the authors say of themselves, “however just, therefore, our views of church government might have been, they would have still gone out as the views of a self constituted body” distinguishable from the body of Christ at large.<sup>74</sup> This perhaps suggests some disagreement about the specifics of Biblical church polity among the signers, and it is a positive statement that the document was intended primarily to promote Christian unity not to proscribe church polity.

In any case, it was not always read exclusively that way in retrospect. Marshall and Thompson in 1811 as they sought to return to the Presbyterians called the *Last Will* an “obnoxious instrument” the sentiments of which “gained ascendancy over [their] judgment” and caused them to “resign to private churches that, which, according to scripture, is the proper business of the ministry.”<sup>75</sup> By Presbyterians, the *Last Will and Testament* was seen as a renunciation of their polity, and such renunciations were in Marshall and Thompson’s view responsible for the “divisions and corruption’s, for it had put it out of our power to do anything towards keeping the church pure from an ignorant, or corrupt ministry.”<sup>76</sup> David Purviance replied to Marshall and Thompson, admitting some of the difficulties within the Christian churches, but disagreed that the cause was the absence of creedal statements and a more tightly controlled organizational structure. He wrote, “I think it dishonoring to the King and head of the church, to suppose

that the laws he has given are insufficient for the government of his kingdom.”<sup>77</sup>

Stone would have agreed with McNemar who wondered, “if the principle of love could regulate the conduct of one man why not two? And if two why not a thousand? But if the principle of love be wanting, can any external form of government and discipline make him a good husband?”<sup>78</sup> Later, Stone would similarly state, “if one church can live independent of another and be governed aright within itself a second can do likewise. And so can three hundred.”<sup>79</sup> If people would not be subject to the law of God, no amount of human coercion would make them more pious. Throughout his mature life he believed that those who advocated the use of external rules or structures beyond Scripture in order to hold people accountable not only betrayed a lack of trust in the brethren and “tight laced” the body that was made for freedom, but ignored the cementing power of true religion.

### **Aversion to Unhealthy Dependence**

Especially late in Stone’s life Christian liberty was seen as a freedom from worldly allures, which keep the heart away from God. His biography, written for his family and close associates, especially reveals the nature of the spiritual freedom Stone recommended. He states that early in his life his understanding of conversion was that he “must incur the displeasure of my dear relatives...become the object of scorn and ridicule—relinquish all my plans and schemes for worldly honor, wealth and preferment, and bid adieu to all the pleasures in which I had lived.”<sup>80</sup> Being at liberty was being free from the opinions of men, and the allure of wealth and pleasure.

While he was teaching near Washington, GA, between stints at preparing for the ministry, Stone won the respect of the community there. He wrote, “The marked attention paid me by the most respectable part of the community was nearly my ruin.” Stone knew very well the attraction of worldly honor and its capacity to enslave the will to popular opinion. This was the great power of a creed—it commanded ascent and threatened the loss of relationship and approval. Such fear of man “bringeth a snare” and limited “the spirit of free inquiry.”<sup>81</sup> He wrote, “Should this dread of exclusion influence all, the consequence would be that all the litigant sects would remain.”<sup>82</sup> Stone would not be falsely shamed into compliance even after his break with the Presbyterians. He blamed the defection of so many of the Christians to the Shakers on being “puffed up at [their] prosperity” in relation to the Presbyterians with whom they had been in conflict.<sup>83</sup> After making some modifications in his views, he demonstrated a public willingness to admit being wrong, for, “The disgrace attached to a change of opinion has ever stood in the way of reformation of error.”<sup>84</sup> The desire for positive regard among peers often was what caused church leaders to fight among themselves. Stone’s deference to Campbell, even in his *Biography*, is an illustration of how his freedom from the lust for preeminence enabled the 1832 union between the Reformers and Christians. The love of praise could easily choke out ones desire for God’s approbation, lessen one’s willingness to listen to those of lesser stature, and could create obstacles to Christian union. Thus, Stone championed a religion “untrammelled by the fear of man.”<sup>85</sup>

Being at liberty was also to be free from the various types of domination caused by the love of money and pleasure. He was convinced that his participation in “tea parties” and “fascinating” social pleasures nearly had cost him his faith early in life. On an early visit to Charleston amidst its “splendid palaces...and rich profusion of luxuries” he found a former acquaintance, Samuel Holmes, whose simple manners and conversation had changed greatly. It was enough to convince Stone that “few men can bear prosperity and popularity so as to retain the humble spirit of religion.”<sup>86</sup> By the end of his life he was convinced that one of the things that “checked the work of religion everywhere, but especially in Kentucky, was extravagance in worldly things.”<sup>87</sup> One’s heart could not be settled in the pursuit of God while it was restlessly seeking earthly treasure.

This no doubt was a lesson Stone knew “experimentally.” His conversion had

cost him a lucrative career as a lawyer. Kentucky was a veritable heaven for lawyers in the 1790's, and no Presbyterian minister could ever hope to have an income close to that of a successful attorney in that place and time. Stone's tearing up of his contract with his congregations at Cane Ridge and Concord and his insistence about being paid only by free-will offerings cost him even the comfortable income he did have. Thereafter, he would have to farm, or teach in addition to preaching. Whatever financial agreements he did enter into with congregations in his life, the congregations broke, leaving him worse off than previously. His conviction about the necessity of emancipating slaves cost him dearly, for very often relatives would leave him slaves in their wills. Rather than enriching him, these inheritances forced him to absorb the cost of liberating these individuals. He was not attached to the goods of this "vain world."

But Stone's fear of money and its capacity to enslave went even beyond this. As Stone got older, the emerging business culture around him more and more offended his austere Republican sensibilities. "Aping after the world and conforming to its maxims of extravagance" many within Stone's churches had "involved themselves and friends in debt."<sup>88</sup> Having learned from experience the evils of others breaking financial agreements, Stone, in good Jeffersonian fashion, despised debt and the servility and hostility it could produce. Failure to pay created animosities, and uncertainty about whether people would come through on their obligations even when they did pay created a climate of distrust. Of course, he despised the opposite of debt, usury, for many of the same reasons.<sup>89</sup> The revolutionary generation had learned that, "dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."<sup>90</sup>

This strain of thought is especially evident in Stone's thinking about arrangements in paying the preacher. He was impressed that when the Anglican clergy's salaries were abolished during the revolution, "our parsons generally left us."<sup>91</sup> There was no way for a preacher to stay at a congregation for the right motives under such a salaried agreement, he would inevitably come to love the comfort and the certainty of the contract more than the Lord and his people. And even if a minister would escape this corruption of a salary, the congregations inevitably assigned to such ministers a kind of hireling status that Stone found unhelpful. Additionally, Stone felt that the presence of a salary was a powerful incentive for ministers to remain "orthodox" because for a salaried minister to reject the standards of a church was to lose his whole living and to face poverty. Stone believed such dependence begat subservience—a greater willingness to maintain the orthodoxy and support the vested and tyrannical interests for the sake of financial security. Thus, he recommended that the ministry have some kind of freedom from such purse strings.

## **Emancipation**

Jefferson had written, "the whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise in the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and the degrading submissions on the other."<sup>92</sup> Stone agreed. But unlike Jefferson and a great many evangelicals of his day, he did something about it. He consistently ran articles decrying the evils of slavery, and the benefits of the Colonization Society, and from his own pocket he emancipated his own slaves and the ones he unfortunately inherited. Christian liberty was not something simply to be enjoyed, it was to be extended.

## **Limits**

In the same way the popular concept of "civic virtue" placed severe restraint on the exercise of Republican liberty, Stone's version of Christian liberty was defined and limited by Scripture. Stone upheld the Bible over and again as "the only infallible standard or rule."<sup>93</sup> In the second addition of his *Address to the Christian Churches* he

illustrated the relationship between his reason and the Bible. Reason always bowed to the clear teaching of Scripture. Making Locke's distinction between propositions that are *above reason* and those that are *contradictory to reason*, he accepted many expressly revealed mysteries (such as the union of the soul and body) because they were revealed and because they were merely *above reason*.<sup>94</sup> He wrote. "If a doctrine be revealed, however mysterious it may be, I will humbly receive it. My reason shall ever bow to revelation; but it shall never be prostrated to human contradictions...."<sup>95</sup>

Liberty was not the absence of rigor. For him to approach the Bible with an attempt to practice it was an exercise which "required a greater degree of fortitude and self-denial than is generally possessed by professors of religion."<sup>96</sup> Freedom was always to be disciplined by scholarship and an exhausting and humble dedication to pursuing the truth in scripture. Stone knew Latin, Greek, and learned Hebrew in mid-life, and his recommendations to younger students aspiring to preach demonstrate a devotion to prayer and study. While he saw himself more a teacher and pastor of churches than an academic, he was a professional educator for a large part of his life. He was aware that the Christian church ministers were not as well educated as some; and he encouraged plain, simple and short addresses given by unlettered person[s] within the congregations. No doubt these things along with his opposition to learned and polished doctors who rhetorized and philosophized the people to sleep,<sup>97</sup> opened him to the charge of being against religious education. But this charge is largely unfounded.

Stone's view of Christian liberty required him to limit his public speech to the language of the biblical text itself. Just as Republicans argued a strict construction of the political constitution ensured civil liberty, Stone, in an age when the New Testament was widely viewed as a religious constitution, argued for limiting religious language to the Biblical text as a means of accommodating diverse people who had diverse interpretations of that scripture. Stone knew that the "candid and thinking part of all Christians would agree with his views of the blood of Jesus." He was not "unaware that men have attached other ideas to the blood of Jesus besides those he mentioned,"<sup>98</sup> but if he simply affirmed the biblical language without further amplification, he felt like the cause of unity and revival would be furthered. Although Stone occasionally found himself carried away in the sectarian broils, as an 1805 private letter to Richard McNemar illustrates,<sup>99</sup> he seemed to have exhibited forbearance most of his life.

But this tolerance did not imply there was no such thing as heresy. Stone's usual generosity was not extended to Shakers Dunlavy and McNemar, something Dunlavy did not hesitate to point out.<sup>100</sup> Shakers denied the bodily resurrection, and they taught salvation through someone else in addition to historical person Jesus of Nazareth, among a host of other lesser things that offended Stone. The Shakers were a "vortex of ruin"<sup>101</sup> with whom he would have nothing to do.

In addition to Scripture liberty was limited by the consensus of the community of Spirit-led believers. At least to this degree Stone resisted the radical individualism of the Enlightenment. While he definitely was in favor of wresting the power of administering discipline from the usurping hands of the clergy, he did expect churches to exercise church discipline themselves. Even if the Bible could be interpreted with "common sense" the early Christian ministers, especially when subjects as baptism began to arrest the attention of the churches, agreed "to act in concert and not to adventure on anything new without the advice from one another."<sup>102</sup> "While it is a liberty granted by the head of the church that all may prophesy and exhort one another," Stone thought it an "impropriety for a person impressed with the idea that he is divinely called to preach to go...from country to country preaching, without being sent by a church with letters of recommendation."<sup>103</sup>

Above all, Christian liberty was limited by vital piety. Without it, his vision for Christian unity would amount to nothing but an adolescent rejection of authority. Without a vital relationship with the Spirit of Christ anti-partyism in profession would

“become as rank partyism as any other, and probably more intolerant.”<sup>104</sup> Those who knew him best knew that he lived this example of living relationship with the Lord. John Gano, upon Stone’s death, said, “Union and liberty was their [Christian Churches] motto; not union without love, or liberty without light—or either without implicit faith in, and devotion to the Lord Jesus.”<sup>105</sup> The manner in which that devotion should be expressed did not seem to be in dispute. Therefore, it is a rather intense irony that the tolerance Stone so championed with regard to differences in systematic theology, he did not extend with regard to questions of everyday holiness. He rejected Calvinism but he did not reject Calvinist piety.

For example, he just knew experimentally that certain “amusements [tea parties, dancing schools and the like] were calculated to banish all serious thoughts and to bind the whole heart to groveling pleasures.”<sup>106</sup> Father Stone did not mind going beyond what was written in Scripture to discuss issues of worship style. “Piano tunes” were censured as worldly and irreverent. Likewise, prayer position and personal dress seemed to Stone obvious indicators of one’s devotion. While he was able to acknowledge there were times where a congregation “might not be able to kneel as in a crowd, but few cases could justify the posture of sitting.” Such a display was “indecent.” And he thought he knew why kneeling was being abandoned—the worldly minded and fashion conscious were “afraid of sullyng their fine garments by kneeling!”<sup>107</sup> Clean the floors! He was disgusted with the allure of wealth and fashion, complaining that one might think, “flowers grew out of the hair of the fair sex.” Tolerance in such situations could even be viewed as sinful. As David Purviance put it “Saul spared Agag but good old Samuel hewed him to pieces.”<sup>108</sup> Even late in life Stone proudly recorded in his *Biography* that he “drubbed [dancers] without mercy.”<sup>109</sup> Christian liberty, then, was not a weak-willed indifference that called itself liberal and tolerant. Freedom for Stone was the capacity to get past the hindrances to relationship with Christ, and anything that kept the affections from this liberating relationship met with his unqualified disapproval.

For similar reasons, late in life he adopted the more unusual belief that a Christian should not participate in government. Perhaps it was the raucous atmosphere of a nation that once again deeply divided politically and sectionally. Perhaps it was the government’s reticence to do anything about slavery, or the sordid talk by 1843 of the annexation of Texas. Whatever the incipient cause of this change in attitude, Stone was convinced that “he had never seen a man much engaged in politics and religion at the same time. What is more he was convinced that the politics of the day are in opposition to the politics of heaven.”<sup>110</sup> The pursuit of earthly power “destroyed fervor of devotion.” And thus, it was to be avoided.<sup>111</sup>

### **Freedom to Fulfill God’s Mission**

It was such Christian liberty Barton Stone recommended to the church and to the world. At the beginning of his ministry he had seen a large portion of the frontier amass in unity and tolerance and had seen perhaps thousands of conversions, only to have his millennial dreams and the Spirit of the revival checked by partisan wrangling and creedal oppression. If as an old man he was disheartened by the democracy and American culture which had given him his language with which to resist sectarianism, he was ever confident in the King of Glory’s capacity to bring revival as God’s people abandoned their sectarian opinions, their unnecessary intrusions on the divine prerogative, allowing free recourse to the Bible. Such an exercise of liberty of conscience would inevitably bring unity, love, and freedom from the enslaving allures of this world, and even release from anxiety about death itself. Toward the end of his life he wrote:

It is evident to all that sectarianism has received a death wound, and as light increases, liberty will in the same ratio increase, and the truth will run and be glorified, unfettered from human manacles, untrammelled by the fear of man. Christians will flow together. I have seen sheep pent up

in a lean pasture, looking through the crevices of their enclosure at a flock grazing on a rich field at liberty—I have seen their manifestations of anxiety to be with them, in their bleating and running along the fence to find a place of escape. At length one made the leap and many followed.<sup>112</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ronald P. Byars, “Cane Ridge from a Presbyterian Point of View” in *Cane Ridge in Context: Perspectives on Barton W. Stone and the Revival* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society 1992) 97,98.

<sup>2</sup>Richard McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary Out-pouring of the Spirit of God in the Western States of America...* (Union Villiage 1808) 56.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Jefferson, *To Benjamin Rush*, Washington April 21, 1803.

<sup>4</sup>Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President, First Term 1801-1805* (Boston: Little and Brown 1970) 191.

<sup>5</sup>McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival* 11.

<sup>6</sup>William Garrett West, *Barton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society 1954) 22.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Conkin, *Cane Ridge America's Pentecost* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1989)118.

<sup>8</sup>Merrill Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Clay, Webster and Calhoun* (London: Oxford University Press 1987) 8-18.

<sup>9</sup>West, 23.

<sup>10</sup>Barton Stone, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone Written by Himself with Additions and Reflections by John Rogers* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James 1847) 3.

<sup>11</sup>Stone, *Biography* 47.

<sup>12</sup>Stone, *Biography* 137.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Marshall, *Apology of the Springfield Presbytery* in Rogers, *Biography* 147-191.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. 168.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. 180.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Marshall and John Thompson, *A Brief Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian, or as it is Commonly Called, the Newlight Church...* (1811) in Levi Purviance, *The Biography of the Elder David Purviance* (Dayton: B.F. and G.W. Ells, 1848) 271.

<sup>17</sup>Barton W. Stone, VI(*Christian Messenger* 1833)198.

<sup>18</sup>John Rogers, *A Discourse on Civil and Religious Liberty Delivered on the Fourth of July 1828 in Carlisle, Kentucky Re-written by the Author in 1856 with Alterations and Additions* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys and Co 1857)5. Stone recommends this discourse in volume II of the *Christian Messenger* (p240) as “the best production we have seen on this subject.”

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom* (adopted 1786) in Peterson, *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin Books 1980)251.

<sup>20</sup>Barton W. Stone, X (*Christian Messenger* 1836) 27.

<sup>21</sup>*Form of Government and Forms of Process of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America as Amended and Ratified by the General Assembly in May 1821* Book I Chapter 1 section VII.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>McNemar, *Last Will and Testament*, in Stone, *Biography* 52.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. 28.

<sup>25</sup>See discussion in Paul Conkin, *Cane Ridge America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wisconsin:

University of Wisconsin Press 1989) 90-109.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas Jefferson, *To Roger C. Weightman*, June 24, 1826.

<sup>27</sup>Barton W. Stone, I(*Christian Messenger* 1826) 272.

<sup>28</sup>Barton W. Stone III(*Christian Messenger* 1829) 90.

<sup>29</sup>Marshall and Thompson, *A Brief Account*, 258.

<sup>30</sup>Barton W. Stone, IV(*Christian Messenger* 1830) 90.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* 8.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* 2, 8.

<sup>33</sup>For a discussion of the Enlightenment's effects on evangelical theology including the rejection of Augustinian and Calvinist views of election, substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness, see Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction, Second Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1994) 403-404.

<sup>34</sup>Thomas Jefferson, *To Joseph Priestley*, March 21, 1801.

<sup>35</sup>*Letter to the Synod of Kentucky* 1804 signed by Marshall, Dunlavy, Stone and Thompson in, McNemar, *Kentucky Revival*, 65.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>37</sup>Marshall and Thompson, *A Brief Account*, 255.

<sup>38</sup>Richard McNemar, *Observations on Church Government by the Presbytery of Springfield to which is added The Last Will and Testament of That Reverend Body* (Union Villiage:1808 )22 See also *Christian Messenger* I, 272.

<sup>39</sup>Rogers, *A Discourse* 27.

<sup>40</sup>Stone, *Biography* 13.

<sup>41</sup>Barton W. Stone, *Atonement: The Substance of Two Letters Written to a Friend* (Lexington: Joseph Charles 1805)3.

<sup>42</sup>Rogers, *A Discourse* 8.

<sup>43</sup>Stone, *Biography* 210.

<sup>44</sup>Stone, *Address* 84.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Marshall, *Apology for the Springfield Presbytery*, in Rogers, 170.

<sup>46</sup>Stone, *Atonement* 14.

<sup>47</sup>Stone, VII(*Christian Messenger*)131. And *Address*, 60.

<sup>48</sup>Marshall, *Apology* 170.

<sup>49</sup>See discussion in D. Newell Williams, *Stone's Revivalist Theology, in Cane Ridge in Context* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society 1992) 86.

<sup>50</sup>Stone, X(*Christian Messenger*) 141.

<sup>51</sup>Stone, *Compendious View* in Rogers, 205.

<sup>52</sup>Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in the Portable Thomas Jefferson 211.

<sup>53</sup>Stone, I(*Christian Messenger*) 188.

<sup>54</sup>Stone, *Address* 94.

<sup>55</sup>Stone, I(*Christian Messenger*) 188.

<sup>56</sup>Stone, X(*Christian Messenger*) 27.

<sup>57</sup>Stone, *Biography* 93.

<sup>58</sup>Stone, IV(*Christian Messenger*) 166.

<sup>59</sup>Marshall and Thompson, *A Brief Historical Account* in Purviance 269.

<sup>60</sup>Stone, *Address* 95.

<sup>61</sup>Stone, XIII (*Christian Messenger*) 229-230.

<sup>62</sup>Thomas Jefferson, *To Benjamin Rush* in Malone, 200.

<sup>63</sup>This expression was frequently used by Republicans, especially Jefferson.

<sup>64</sup>Stone, *Biography* 13.

<sup>65</sup>McNemar, *Kentucky Revival* 88.

<sup>66</sup>Stone, I(*Christian Messenger*) 8.

<sup>67</sup>Rogers, *A Discourse*, 7.

<sup>68</sup>Barton W. Stone, VII(*Christian Messenger* January 1833) 2.

- <sup>69</sup> Barton W. Stone, XI(*Christian Messenger* August 1841) 420.
- <sup>70</sup> Barton W. Stone XIII (*Christian Messenger*)68.
- <sup>71</sup> James North, *Union In Truth: An Interpretive History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing 1994) 56.
- <sup>72</sup> Richard McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival*, 43.
- <sup>73</sup> *Witnesses Address* in Stone, *Biography* 55.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 54.
- <sup>75</sup> Marshall and Thompson, *A Brief Account*, 256.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* It is difficult to say how much Marshall and Thompson were influenced by their desire to court Presbyterian favor here. Their statements may reflect Presbyterian perceptions as well as their own.
- <sup>77</sup> David Purviance, *Observations on the Constitution, Unity and Discipline of the Church of Christ. Addressed to the Brethren of the Christian Church* (Cincinnati: JW Brown, 1811) in Levi Purviance, *the Biography of Elder David Purviance* (Dayton: B.F. and G.W. Ells 1848) 58,66.
- <sup>78</sup> Richard McNemar, *Observations on Church Government* (1808) 8.
- <sup>79</sup> Barton W Stone, XIII (*Christian Messenger* 1842) 72.
- <sup>80</sup> Stone, *Biography* 8.
- <sup>81</sup> Stone, XIII(*Christian Messenger*) 90.
- <sup>82</sup> Stone, I vol 1(*Christian Messenger*) 7.
- <sup>83</sup> Stone, *Biography* 61.
- <sup>84</sup> Stone, *Address*, preface v.
- <sup>85</sup> Stone, XIII(*Christian Messenger*) 86.
- <sup>86</sup> Stone, *Biography* 27-8.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 96.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 97.
- <sup>89</sup> Stone, XIII(*Christian Messenger*) 49.
- <sup>90</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia (1787)*, in the *Portable Thomas Jefferson*,(Middlesex:Penguin Books 1980) 217.
- <sup>91</sup> Stone, *Biography* 4.
- <sup>92</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* 215.
- <sup>93</sup> Barton W. Stone, I (*Christian Messenger* 1826) 2.
- <sup>94</sup> See discussion in D. Newell Williams, *Barton W. Stone's Revivalist Theology* in Anthony Dunnivant, *Cane Ridge in Context* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society) 78.
- <sup>95</sup> Barton W. Stone, *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio on several Important Doctrines of Religion* (Lexington: I.T. Cavins 1821) 12.
- <sup>96</sup> Stone, I(*Christian Messenger*) 2.
- <sup>97</sup> Stone, I(*Christian Messenger*) 80.
- <sup>98</sup> *Address*, 62.
- <sup>99</sup> McNemar, *Kentucky Revival* 79. This private letter was unkindly published after McNemar's departure into Shakerism. It no doubt must have embarrassed Stone.
- <sup>100</sup> John Dunlavy, *Manifesto Part IV Comprised in the Substance of a Letter to Barton W. Stone* (Pleasant Hill: 1815) 494.
- <sup>101</sup> Rogers, *Biography* 63.
- <sup>102</sup> Stone, *Biography* 60.
- <sup>103</sup> Stone, I(*Christian Messenger* 1826) 80.
- <sup>104</sup> Stone, X(*Christian Messenger*) 169.

- <sup>105</sup> Rogers, *Biography* 141.  
<sup>106</sup> Stone, XIII(*Christian Messenger*) 314.  
<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 165.  
<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 124.  
<sup>109</sup> Stone, *Biography* 22.  
<sup>110</sup> Stone, XIII (*Christain Messenger*) 123.  
<sup>111</sup> Stone, XIII(*Chistian Messenger*) 123-6.  
<sup>112</sup> Stone, XIII (*Christian Messenger*) 86.

# THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

**Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers,  
Anthony L. Dunnivant, D. Newell Williams**  
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John 17:23

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Disciples of Christ Historical Society  
Nashville, Tennessee  
February 10 - 12, 2005  
**(See page 78 for Speakers List)**

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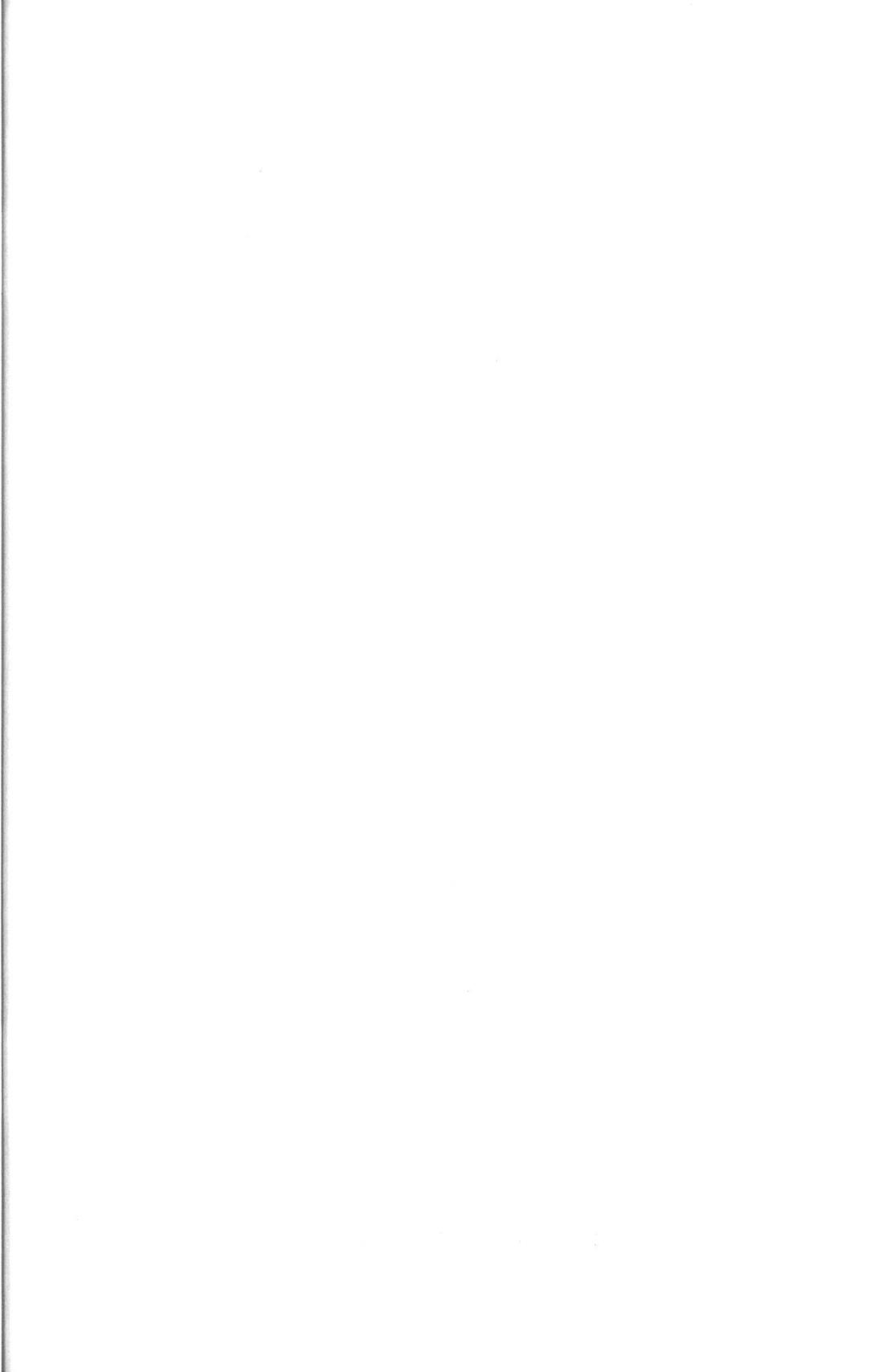
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July, 2005



Published by

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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*DISCIPLIANA* (USPS 995-060) is published quarterly for \$20.00 per year by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society which was established in 1941 "to maintain and further interest in religious heritage, backgrounds, origins, development, and general history of Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, Churches of Christ and related groups." Members of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society receive *DISCIPLIANA* quarterly, along with other benefits. Annual membership categories are: Sustaining - \$50 to \$249, Participating - \$30, Regular - \$20, Students - \$10.00, Non-U.S. - \$25. Life Memberships are: Life - \$250, Life Link - \$500, Life Patron - \$1,000.

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The Disciples of Christ Historical Society Phone: (615) 327-1444. FAX: (615) 327-1445  
E-mail: mail@dishistsoc.org Home Page: www.dishistsoc.org  
Periodical postage paid at Nashville, TN 37229-9715.

Copyright 1997. Disciples of Christ Historical Society  
Indexed by Restoration Serials Index  
ISSN 0732-9881

Indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals, the Index to Book Reviews in Religion, Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBRR 1975- on CD-ROM, and the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: atla@atla.com, WWW: <http://www.atla.com/>

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DISCIPLIANA*, 1101 - 19th Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37212-2196. Please give both old and new addresses and attach a mailing label from an old issue. USA: Please provide nine-digit code (ZIP+4).

## — From the Editor's Desk

What did the Klu Klux Klan have to do with a division in the Stone-Campbell Movement? More, it seems, than you might have thought.

David Siebenaler is pastor of an unusual congregation. His Springport Christian Church of Springport, Indiana, relates to both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (sometimes referred to as the Independent Christian Churches). Eager to better understand the division between these two bodies, a division which his congregation has resisted, Mr. Siebenaler, who completed his Master of Divinity at Emmanuel School of Religion, wrote his Ball State University Master's thesis in history on the Modernist - Fundamentalist Controversy among Indiana Disciples. This issue of *Discipliana* is an extract of that thesis.

Siebenaler argues that the controversy in Indiana that eventuated in the separation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ was rooted in divergent responses to the growth of urbanization, industrialization and pluralism that marked late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. On one side were the advocates of "cooperation" among the congregations and agencies of the Disciples of Christ, persons who took their cues from the "progressives," who called for a re-ordering of American life in response to the social changes of the era, and from the prevailing culture of corporate capitalism. They called for a more centralized Disciples organization based on the principle of cooperation. On the other side were Disciples who responded ambivalently to this modernizing agenda, persons who saw the emerging order as a threat to decentralized political and economic power and the primacy of white evangelical Protestantism.

Indiana Disciples who opposed the cooperative agenda gave significant support to the Klan, which they viewed as a bastion of traditional American values. Progressive Disciples opposed the Klan. Leaders of the state organization tried to ignore the Klan. Nevertheless, support for the Klan became one of the issues that contributed to the division.

But, this is only a quick summary of an article that will repay a careful reading. As leaders from across the divided streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement engage in dialogue and common work, they can only be served by a fuller, carefully nuanced understanding of the issues that led to division. Siebenaler's case study of Indiana Disciples and the Modernist - Fundamentalist controversy will contribute to that understanding.

D. Newell Williams

## — From the President's Desk

The 1920s was an uneasy period in which the world was attempting to adjust to the aftermath of World War I. Established landmarks of thought, values and social order were changing. The Scopes trial, the heavy migration of Blacks from South to North, literature that departed from traditional American values, a vast urbanization of the American people, a flood of foreign-born coming to America—all of this and more was disturbing to many Americans. Anger simmered in the streets and blended with peoples' fears. The ethos of this period is ably described in Kevin Boyle's 2004 National Book Award winner, *Arc of Justice*.

How did the Disciples of Christ respond to these extraordinary changes?

The article in this edition of *Discipliana* by David Siebenaler provides a case study of how one region of the Disciples, Indiana, reacted to these emerging trends in the 1920s. The conflict within the congregations between progressives and traditionalists shaped the church in those days and set a future direction for several of them. Although somewhat painful to read, the article presents a clear snapshot of one part of our church responding to the powerful conditions of that day.

D. Duane Cummins

**INDIANA DISCIPLES OF CHRIST  
AND THE  
MODERNIST-FUNDAMENTALIST  
CONTROVERSY, 1919-1930**

David Siebenaler\*

As the United States became an ever more urbanized, industrialized, and pluralistic nation throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Americans became increasingly divided over the implications and outcomes of these developments. Some viewed the re-ordering of American life in response to these large-scale changes as a challenging opportunity, and they searched for ways to adapt economic, social, political, and cultural institutions—including churches—to the new reality. Often labeled “progressives,” they were generally more optimistic in their outlook, although they were by no means uniform in terms of the prescriptions and programs that they proposed in order to ameliorate or manage the effects of modernity. Other Americans were less enthralled by the far-reaching transformation that was taking place all around them. They regarded the emerging order as a threat to certain traditions, such as decentralized political and economic power, the primacy of evangelical Protestantism, and the predominant role of native-born, “old stock” Americans in every aspect of society.

When modernizing ideas began to gain a foothold in American churches, conflict erupted at every level between progressives and traditionalists. Individual congregations, regional and statewide networks of churches, and whole denominations experienced discord and strife. Among Indiana Disciples, one important way that this antagonism manifested itself was in their differing views about the issue of “cooperation.” Taking their cues from progressive elements within the denomination and from the prevailing culture of corporate capitalism, the leaders of the state association of Disciples churches devoted considerable energy to promoting the cause of a more centralized organization based on the principle of cooperation. They envisioned a more coordinated structure that would incorporate individual congregations, the state association, and national Disciples agencies into a more unified entity. Having witnessed the apparently successful instances of voluntary cooperation between government and business during and after the Great War, they were certain that applying this model to the church would result in greater effectiveness, both in terms of evangelism and social action. These leaders presented a consistent message to Indiana Disciples during the 1920s: the time for radical congregational independence had ended, and the time for cooperative endeavors had come. From their standpoint, the pursuit and realization of a progressive agenda demanded nothing less.

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Indiana Disciples responded ambivalently to this modernizing message. Indeed, significant numbers of Disciples ministers and lay persons became involved in the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s. This phenomenon indicated not only the general persistence of racist and nativist ideas in Indiana but also a widespread negative reaction among the state's Disciples to modernization in general. Recent scholarship on the 1920s-era Klan has focused on the populist nature of the organization, particularly in Indiana.<sup>1</sup> Many Indiana residents regarded it as a bastion of traditional morality and local community life and as a bulwark against the forces of economic consolidation. An analysis of Klan membership data and pro-Klan and anti-Klan periodicals will reveal that fundamentalist Disciples in Indiana tended to be drawn to the "Invisible Empire" or to have favorable views of it. Although the pervasive presence of the Klan did not necessarily precipitate divisions among Indiana Disciples, it did reveal the growing gap between those who feared and those who embraced "cooperation" and modernization.

## I

According to historian Ellis Hawley, the emergence and growing influence of "managerial progressivism" was one of the hallmarks of post-World War I American society.<sup>2</sup> Following the conclusions of Robert Wiebe and Samuel Hays, Hawley contends that this "organizational revolution" was the most notable development in response to the processes of industrialization and urbanization that had begun in the late nineteenth century and had intensified in the early twentieth century. As an outgrowth of the variegated progressive movements of the prewar years, this phenomenon represented a concerted effort by political, social, and economic elites to re-order American life along more rational lines while also accommodating the nation's liberal democratic tradition. The experience of wartime mass mobilization invigorated those who envisioned a more centralized and unified social and economic order as the key ingredient for national progress and harmony.<sup>3</sup>

Before the war, there were competing versions of how this vision might be realized. In spite of these somewhat divergent views, a rough consensus among organizational elites began to take shape in the early years of the interwar era. Private groups, primarily business interests, would cooperate voluntarily with one another and with government agencies in order to manage economic growth and social stability. By carefully applying scientific principles and bureaucratic techniques to various social and economic problems, these associations would help ease the transition to modern life. As Hawley describes it, the story of the period between American entrance into the Great War and the beginning of the Great Depression largely revolves around attempts to realize this "associative vision" and the conflicts that it either engendered or aggravated.<sup>4</sup>

Virtually every component of American society felt the impact of these changes, including the Disciples of Christ churches in Indiana. In terms of both their ecclesiology, with its strong emphasis on local autonomy, and their concentration in rural areas and small towns, Indiana Disciples congregations tended to identify closely with these rapidly changing or disappearing "island communities."<sup>5</sup> As such, they proved to be highly susceptible to the sort of

ruptures that would occur when opposing systems—and the values inherent in those systems—clashed. Their experience of the modernist-fundamentalist controversies was conditioned to a significant degree by the widening gap between proponents of progressive ideas and a more bureaucratized order within the church, and those who viewed such developments as threats to both traditional social arrangements and the orthodox tenets of the faith. Because the churches were often the focal points of “island community” life, it was perhaps inevitable that they would become arenas in which acute conflict erupted. In a state where a culture of very gradual adaptation to change prevailed, those church leaders who embraced and promoted the “organizational revolution” with regard to religious institutions did not always face a receptive audience among their constituents.<sup>6</sup>

Among Indiana Disciples of Christ, the two most prominent advocates of a more centralized administrative structure for the statewide network of Disciples churches were Commodore Wesley Cauble and Guy Israel Hoover. Both served as corresponding secretary (a position similar to that of executive director) of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association—Cauble from 1913 to 1925, and Hoover from 1926 to 1940.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to most Protestant denominations during this period, the Disciples of Christ had no official governing apparatus beyond the congregational level. Participation in these organizations was entirely voluntary, and their leaders performed no supervisory functions. During their successive tenures as corresponding secretaries, both Cauble and Hoover tried to implement policies and structural changes that reflected their own biases in favor of “managerial progressivism.” Indeed, in many respects, Cauble and Hoover epitomized the modernizing impulse among Indiana Disciples during the 1920s. Through the pages of the state association’s newspaper, the *Indiana Worker* and the *Indiana Christian*, they called for “cooperative” ventures that echoed similar appeals by government and business leaders in regard to broader social and economic issues.<sup>8</sup>

When Commodore Wesley Cauble assumed his duties as corresponding secretary in 1913, the organization that he now headed had experienced fluctuating fortunes from the time of its inception in 1839. Indeed, throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was disbanded at least once and reconstituted or restructured on several occasions.<sup>9</sup> In the decade preceding Cauble’s tenure as corresponding secretary, the Society had undergone two major reorganizations, the more recent one having occurred in 1910. In that year, at the state convention of Disciples churches meeting at Anderson, the Indiana Christian Missionary Society combined with the Indiana Christian Sunday School Association and the Indiana Christian Endeavor Society (a youth organization) to produce the Indiana Christian Missionary Association.<sup>10</sup> For the next three years, the new entity languished under ineffective leadership; but when Cauble assumed office, he immediately began to implement a vigorous program of organizing and promoting the Association’s work. For Cauble, the organization was to become the primary vehicle for realizing his own progressive, “cooperative” vision of Indiana Disciples of Christ.

Given his educational background and his ministerial career, it is not surprising that Cauble entertained views that tended toward the values and

aspirations of the rising managerial class and its “associative vision” for American society. Born in Indiana in 1874, Cauble pursued his undergraduate studies at the College of the Bible, a Disciples of Christ ministerial training school in Lexington, Kentucky. Cauble appears to have been little influenced by the caustic theological conservatism of the dominant figure at the College of the Bible, John W. McGarvey. Instead, Cauble went on to complete a graduate degree at Indiana University and undertook further studies at the Harvard University Divinity School.<sup>11</sup>

Like many Disciples ministers of his generation who followed similar educational paths, Cauble manifested a tolerant attitude toward contemporary intellectual currents throughout his life.<sup>12</sup> In his later years as editor of the *Indiana Worker*, Cauble enthusiastically supported institutions of higher education among Disciples—especially Butler College (later Butler University) in Indianapolis and the short-lived Indiana School of Religion at Indiana University.<sup>13</sup> A firm believer in an educated ministry, Cauble helped to promote the new Disciples seminary in Indianapolis, the Butler University College (later School) of Religion, founded in 1924.<sup>14</sup> Cauble was convinced that the presence of an academically respectable seminary in Indiana would benefit Disciples throughout the state by producing ministers who would favor progressive ideas and cooperative efforts.

Cauble’s own career in local pastoral ministry also paralleled those of other progressive-minded Disciples clergy who often served in influential churches in the larger cities and county-seat towns of Indiana. They were more likely to encounter a sympathetic response to their “cooperative” ideals and programs among the more educated and more prosperous members of such congregations. Prior to his service with the Indiana Christian Missionary Association, Cauble preached for the Sixth Street Christian Church in Indianapolis and the First Christian Churches in Greencastle and Martinsville.<sup>15</sup> At these posts, Cauble dealt with business and community leaders who presumably shared and reinforced his vision of a more centrally organized and socially active church on the statewide level. Indeed, it was at the behest of the board members of the Martinsville church that Cauble agreed to accept a part-time position raising funds for the Association in February 1913. The intervention of Marshall T. Reeves—a wealthy businessman from Columbus, Indiana—paved the way for this arrangement. Eight months later, Reeves played a vital role in persuading Cauble to leave the local pastoral ministry entirely in order to become the full-time corresponding secretary of the Association.<sup>16</sup> Reeves’ central involvement in this process signified the growing influence of business interests and the impact of the managerial mindset on Cauble and the organization he now led.

Soon after his installation in office on October 1, 1913, Cauble set about the task of reshaping the Indiana Christian Missionary Association. One of his first priorities was to restore publication of a statewide newspaper that would keep Indiana Disciples informed of the Association’s activities. Over ten years had elapsed since any such journal had been circulated, yet Cauble recognized the need for some form of official communication with and among the churches. The first issue of the *Indiana Worker* appeared in January 1914 with Cauble as its editor. Looking back on his editorial career, Cauble proudly noted that “[a]ll of the cooperative agencies in the State were included in its pages.”<sup>17</sup> As a

platform for Cauble's "cooperative" agenda, the state newspaper symbolized his "top-down" efforts to bring about a new order among Indiana Disciples. Its limited circulation virtually ensured that Cauble and other elite Disciples leaders with modernist inclinations would converse mostly among themselves, little cognizant of grassroots congregational resistance to their agenda.<sup>18</sup>

Along with his communication initiative, Cauble also set up a new system whereby Indiana Disciples churches were divided into five districts in which district evangelists would carry out the state association's work.<sup>19</sup> Soon after Cauble implemented this restructured organization, his ties with Marshall T. Reeves resulted in enhanced mobility for the district evangelists. Reeves donated five new Model T Ford automobiles for their use as they traveled about their areas of responsibility.<sup>20</sup> Cauble himself worked from an office in Indianapolis with a small staff, although he also traveled widely throughout the state, visiting churches and frequently presiding over the dedication of new church buildings.<sup>21</sup>

As their monthly reports in the *Indiana Worker* indicated, Cauble's lieutenants expended a great deal of their time and energy in promoting the cause of cooperation among Disciples churches. Whether it concerned county conferences, district meetings, state conventions, or other gatherings of Indiana Disciples, the district evangelists enthusiastically encouraged the churches under their charge to participate. A notice by Western District evangelist R. D. Thomas in the September 1923 issue of the *Indiana Worker* typifies such efforts. In his announcement of conferences to be held in Boone, Clinton, and Tippecanoe Counties, Thomas made the following plea for involvement: "Don't just say, you think it would be fine if some of your church could attend; tell them it is their duty to do, that if we as a people are to move forward we must be trained, and to be trained we must go this year to our conferences."<sup>22</sup> The fact that Thomas and his colleagues had to rely heavily on their persuasive powers suggests that significant numbers of Indiana Disciples remained suspicious of the idea of cooperative ventures under the aegis of an increasingly centralized state association—if, in fact, they were even aware of such a campaign.

Such resistance, apathy, or ignorance did not dampen Cauble's determination to bring about a new order among Indiana Disciples churches. Indeed, even in the wake of the collapse of the Interchurch World Movement in 1920, Cauble continued to sound an optimistic note about the possibilities of coordinated work among the churches. In a report on the successful conclusion of an "underwriting campaign" soliciting Indiana Disciples churches to help retire the indebtedness incurred by the now-defunct organization, Cauble declared, "The churches came to the rescue in heroic fashion."<sup>23</sup> He further asserted that this kind of cooperation boded well for the future, because it demonstrated the "good will, peace of mind, and unity of spirit that our Brotherhood has today."<sup>24</sup> Whether or not such conditions actually existed, Cauble and those who worked with him in the Indiana Christian Missionary Association continued to pursue a cooperative, centralizing agenda for Indiana Disciples.

Cauble never disguised his intentions for the statewide Disciples organization. He viewed it as an integral part of a larger structure of unified denominational and ecumenical agencies. When several Disciples of Christ missionary societies and boards merged in 1919-1920 to form the United Christian Missionary Society, Cauble hailed the new entity as an example for Indiana

Disciples to emulate and support. He devoted the entire front page of the September 1920 issue of the *Indiana Worker* to a notice announcing the formation of the United Society. In an accompanying editorial, Cauble expressed his hopes for what this development portended: "Many wish we could have complete unification, but all will agree that with six of our leading agencies uniting for co-operative work that a long step has been taken toward complete unification."<sup>25</sup> He went on to remind his readers that, although the state association and certain other national agencies were not yet integrated into the United Society, Indiana Disciples should still support them "as in the past if our work is to develop harmoniously and systematically."<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, under Cauble's leadership, the Indiana Christian Missionary Association would continue to collaborate closely with both the United Society and other Disciples organizations.

On at least three separate occasions, Cauble articulated his philosophy of cooperation and centralization among the churches. During the latter part of 1920, a group identifying itself as the International Christian Missionary Association entered the state and began soliciting funds from Indiana Disciples churches to support its work. Ostensibly, the purpose of this organization, which was based in Minneapolis, was "to Christianize and Americanize the foreign-speaking populations" of the Midwest.<sup>27</sup> Cauble published a series of articles in the January, February, and March 1923 issues of the *Indiana Worker* in which he exposed the group's motives and aims. In these articles, Cauble reproduced detailed warnings and disclaimers from various ministers and church officials who had encountered representatives of the organization. The International Christian Missionary Association filed a lawsuit against Cauble, the board of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association, and other Disciples agencies in April 1921, charging them with slander. Although the suit never came to trial, Cauble regarded the whole episode as a cautionary tale for Indiana Disciples. For him, it underscored the need for a stronger, more centralized statewide organization in order to protect the churches from disreputable groups. Later, as he recalled the incident, Cauble observed, "Strange as it may seem the churches that seemingly took little interest in the State Association, when all was going well, were the first to seek aid when in trouble."<sup>28</sup>

Cauble made a more extensive case for his policies in a lengthy article entitled "Let the Readers Be the Jury" in the March 1925 issue of the *Indiana Worker*. On the front page of the previous month's issue, Cauble had reprinted unflattering reports about the "Restoration Congress," a convention of fundamentalist Disciples that had taken place in Cincinnati in December 1924. Under the headline "History Repeating Itself," Cauble had coupled these reports with an article entitled "Non Cooperative Failures" by Butler School of Religion Dean Frederick D. Kershner.<sup>29</sup> L. G. Tomlinson, a prominent leader of the fundamentalist faction, wrote to Cauble and expressed both his objections to the articles and a defense of the Restoration Association, a rival mission organization set up by fundamentalist Disciples in opposition to the United Christian Missionary Society. Cauble decided to publish Tomlinson's correspondence and his own response. Cauble viewed the denunciations of the United Society as being inimical to every aspect of cooperative work among Disciples, including the state association. "It is easy to pass from attacking one missionary

organization to the place where you are ready to attack all of them," he argued.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, he contended, non-cooperation would only result in the proliferation of unaccountable agencies and the dispersal of the church's energies. With language and arguments that echoed the values of "managerial progressivism," Cauble asserted that a cooperative approach, on the other hand, would yield "efficiency, economy, durability, and results."<sup>31</sup>

Cauble concluded his argument with a theological warning about the probable outcome of non-cooperation: "The result of this sort of procedure is the strong likelihood that one will ultimately land in the ranks of the genuine non-progressives."<sup>32</sup> To illustrate his point, Cauble referred to the case of his former mentor, Hall D. Calhoun, and the fallout from the modernist-fundamentalist controversy at Cauble's *alma mater*, the College of the Bible. Calhoun had become a leading voice among fundamentalist Disciples and had recently issued a statement in which he declared that "humanly organized missionary societies lead to ecclesiasticism and human authority in religion, and that their use is not a help, but a hindrance, to the progress of the truth."<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, Cauble rejected this position in his comments on Calhoun's statement and cautioned his readers to do the same. Apparently, Cauble felt confident that the "jury" would decide correctly.

The final and most sustained instance of Cauble's advocacy of cooperation and centralization occurred after he left office as corresponding secretary of the state association. At the request of the 1926 convention of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association, Cauble undertook the project of writing a history of Indiana Disciples of Christ. For the most part, Cauble's account consists of anecdotes and short biographical sketches and is more thematic than chronological in its organization. Even so, it is obvious that Cauble structured his story in order to show a natural progression toward greater cooperation among Indiana Disciples. Acknowledging that this had not always been a steady or uncontested process, Cauble nevertheless maintained that his fellow Indiana Disciples had learned from past mistakes and were now poised to fully embrace cooperative organization. They had learned that "the spirit of individualism and extreme democracy" were detrimental to the church's health. "A better day has come, thank God," Cauble declared. "We are learning that 'cooperation and combination of effort' lead to success in the kingdom of God."<sup>34</sup> He envisioned a bright future for Indiana Disciples if they would continue to commit themselves to "learning the art of cooperation and of cooperative organization."<sup>35</sup>

When Cauble's project was published in 1930, his successor as general secretary of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association, Guy Israel Hoover, had been serving in that capacity for over three years. Hoover was also an avid advocate of a more centralized organization that drew upon a cooperative relationship between the local churches and the state association. He had begun his service with the Indiana Christian Missionary Association in November 1913, shortly after Cauble had accepted the call to become the corresponding secretary. Hoover was the eastern district evangelist from 1913 to 1921, when he resigned in order to take a position with the Disciples' Board of Higher Education.<sup>36</sup>

Like Cauble, Hoover's service with the state association followed an educational and professional career that marked him as a more progressive-

minded Disciples. Born in 1873 in Ohio, Hoover pursued his undergraduate education at Hiram College, a Disciples of Christ liberal arts college in northeastern Ohio, and received two graduate degrees from the University of Chicago Divinity School. From the time of his ordination in 1899 until 1913, Hoover served influential churches in Ohio, Chicago, and Indiana.<sup>37</sup> During his time in Chicago, he joined the Campbell Institute, an association of Disciples scholars and ministers that gained a reputation among fundamentalist Disciples as a modernist think-tank.<sup>38</sup> According to one of his older brothers, Guy Hoover greatly admired Herbert L. Willett, founder of the Disciples Divinity House at the University of Chicago and a leading liberal thinker and preacher among the Disciples.<sup>39</sup> In spite of his progressive credentials, Hoover took a non-ideological approach to local church ministry. At his last pastorate with the West Street Christian Church in Tipton, Indiana, from 1909 to 1913, Hoover was known chiefly for his emphasis on “preaching doctrinal sermons, personal evangelism, administration, and promoting cooperation among the churches.”<sup>40</sup>

Hoover’s focus on promoting cooperative efforts and his penchant for performing administrative tasks on the local level undoubtedly caught the attention of the new leadership of the reorganized state association in 1913. Cauble lauded his successor as “an efficient evangelist of the Eastern District” who “was well qualified and thoroughly familiar with the work that he was to do.”<sup>41</sup> During his years as a district evangelist, Hoover enthusiastically supported the centralization and unification of Disciples agencies, and he used his column in the *Indiana Worker* to encourage Indiana Disciples to embrace the cause of cooperation on every level. For example, in 1920 Hoover implored Indiana Disciples to support the Interchurch World Movement. “Shall we cooperate in an earnest, untiring and magnanimous effort to make it possible that the missionary, benevolent and educational institutions established by our fathers shall bear worthily their part in this great world program?” he asked his readers. “It is an hour of great opportunity fraught with large responsibility.”<sup>42</sup> To what extent Hoover’s arguments fell on sympathetic, deaf, or hostile ears is impossible to measure; however, the relatively small circulation of the state paper once more suggests that Hoover reached a limited audience with his advocacy of denominational and ecumenical “cooperation.” In any case, the groundswell of support that both Hoover and Cauble called for failed to materialize, thus illustrating the gap between the leadership of the statewide association and large numbers of Indiana Disciples.

Within the state of Indiana itself, Hoover had a special interest in the development and growth of institutions of higher education among Disciples of Christ. Like Cauble, he called on Indiana Disciples to come together in support of Butler College and the Indiana School of Religion at Indiana University. As Hoover explained to the readers of the *Indiana Worker* in early 1921, Butler College was “the direct fruitage of our co-operative work in the state” when it was founded.<sup>43</sup> Hoover urged Indiana Disciples to renew their commitment to Butler so that it might provide an educated ministry for their churches. By supporting Butler and the Indiana School of Religion, Indiana Disciples would have access to “the centers of influence and power in this state,” Hoover avowed. He depicted the “church’s opportunity” in grandiloquent tones: “The needs of the church, our manifest destiny, the call of a great opportunity beckon us to an immediate,

concerted and mighty advance to establish worthily these educational undertakings!”<sup>44</sup>

Hoover's zeal carried over into his work for the Disciples' Board of Higher Education, where he served as promotional secretary from 1921 to 1926. Throughout this time, Hoover maintained close ties with Indiana Disciples, and he continued to promote cooperation among the churches in support of educational endeavors. He also became directly involved in ministerial education at the recently founded College of Religion at Butler University. When the seminary opened for classes in September 1925, Hoover was listed as one of the faculty in the department of "practical theology." After he became General Secretary of the state association in 1926, he continued to teach courses in this field until the end of the 1931-32 academic year.<sup>45</sup> This position provided Hoover with a platform for disseminating his philosophy of cooperation and centralization among a rising generation of Disciples ministers and educators.

Like his predecessor, Hoover relied heavily on the power of the printed word to communicate his policies and ideals to the Disciples of Christ churches in Indiana. When he assumed office in September 1926, Hoover also took over the role of managing editor of the *Indiana Worker*. He oversaw the transformation of the journal that took place in 1927; its name was now to be the *Indiana Christian*. The first number of the renamed journal appeared in November 1927, and the new slogan under the masthead spelled out Hoover's intentions for the paper and the organization that it represented: "Devoted to the interpretation, advocacy and promotion of the work of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) in Indiana."<sup>46</sup> In both the *Indiana Worker* and the *Indiana Christian*, Hoover sent a consistent message to Indiana Disciples that the Indiana Christian Missionary Association was to be the institutional embodiment of the churches on a statewide level. In his first article as General Secretary, Hoover called on Indiana Disciples to "labor to secure the ever closer and more complete cooperation in the carrying out of the world-wide program of Jesus Christ."<sup>47</sup> As Hoover envisioned it, the role of the state association was to be "an agency of cooperation for the churches" that would "be an instrument of the will of the brotherhood in the evangelization of this state."<sup>48</sup>

Such rhetoric stressed the accountability of the state association to the local congregations, perhaps in an attempt to assuage fears that it was assuming too much centralized authority. Throughout his tenure as general secretary, Hoover also emphasized evangelism and congregational growth—two themes that resonated strongly among Disciples of various theological positions. He was especially concerned about involving more churches in contributing financially to the state association, and he developed a system of "apportionments" whereby each church was asked to give a certain amount based on their size and income.<sup>49</sup> Shortly after taking office, Hoover made much of the fact that although Indiana led all other states in numbers of Disciples church members, the state ranked sixteenth in terms of giving to "state missions." Furthermore, he cited the low number of congregations that actually contributed to the state association. As of the end of the 1925-1926 fiscal year, only 128 out of 706 Disciples churches in Indiana had given financial support to the Indiana Christian Missionary Association. Although dollar amounts had increased steadily throughout the preceding decade, the number of contributing churches

had peaked at 166 in 1919-1920 and steadily declined thereafter.<sup>50</sup> For Hoover, both the level of financial backing and the number of contributing churches would serve as important measures of the progress of the cause of cooperation. To that end, in his first year as general secretary, he issued a "rallying cry" for "three hundred churches giving \$12,000 to State Missions" by the end of the fiscal year.<sup>51</sup> He was gratified to report that these goals had been surpassed by April 1928.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the modesty of such goals suggests an implicit acknowledgement of a significant level of congregational resistance to Hoover's "cooperative" agenda.

Although the increasing prosperity of the mid- to late-1920s probably accounted for some of this improvement, Hoover's initiative in enlisting businessmen in support of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association certainly was a major contributing factor as well. At Hoover's suggestion, a "Business Men's Commission" was established at the state convention in May 1927.<sup>53</sup> By cultivating ties with prominent business leaders throughout the state, Hoover seized upon the cultural icon of the successful businessman as a model for the state association to emulate. Over the next few years, the Business Men's Commission sponsored a series of banquets in Indianapolis and most of the larger towns and cities in Indiana. Speakers at these gatherings appealed to their audiences not only to give generously to the work of the state association but also to lend their business acumen to its operations.<sup>54</sup> Hoover worked in tandem with M.R. Denison, an executive at the Studebaker Corporation in South Bend, to develop this program as well as a "men's department" of the state association's work. As if to underscore how strongly Hoover felt about these endeavors, the front page of the January 1928 issue of the *Indiana Christian* featured a large photograph of the Business Men's Banquet held at the Claypool Hotel in Indianapolis on December 6, 1927. Hoover described the meeting as a sign of the "vigorous and aggressive program" being undertaken by the state association.<sup>55</sup> Like his predecessor, Hoover made a conscious effort to align the Indiana Christian Missionary Association with business interests and to instill a managerial mindset on its organization and functions.

As general secretary, Hoover continued or even expanded the policies of Commodore Wesley Cauble in almost every respect. Both Hoover and Cauble tried to transform the state association into a more consolidated and organized expression of the Disciples of Christ in Indiana. At the same time, sensitive to the Disciples tradition of local congregational autonomy, they constantly appealed for "cooperation" from the churches. They had no power to coerce Indiana Disciples, but this did not deter Hoover and Cauble from searching for ways to increase the visibility and necessity of what they often referred to as "state missions." They saw the Indiana Christian Missionary Association as a vital part of an evolving structure that would enable their "brotherhood" to have a greater impact on the urbanizing, industrializing world they inhabited. In his report to the state association's board in May 1930, Hoover articulated this point clearly. "It is in the spirit of intelligent, consecrated loyalty to Jesus Christ and His church and of co-operation that we can work out the great problems that confront the churches and the brotherhood in the complex, social environment in which we now live and serve," he asserted. Only by centralizing their efforts on the county, state, and national levels, Hoover argued, could the Disciples of

Christ in Indiana realize their potential “in the building of the Kingdom of God in its world-wide relations.”<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, as fundamentalist and modernist Disciples came into more frequent and open conflict, Cauble and Hoover tried to maintain peaceful relations with the increasingly separated camps. Although they both tended to identify more closely with modernist Disciples, the two leaders attempted to placate their more conservative “brethren” in Indiana by publishing information about meetings and conferences of fundamentalist Disciples. For example, Cauble included a notice in the March 1921 issue of the *Indiana Worker* about the Indiana Bible Congress that was to be held at the Tabernacle Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, the following month.<sup>57</sup> The organizer of this conference, W. H. Book, was an outspoken critic of theological modernism and cooperative efforts.<sup>58</sup> Six years later, when the first North American Christian Convention took place at the Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis, Hoover advised Indiana Disciples to attend and give the speakers at the gathering “a courteous and respectful hearing.”<sup>59</sup> Hoover continued to publish news about subsequent meetings of the North American Christian Convention, publishing advance notices containing the complete program of speakers and activities on at least two occasions.<sup>60</sup> Despite such overtures, neither Cauble nor Hoover was able to forestall the widening breach between the two factions. Only the onset of depression and war prevented a decisive schism from occurring as Indiana Disciples focused their energies on survival. Contributions to the state association and the number of contributing churches declined precipitously during the early 1930s. According to one historian, the Indiana Christian Missionary Association faced a substantial deficit by the end of the fiscal year in 1931, forcing it to curtail its activities and reduce the number of district evangelists.<sup>61</sup> Although Hoover had to deal with a prolonged period of retrenchment, he continued to promote the cooperative ideal among Indiana Disciples until his retirement at the end of 1940.<sup>62</sup>

The record of their activities and public statements shows conclusively that throughout the 1920s—when the modernist-fundamentalist controversies were most intense—Commodore Wesley Cauble and Guy Israel Hoover were tireless proponents of cooperation and centralization among Indiana Disciples of Christ. Like their counterparts in business and industry, they aspired to be managerial leaders of an increasingly bureaucratized organization. During the same period when Herbert W. Hoover and other Republican progressive politicians were trying to construct a “cooperative state” on the national level, Cauble and Hoover sought to bring into being a cooperative church on the state level. In so doing, they identified themselves and the Indiana Christian Missionary Association with the forces of modernization that were proving to be so disruptive to the “island communities” in which many Indiana Disciples lived.

From the perspective of their cultural and religious heritage, many Indiana Disciples could only view such efforts with suspicion and alarm. The rise of centralized agencies and the growing influence of theological modernism within those organizations merely reinforced the perception among “ordinary” Disciples, both clergy and laity, that they were losing control of their churches. Ironically, Cauble was exactly right when he identified “the spirit of individualism and extreme democracy” as the chief impediments to his vision of a more

centralized, cooperative structure for Indiana Disciples. In their optimism about the potential of a modernized church organization, both Cauble and Hoover underestimated the persistence of such traditions among the people whom they ostensibly led. Like their supporters among business leaders and other elite groups, the leaders of the Indiana Christian Missionary Society wrongly presumed a more or less unquestioning acquiescence to their “cooperative” agenda. Their “top-down” approach to implementing a new church order proved to be inadequate, especially in terms of the limited audience they reached through the *Indiana Worker/Indiana Christian*. Considering their educational backgrounds and their identification with business and managerial elites, it is unlikely that Cauble and Hoover could have imagined an alternative to the “associative vision” they pursued as they sought to modernize their church. Among Indiana Disciples, the fundamentalist response to such ideas and initiatives took many forms, including a high degree of participation by Disciples ministers and lay persons in an organization that purported to uphold traditional values and promised to restore a sense of local control—the Ku Klux Klan.

## II

The story of the impact of the Ku Klux Klan on the Disciples of Christ in Indiana has been told in a fragmentary manner at best and ignored altogether at worst. Cauble’s previously cited centennial history of the Disciples in Indiana concludes with his years as corresponding secretary of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association between 1913 and 1926, when he was in a reasonably good position to know what was taking place among Indiana Disciples. The latter part of his tenure in this office coincided with the era of the Klan’s greatest strength in Indiana, yet his account is silent on the subject. Perhaps the fallout from the Klan’s meteoric rise and precipitous decline was too fresh or even too embarrassing for Cauble and for other Disciples leaders, especially because of their close ties with Klan-related politicians such as Ed Jackson, a prominent Disciples layman from New Castle, Indiana. In May 1919, Cauble had written a piece for the *Indiana Worker* in which he heralded Jackson’s return from military service in Europe.<sup>63</sup> Five years later, when Jackson won the Republican gubernatorial primary and the election with significant Klan support, Cauble offered no comment in the pages of the *Indiana Worker*.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the *Indiana Worker* and its successor, the *Indiana Christian*, contained few, if any, references to the Klan or its political fortunes in Indiana. This omission perhaps reflects a studied neutrality toward the Klan on the part of the Disciples’ statewide leadership.

A more recent analysis of Indiana Disciples history offers a brief illustration of the problems involved in explaining the Klan’s presence among Indiana Disciples. Henry K. Shaw draws no explicit connection between divisions among Indiana Disciples over the Klan and the subsequent schisms they suffered. He simply observes that “the Klan left its scars of prejudice and bigotry on many Disciples’ congregations in the Hoosier state.”<sup>65</sup> Nearly every other major study of Disciples history lacks any mention of the Klan issue; the one that

does deal with it follows Shaw's lead and gives it only cursory attention.<sup>66</sup> The obvious implication is that most Disciples historians have not considered the Klan issue vital to the story of division between fundamentalist and modernist Disciples.

In contrast, Kevin R. Kragenbrink contends that attitudes toward the Klan on the part of Disciples leaders and clergy were indicative of the increasing gap between modernists and fundamentalists over competing visions of American society. For those Disciples who favored the Klan, Kragenbrink argues, the organization "was part of the America in which they lived, and was accepted as a partner in achieving the America they dreamed of."<sup>67</sup> This view accords with Leonard J. Moore's assertion that the Klan served as a rallying point for white Protestants in Indiana who felt that their traditional way of life was being threatened by the impersonal forces of modernity.<sup>68</sup>

Those Disciples clergy and church members who did not share such views regarded the Klan as an insidious threat to their progressive agenda. Kragenbrink notes that the *Christian Century*, a modernist Disciples publication, offered the "only consistent opposition to the Klan among the Disciples."<sup>69</sup> Contributors to that journal often framed their anti-Klan arguments in terms of the wider fundamentalist-modernist controversy raging throughout American Protestantism at this time. Among Indiana Disciples, one of the most outspoken modernist critics of the Klan was Alva W. Taylor, secretary of the Disciples' Board of Temperance and Social Welfare in Indianapolis from 1921 to 1932.<sup>70</sup> In a 1927 article for the *New Republic*, Taylor contended that the notorious Indiana Klan leader, D. C. Stephenson, owed his rise to power in Indiana in large part to his exploitation of "religious fundamentalism and its concomitant, 100 percent Americanism."<sup>71</sup> Those who had supported Klan-backed politicians in the 1924 elections had been led astray by their wrong-headed religious ideology, according to Taylor. Although Stephenson had fallen from power in 1925, Taylor still feared a Klan resurgence, and he issued a plea to readers. The fundamentalists, he argued, "can be led to vote according to an enlightened conscience, if only those organs of public opinion and civic conscience, the press and the pulpit, will do their duty."<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately, from Taylor's perspective, no such appeals appeared in the pages of either the *Indiana Worker* or the *Indiana Christian* during this period.

As Taylor undoubtedly knew, some of his fellow Disciples clergy in Indiana had in fact attempted to "enlighten" their church members about the Klan during the height of the Klan's popularity, but to little or no avail. At least four Disciples ministers in Indianapolis lost their pulpits as a direct result of their resistance to Klan infiltration in their congregations. All four were identified with the more progressive wing of the Disciples, and one of them—Frank E. Davison—came under scathing criticism from his more conservative colleagues for the position that he took. The controversy surrounding his confrontation with his church and his eventual resignation reveals the close connection between the Klan issue and the deepening fissures among Indiana Disciples.

In May 1923, the Reverend Davison was pastor of the third largest Disciples congregation in Indianapolis, the Englewood Christian Church. A graduate of Butler College and Yale University Divinity School, he had recently concluded a successful revival during which over two hundred members were

added to the church's rolls.<sup>73</sup> Shortly thereafter, three of the church's elders approached Davison with an offer "to make [him] the greatest preacher in the state" if he would agree to join the Klan and speak out in favor of it.<sup>74</sup> They promised financial rewards and an even greater influx of new church members; but Davison refused, equating their offer to the biblical temptations of Christ by Satan.

What happened next gained the attention of the Indianapolis newspapers, the Klan's journal, the *Fiery Cross*, and the anti-Klan publication *Tolerance*. During Sunday services on May 27, Davison announced his opposition to plans to hold a mass meeting of Klansmen at the Englewood church in response to an invitation by a men's organization known as the "Hustling Hundred" and the official church board.<sup>75</sup> Davison had been out of town when both groups met and approved the invitation. In his statement to the congregation, Davison described his opposition to the Klan meeting as "a protest against bringing a divisive organization into the church and a protest against using the church of Jesus Christ as a promoting agency for a worldly and somewhat questionable institution."<sup>76</sup>

Not surprisingly, Englewood church officials soon called for Davison's ouster. At a contentious church board meeting a few days later, Davison was forced to resign.<sup>77</sup> The controversy did not end with that action, however. Sixteen members of the Indianapolis-area Disciples ministers' association met on June 13 and passed a resolution in support of Davison. In a public statement, this group declared that it was "unalterably opposed to having the Klan issue intruded into the churches," and they decried "the religious dissension within the church brought about by Klan activities."<sup>78</sup> Of this group, only one of the sixteen agreed to let his name be published—the Reverend R. Melvyn Thompson, pastor of the Northwood Christian Church and the vice-president of the ministers' association. According to a report of this meeting in *Tolerance*, the other participants feared that they might face similar pressures and thus chose to remain anonymous.<sup>79</sup> In spite of their reticence, it seems likely that Davison's supporters represented the more progressive element among the Disciples clergy in Indianapolis.

A large contingent of conservative Disciples ministers in the Indianapolis area swiftly and angrily reacted to the resolution passed by Davison's supporters. Meeting at the Bethany Church of Christ (Disciples) in Indianapolis, members of a conservative caucus calling itself the Central Indiana Christian Institute produced a statement denouncing the action of the pro-Davison Disciples ministers. Their counter-resolution stated that "the sixteen Christian ministers who passed certain resolutions pertaining to F. E. Davison and the Christian Church do not represent the sentiment of any considerable number of Christian preachers in Indianapolis, or at most only represent themselves."<sup>80</sup> B. W. Bass, who presided at this meeting, further declared that the Institute's resolution represented the unanimous vote of sixty-five participants. Significantly, one newspaper account of the Institute's action described it as an ominous development, stating that the "Klan issue may lead to a break in local churches."<sup>81</sup>

The Central Indiana Christian Institute was an informal organization of conservative and fundamentalist Disciples who were alarmed by what they viewed as a discernible movement toward theological modernism and

centralization of power within their denomination. Many who were associated with the Institute were openly sympathetic to the Klan; some were active members and promoters of it. For example, the program for the Institute's three-day gathering in March 1924 included a number of Indiana Disciples ministers who were also involved with or supportive of the Klan. Among the featured speakers were two whom *Tolerance* had identified as Klan members: the Reverend M. V. Foster of the Eighth Christian Church in Indianapolis and the Reverend U. S. Johnson of the South Side Christian Church in Indianapolis.<sup>82</sup> S. S. Lappin, pastor of the First Christian Church in Bedford, Indiana, was also on the program. Shortly before the Institute's meeting Lappin had published an article in the *Christian Standard*, the conservative Disciples' national weekly journal, in which he stated that he "agreed fully with the principles of the Klan and supported the right of a preacher to speak for the Klan in his own pulpit."<sup>83</sup> Finally, the Institute welcomed a prominent Disciples minister from Cincinnati, Orval W. Baylor, whom the *Fiery Cross* had recently interviewed and celebrated as "Cincinnati's Klan Preacher."<sup>84</sup> Although the topics addressed by the speakers at the Institute's conference apparently had little or nothing to do with the Klan issue, the presence of these speakers on the program offers evidence of more sympathy for the Klan among conservative Disciples ministers in Indiana than among their liberal counterparts.

The other three Disciple pastors who left their pulpits in 1923 due to the Klan issue included the Reverend Clay Trusty of the Seventh Christian Church, the Reverend Earl N. Griggs of the Capitol Avenue Christian Church, and the Reverend Clarence Garfield Baker of the West Park Christian Church. All three churches were in Indianapolis, and all three ministers had modernist credentials and reputations. Baker and Griggs had received their degrees from two liberal seminaries—Baker from the University of Chicago Divinity School and Griggs from the Yale University Divinity School.<sup>85</sup> Baker's resignation from his pulpit resulted from a Fourth of July sermon in which he leveled criticisms against the Klan.<sup>86</sup> The circumstances surrounding Griggs's resignation were less clear, although press reports insinuated that it stemmed from "a difference of opinion" between the pastor and members of his church in regard to the Klan.<sup>87</sup> Griggs himself refused to disclose the reason for his decision to step down from his pulpit.

The departure of the Reverend Clay Trusty was more clear-cut. A Butler College and Indiana University Law School graduate, Trusty was widely known for his community involvement, particularly his promotion of interfaith activities with Catholics and Jews. His unabashedly anti-Klan sermons and his ecumenical interests apparently ran afoul of a large number of his church's members. In September 1923, the church elected a new board, and Trusty resigned a month later. Trusty's successor at Seventh Christian Church was the Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, a fundamentalist Disciples minister who, according to one historian, later gained a reputation as "a notorious rabble-rousing bigot and anti-Semite."<sup>88</sup> Smith was another one of the featured speakers at the Central Indiana Christian Institute's conference in March 1924.<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, as was the case with other major Protestant denominations in Indiana, there were many Disciples preachers who openly embraced and worked with the Ku Klux Klan. Perhaps one of the best known was the Reverend

Donald C. Ford, pastor of the Michigan City Christian Church. *Tolerance* identified Ford as a Klan member in April 1923, shortly after the anti-Klan newspaper had published a sermon by Ford entitled “The Ku Klux Klan: What I Think of It and Why I Think It.”<sup>90</sup> Like other Klan apologists, Ford, declaring to his congregation that the Klan had been falsely maligned, proposed to dispel those accusations. His sermon offers a fairly comprehensive representation of the white Protestant nationalist ideology that drew other Disciples ministers and lay people into the Klan movement.

Ford’s first concern was to rebut the contention that the Klan was based on principles of religious and racial bigotry. He argued that the Klan did not seek to deprive Catholics, Jews, or blacks of their constitutional rights. But such persons by definition could never belong to the Klan because, according to Ford’s convoluted logic, it was “an organization of 100 per cent Americans.” Catholics and Jews were automatically excluded from this category because of the Catholics’ “first allegiance to the Pope of Rome” and the Jews’ refusal to “believe in the tenets of the Christian religion.” When it came to African Americans, Ford’s racist presumptions rose to the fore. The key issues, he argued, were racial inferiority and the divinely ordained system of racial segregation:

For six thousand years the Negro walked over the diamond mines of Southern Africa and never once did he take one of the stones and polish it into a beautiful diamond. Never once did he cut down the trees and build himself a boat with which to ford the rivers. Always he was content to either wade or swim. Never once did he attempt to build himself a house in which to live or to organize a form of government that would evolve [*sic*] his people.<sup>91</sup>

Clearly, Ford and those Disciples clergy who became active in the Klan preached a gospel of white supremacy that would resonate with many of the faithful in their churches. After all, like the state’s population in general, Indiana Disciples were overwhelmingly white. In 1925, the Disciples’ *Year Book* listed 703 white churches with 160,436 members and only three African American churches with a cumulative total of just over 300 members.<sup>92</sup>

Having established the basis for the Klan’s membership, Ford next turned to its program of action. All of the Klan’s activities, he argued, flowed from its overarching goal of preserving Protestantism in the United States. To that end, Ford declared, the Klan stood “shoulder to shoulder” with Protestant Christians in promoting the seemingly innocuous objectives of instilling “a greater reverence for and a deeper faith in the Bible,” “a higher regard for the law,” and “the developing of Christian character.”<sup>93</sup> More specifically, the pursuit of these goals necessitated the severe restriction of immigration as well as the complete “Americanization” of foreign-born citizens. In Ford’s view, immigrants were the chief source of labor and political strife and were the main participants in illicit liquor traffic. He further advocated stricter law enforcement of Prohibition statutes and called for “clean” politics. These were familiar Klan themes, and they apparently found receptive audiences in Disciples churches

throughout Indiana.<sup>94</sup> Ford concluded his pro-Klan sermon with a vigorous if somewhat obscure defense of the Klan's methods. He solemnly declared that the Klan eschewed violent tactics and that any reports to the contrary were patently false.<sup>95</sup> Those considering Klan membership should not be put off by its shadowy nature. Rather, Ford contended, the Klansmen's secrecy was a necessity, for it was what enabled them to be more effective in their law enforcement activities. In a final rhetorical flourish, Ford avowed that the Klan endeavored to accomplish its goals by encouraging its members and society in general to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. "What can there be wrong with such an organization as this?" he asked.<sup>96</sup>

Evidently many Disciples ministers concurred with Ford's assessment and were willing to go public with their convictions. Shortly after Ford delivered his address, the Reverend Ora Oxely of the Boone Grove Christian Church in neighboring Porter County delivered a sermon to his congregation entitled "Cleaning the Slate of America, the Great." According to a report in *Tolerance*, a large group of Klansmen was present for Oxely's sermon, most of them having arrived by a chartered interurban car.<sup>97</sup> The same account tells of a Klan visit to the Sunday evening services at the Rolling Prairie Christian Church in nearby La Porte County and a lecture on "Klanism" by Ford at the Rolling Prairie High School the following Tuesday evening.<sup>98</sup> The Reverend R. Warren Main of the Hobart Christian Church was honored in the pages of the *Fiery Cross* for interrupting an anti-Klan speech by Clarence Bretch, a candidate for Lake County prosecutor in 1924, and defending the Klan's activities.<sup>99</sup> In July 1922, a correspondent from the *Christian Standard* reported favorably on an address entitled "The Fundamentals of Americanism" by an Indianapolis Disciples pastor, the Reverend Charles Gunsolus. Sounding several familiar Klan themes, Gunsolus called for the maintenance of white supremacy, the suppression of Catholicism, the study of the Protestant Bible in public schools, and the immediate deportation of all Catholic and Japanese immigrants.<sup>100</sup>

Examples abound of the cooperation of Disciples clergy with the Klan in Indiana. The First Christian Church in Hammond sponsored a showing of the Klan propaganda movie "The Traitor Within," presumably with the pastor's concurrence.<sup>101</sup> During a Klan rally in Noblesville in January 1923, the Reverend A. H. Monroe of the Noblesville Christian Church addressed the gathered Klan recruits on "the virtues of 100 percent Americanism and the separation of church and state."<sup>102</sup> The Prospect Christian Church in Beech Grove advertised its ice cream social in the *Fiery Cross* with the accompanying declaration by its minister, C. M. Hamilton, that "This is a 100 per cent Protestant church."<sup>103</sup> At a statewide meeting of the women's Klan organization near Mooresville, two Disciples pastors—the Reverend E. J. Cain of the First Christian Church in Mooresville and the Reverend J. Walter Green of Carlisle Christian Church—offered words of welcome and blessing.<sup>104</sup> In some areas, Disciples ministers even sponsored and participated in "Klan revivals." The Reverend W. W. Roberts of Crawfordsville conducted such services at the Central Christian Church in Lebanon and at the First Christian Church in Linden during the winter and spring of 1924. In its report on the revival at Lebanon, the *Fiery Cross* reported that Roberts was "making recruits for the Klan the same as the church."<sup>105</sup>

Like their colleagues in other Protestant churches throughout Indiana, some Disciples ministers became so enamored of the Klan that several became full-time Klan “lecturers” and officers within its county and statewide organizations. One who followed such a route, and who was castigated in the local press for it, was the Reverend Rome G. Jones, the former pastor of the West Walnut Street Church of Christ (Disciples) in Portland. *Tolerance* reprinted an article that appeared in the Portland *Post-Democrat* and described Jones as an example of “[o]ne-horse preachers of the lame duck variety” who “are traitors to the cause of Christianity and should be shunned and scorned by all right-thinking people.”<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, other Disciples ministers, such as the Reverend L. E. Brown of the Main Street Christian Church in Rushville, also left the preaching ministry to become full-time Klan lecturers.<sup>107</sup> The Reverend Verle Wilson Blair of Plainfield was the Grand Kludd or state chaplain who offered the invocation at the massive Klan gathering in Kokomo on July 4, 1923; the *Fiery Cross* frequently published his sermons and lectures.<sup>108</sup> Disciples ministers were even involved in the split in the state Klan organization that occurred in the spring of 1924 when D. C. Stephenson attempted to set up a rival Klan in Indiana. Stephenson had quarreled with the national Klan leadership and had been removed as Grand Dragon of Indiana. In a bid to reassert his authority over the Indiana Klan, Stephenson called for a meeting of local Klan representatives at Indianapolis on May 12, 1924, but the convention failed to stimulate sufficient support or interest.<sup>109</sup> The Reverend G. Stanley West of the First Christian Church in Brazil was elected as Grand Kligrapp (secretary) of Stephenson’s short-lived organization.<sup>110</sup>

Although many Disciples ministers in Indiana took unmistakable positions on the Klan, still others struggled to remain neutral or non-committal. Evidently, this was the stance adopted by Secretaries Cauble and Hoover of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association and its district evangelists. References to the Klan simply do not exist in the pages of the *Indiana Worker* and *Indiana Christian* throughout the 1920s. Indeed, the reports by Cauble, Hoover, and the district evangelists about the activities of Indiana Disciples congregations create the impression that the Klan was altogether absent. But that certainly was not the case, in spite of the efforts of some Disciples ministers to stay out of the fray when their churches became embroiled in Klan-related controversies. For example, the Reverend M. H. Garrard was the pastor of the Main Street Christian Church in Kokomo in February 1924 when a conflict arose concerning the use of the church sanctuary for a Klan funeral service. Two of the church’s trustees had prohibited the ceremony on the grounds that “the wearing of masks would create dissension [*sic*]” within the church.<sup>111</sup> The *Fiery Cross* charged the church officers with entertaining political ambitions, but it noted that Garrard “had nothing to say” about the matter.<sup>112</sup>

Whether Disciples ministers in Indiana kept silent or became vocal opponents or advocates of the Klan, the divisive presence of the “hooded order” unmistakably emerged at a time when fundamentalist and modernist Disciples were moving toward open rupture. An analysis of those Indiana Disciples clergy who served as chaplains (“kludds”) or officers in the county organizations (“klaverns”), and the eventual alignment of their congregations with conservative and liberal Disciples factions, further reinforces this perception. A comparison

of those named as “kludds” and other officers in the 1925 lists of Indiana Klan officers with the rosters of ministers in the Disciples’ 1924 and 1925 *Year Books* of the Disciples yields some illuminating results.<sup>113</sup> Of the eighty-eight county klaverns for which complete or partial officer lists exist, no less than twenty-seven had Disciples pastors serving as “kludds.” In other words, nearly one of every three “kludds” in Indiana was a Disciples minister when the Klan was at its peak. Additionally, at least eleven klaverns had Disciples clergy holding various other offices, including three who were “Exalted Cyclops” and four who were “Great Kludds.”<sup>114</sup> Altogether, thirty-two of the ninety-four separate klaverns (exclusive of Marion County) in Indiana had forty-one Disciples ministers among their officers.<sup>115</sup> Clearly, Disciples clergy were well represented among Indiana Klan officialdom.

As a group, these clergy members paralleled some of the demographic patterns described by historian Leonard J. Moore in regard to Indiana Klan members generally.<sup>116</sup> Disciples pastors who were active in the Indiana Klan were fairly evenly distributed throughout the state, although they tended to be more clustered in the central and northern sections of the state.<sup>117</sup> In terms of their places of residence and the locations of their churches, they could be found in rural areas, villages, towns, and cities. It is difficult to determine their socio-economic status, although slightly less than half (twenty) served churches that paid them as full-time ministers. Most of these churches were located in larger towns and tended to be more affluent.<sup>118</sup> It seems probable that most of the ministers who served these churches would have had incomes in the middle- to upper-middle class ranges. The remaining clergymen either served more than one congregation on a part-time basis or were preaching infrequently and thus not identified with a particular congregation. A handful of these were involved in general evangelistic work during 1925.<sup>119</sup> The churches served by these ministers were almost uniformly located in very small communities and were usually below average in terms of their yearly offering totals.<sup>120</sup> Given this situation, the ministers who preached in these churches probably earned incomes that would have identified them for the most part as lower middle class. Like the Klan membership in general, then, Disciples ministers who were active in the Indiana Klan represented a broad cross-section of society in terms of their geographic distribution and social and economic standing.

The higher-profile Klan involvement of these Disciples ministers seems to suggest that pro-Klan sympathy may have been fairly strong within the thirty-seven churches they served during 1924-1925. Less clear is the relationship between a congregation’s stand on the Klan issue and how it would identify itself when the Disciples divided. Answering this question becomes even more problematic in view of the fact that the Disciples did not formally separate until 1968. This year marked a watershed point, as ministers and congregations chose between affiliation with the “Disciples” (liberals) or the “independents” (conservatives). These decisions were formalized in the publication of two separate church directories, the *Year Book of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and the *Directory of the Ministry: A Yearbook of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ*. Using the listings in the 1968 editions of these directories, it is possible to gain some sense of which camp each congregation was gravitating toward during the 1920s. By comparing this information with

each congregation's per capita giving to Disciples' agencies in 1924-1925, an even clearer picture emerges.<sup>121</sup> Such figures provide a fairly accurate portrait of a congregation's position on the theological and cultural spectrum during the mid-1920s, for they reflect that particular church's level of commitment to the liberal ideology that had become increasingly prevalent in the Disciples' state and national agencies since the early 1900s.

The 1968 directories show that, at that time, eighteen of the thirty-seven Disciples churches that were being served by clergy who were Klan officers in 1924-1925 eventually identified themselves as "independents" (conservatives). Fourteen of these congregations affiliated with the "Disciples" (liberals), and five had ceased to exist.<sup>122</sup> Of those that became "independent," all but two were substantially below the average per capita giving for Disciples agencies during 1924-1925; none were above the average. Of those congregations that became "Disciples," eight were considerably above the average while the remaining six were near or slightly below it. Every one of the five churches that had ceased to exist by 1968 contributed negligible amounts to "cooperative" Disciples causes during 1924-1925, perhaps indicating that they were more sympathetic to the conservative and fundamentalist Disciples.<sup>123</sup>

It is important to note that eleven of the fourteen churches that ultimately identified with the more liberal branch of the Disciples were located in county seat towns, while only three of the "independent" churches were in such locations.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, fourteen of the eighteen churches that eventually aligned with the "independent" Christian Churches were located in small towns and rural areas, with only one being located in a major urban area.<sup>125</sup> Historian Leonard J. Moore has persuasively demonstrated that the Klan arose in Indiana as a populist response to the growing domination of community life by social and economic elites in the towns and cities of Indiana.<sup>126</sup> Among the Klan's chief opponents, then, were those civic and business leaders who had a large stake in the new industrial economy of the 1920s. It therefore seems altogether probable that such elites were more likely to be found in the wealthier county seat Disciples churches than in the small town and rural churches. When Klan infiltration became an issue in their congregations—such as what occurred at the Main Street Christian Church in Kokomo over the use of the church for a Klan funeral—members of those elites would have exerted their lay leadership power to oppose it. This scenario provides at least a partial explanation for why most of the Klan-influenced congregations that were located in county seats and larger towns eventually aligned themselves with the liberal branch of the Disciples.

What role, then, did the Ku Klux Klan have in the growing division between conservative and liberal Disciples during the 1920s? It certainly was not the sole precipitating factor, yet the preceding analysis shows that it was at least a contributing one. As sociologist Edwin L. Becker argues, the experience of Disciples clergy in Indiana with the Klan demonstrates that there was an "overlap" between the Klan issue and the Disciples' eventual schism.<sup>127</sup> Much like their colleagues in Protestant pulpits throughout the state and the nation, many conservative and fundamentalist Disciples ministers in Indiana found common ground with the Klan's ideology and program of action. Of course, unless a Disciples congregation was unusually united, establishing a direct

connection between ministerial actions and congregants' attitudes toward the Klan remains problematic. Nevertheless, the correlation of congregational giving patterns and participation of pastors in the Klan offers a useful impression of Indiana Disciples churches in the 1920s, especially in terms of their attitudes toward centralization and "cooperation." At the very least, the widespread involvement of Disciples ministers with the Klan was symptomatic of their anxiety over the direction of American society, and it exacerbated the growing cultural rift between themselves and modernist Disciples. In short, the Klan exacerbated the division that continues to separate the heirs of the Stone-Campbell movement some eighty years after it first appeared.

The experience of Indiana Disciples during the 1920s illuminates the intersection between the modernist-fundamentalist controversy and the struggle over how to respond to the massive changes taking place in national life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this story solely in terms of economic and social dislocation, or to dismiss entirely the critical role of doctrinal beliefs. As Henry E. Webb has observed, it is clear that "social and cultural factors certainly facilitated the schismatic tendencies within the ranks of the Disciples of Christ."<sup>128</sup> Those tendencies had to do with theological and ecclesiological convictions, and as such they were indispensable causes of the rupture that eventually took place. The changing conditions of American society brought these divisive proclivities to the forefront after World War I. The advocates of "cooperation" pushed a modernizing agenda that elicited a negative response among some Indiana Disciples, and many of them expressed their overall discontent with the emerging modern order by involving themselves in organizations of resistance such as the Ku Klux Klan. This mixture of diverging beliefs and clashing visions of society proved to be a potent formula for division. For the Disciples of Christ in Indiana, it also reflected the cultural divide that would characterize much of American national life for the rest of the twentieth century.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See especially Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup>Ellis Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1997), 46.

<sup>3</sup>Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 293-302; Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 69-70.

<sup>4</sup>Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order*, 8-9, 83-84.

<sup>5</sup>The term "island communities" is from Wiebe, *Search for Order*, xiii. He

uses it to describe the decentralized, informal power structures that characterized American society prior to the 1870s.

<sup>6</sup>Indiana historian James H. Madison regards the social conservatism and democratic localism of Hoosier culture as essential components of “the Indiana way.” Such values and practices resonated closely with the Disciples’ congregational ethos. For a summary of Madison’s view of Indiana culture, see Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 319-21.

<sup>7</sup>The title was later changed to “General Secretary” as a result of action taken at the state convention at Lafayette in May 1927. G. F. Powers, “A Memorandum of Various Sessions,” *Indiana Worker* 13 (June-July 1927): 2.

<sup>8</sup>Hawley provides an excellent overview of the “cooperative individualism” of public-private partnerships that is closely identified with Herbert Hoover and other Republican progressive politicians. See Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order*, 53-57. Emily S. Rosenberg analyzes the impact on American foreign policy of Hoover’s vision of the “cooperative state” in *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 138-60.

<sup>9</sup>Traditional Disciples antipathy toward extra-congregational entities certainly accounted for some of the Society’s lack of success during this time. However, as Henry K. Shaw points out, other organizations and movements within the churches were vying for the attention and resources of Disciples church members. These included, most notably, the Sunday School movement and the emergence and growing influence of women’s church organizations, especially the Christian Woman’s Board of Missions. See Shaw, *Ibid.*, 193-94.

<sup>10</sup>Henry K. Shaw, *Ibid.*, 296-97.

<sup>11</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 21.

<sup>12</sup>For evidence of his theological leanings, see, for example, Cauble’s publication of and favorable comments on excerpts from a sermon by Allen B. Philputt, a leading modernist Disciples minister in Indianapolis, in the *Indiana Worker*. In this sermon, Philputt asserts that Christianity must change with the times and that “practical results” are more important than correct doctrine to “modern man.” C. W. Cauble, “Christianity Active and Growing,” *Indiana Worker* 11 (December 1922): 1.

<sup>13</sup>C. W. Cauble, “Education,” *Ibid.*, 8 (January 1920): 2.

<sup>14</sup>“To the Readers of the *Indiana Worker*,” *Ibid.*, 12 (December 1924): 3. Significantly, Cauble offered no such endorsements of the conservative Disciples seminary at Cincinnati, also founded in 1924.

<sup>15</sup>Cauble’s biographical details are summarized in Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 318n5.

<sup>16</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 294-95.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>18</sup>The circulation of the *Indiana Worker* and its successor, the *Indiana Christian*, never exceeded much more than 4100 subscriptions throughout the 1920s. During this period, the total membership of Indiana Disciples churches fluctuated between 130,000 and 150,000. See “State Paper,” *Indiana Worker* 6 (May 1919): 6, and “Fulfillment of Announcement,” *Ibid.*, 13 (September 1927): 1.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 295. These districts were organized geographically; later they expanded to include seven districts altogether.

<sup>20</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 296-97.

<sup>21</sup>Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 318.

<sup>22</sup>R. D. Thomas, "Western District," *Indiana Worker* 12 (Sept. 1923): 3.

<sup>23</sup>C. W. Cauble, "Important Announcement for the Churches," Ibid., 9 (July 1921): 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>C. W. Cauble, "The Cover Page," Ibid., 9 (September 1920): 2.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. Among the agencies that did not take part in the merger were the Disciples' Board of Higher Education, the Board of Temperance and Social Welfare, and the Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity. All of these agencies were based in Indianapolis, whereas the new United Society was headquartered in St. Louis until 1928, when it moved to Indianapolis. See Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 286-88.

<sup>27</sup>C. W. Cauble, "Facts Churches Should Know," Ibid., 9 (January 1921): 1. Cauble later referred to the group as the "Americanization Association of Minneapolis, Minn." Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 298.

<sup>28</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 297.

<sup>29</sup>C. W. Cauble, "History Repeating Itself," *Indiana Worker* 12 (February 1925): 1.

<sup>30</sup>C. W. Cauble, "Let the Readers Be the Jury," Ibid., 12 (March 1925): 3.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 266.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 289-92.

<sup>36</sup>Robert W. Shaw, "Biography of Guy Israel Hoover" (B.D. thesis, Butler University School of Religion, 1944), 62-63.

<sup>37</sup>Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 335n43.

<sup>38</sup>Shaw, "Biography of Guy Israel Hoover," 33. Shaw notes that Hoover's name no longer appeared on the list of the Institute's members after the September 1921 issue of its journal, *The Scroll*. For a brief description of the Campbell Institute, see McAllister and Tucker, *Journey in Faith*, 374-75.

<sup>39</sup>Shaw, "Biography of Guy Israel Hoover," 14.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>41</sup>Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana*, 299.

<sup>42</sup>G. I. Hoover, "A Great Co-operative Enterprise," Ibid., 8 (April 1920): 10.

<sup>43</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Church's Opportunity in Indiana," Ibid., 9 (Jan. 1921): 1.

<sup>44</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Church's Opportunity in Indiana," *Indiana Worker* 9 (February 1921): 4.

<sup>45</sup>Shaw, "Biography of Guy Israel Hoover," 74.

<sup>46</sup>*Indiana Christian* 14 (November 1927): 1.

<sup>47</sup>G. I. Hoover, "State Program of Work," *Indiana Worker* 12 (October 1926): 1.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>49</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Our Churches Speak Out in Behalf of State Work," Ibid., 13 (December 1926): 1.

<sup>50</sup>See G. I. Hoover, "Facing Our Record," *Ibid.*, 12 (October 1926): 1, and G. I. Hoover, "Facing the Future in Our State Work," *Ibid.*, 13 (December 1926): 1.

<sup>51</sup>G. I. Hoover, "A Challenge to a Great Advance In Behalf of a Great Cause," *Ibid.*, 13 (March 1927): 1. In the preceding year, a total of \$9,254.48 had been given to the state association.

<sup>52</sup>G. I. Hoover, "The Growth of Our Work," *Indiana Christian* 14 (October 1928): 8. According to this report, 310 churches contributed a total of \$17,310.28 to the state association during 1927-1928.

<sup>53</sup>Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 340.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, G. I. Hoover, "Messages to the Men of Indiana State-Wide Dinner Held at Indianapolis," *Indiana Christian* 15 (March 1929): 4. R. A. Long, a wealthy Disciples businessman from Kansas City, made the following statements: "It seems to me there is danger just now of loss through over emphasis on independence. We need to reemphasize our sense of mission and our plea for unity."

<sup>55</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Business Men's Banquet," *Ibid.*, 14 (January 1928): 1.

<sup>56</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Indiana Christian Missionary Association," *Ibid.*, 16 (May 1930): 1.

<sup>57</sup>C. W. Cauble, "Interesting Meeting in Southern Indiana," *Indiana Worker* 9 (March 1921): 1.

<sup>58</sup>See, for example, Book's statement in a letter to Cauble regarding the spurious claims of the International Christian Missionary Association: "It is generally known that I fully believe in independent missions." C. W. Cauble, "Facts Churches Should Know," *Ibid.*, 9 (January 1921): 1.

<sup>59</sup>G. I. Hoover, "Indianapolis Convention, October 12-16," *Ibid.*, 13 (September 1927): 1. Hoover also noted in passing that this was "a convention called outside the lines of our organized work."

<sup>60</sup>See "North American Christian Convention," *Indiana Christian* 14 (September 1928): 6, and "Program For the North American Christian Convention," *Ibid.*, 15 (September 1929): 5. See also "Restoration Rally," *Ibid.*, 15 (April 1929): 7. This conference was held at the Tabernacle Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, and it featured several conservative Disciples speakers.

<sup>61</sup>Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 358.

<sup>62</sup>Robert W. Shaw, "Biography of Guy Israel Hoover," 87.

<sup>63</sup>C. W. Cauble, "Annual Report," *Indiana Worker* 6 (May 1919): 1. Cauble described Jackson as "a disciple known and loved by a host of brethren of this commonwealth." One measure of the esteem Jackson had garnered among his fellow Indiana Disciples was his inclusion as a major speaker at the 1919 state convention. His topic was "We have won the war for Democracy. Will we win the world for Christianity?" "Program of the State Convention [of] Churches of Christ, May 12-15, 1919," *Ibid.*, 6 (April 1919): 4.

<sup>64</sup>Jackson's election was noted in one national Disciples periodical, the *Christian-Evangelist*, under the headline: "The New Governor of the Hoosier State, the First Disciple of Christ to be Elected There to that High Office." See Edwin L. Becker, "1923: Year of Peril for Indianapolis Disciples Pastors," *Encounter* 54 (1993): 374. The *Fiery Cross*—a Klan newspaper published in Indianapolis—featured a photograph of Jackson on the front page with the caption "Maj. Ed Jackson: A Christian Gentleman." See "Protestant Ticket Sweeps State," *Fiery*

*Cross* (November 7, 1924): 1.

<sup>65</sup>Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 332.

<sup>66</sup>McAllister and Tucker, *Journey in Faith*, 356-58.

<sup>67</sup>Kragenbrink, "Dividing the Disciples," 127.

<sup>68</sup>Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 101.

<sup>69</sup>Kragenbrink, "Dividing the Disciples," 126-27.

<sup>70</sup>Taylor was a leading advocate of social reform among the Disciples of Christ during the early twentieth century; he held a variety of denominational posts throughout his career. See Stanley Lincoln Harbison, "The Social Gospel Career of Alva Wilmot Taylor" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1975). Ironically, Ed Jackson was the President of the Board of Temperance and Social Welfare in 1923. See Edwin L. Becker, "1923: Year of Peril for Indianapolis Disciples Pastors," *Encounter* 54 (Autumn 1993): 373-74.

<sup>71</sup>Alva W. Taylor, "What the Klan Did in Indiana," *New Republic* 51 (November 16, 1927): 330.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>73</sup>Becker, "Year of Peril," 376.

<sup>74</sup>Frank Elon Davison, *Thru the Rear-view Mirror* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1955), 75. See also the account by John Augustus Davis, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1920-1930: An Historical Study" (Ph. D. dissertation., Northwestern University, 1966), 291-93.

<sup>75</sup>"Defy Klan—Keep Churches Undeiled," *Tolerance* 2 (June 17, 1923): 8.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>Davison, *Thru the Rear-View Mirror*, 76-77; Becker, "Year of Peril," 375-76. Davison worked in a bank for several months before he was called to a new ministry in Chicago in early 1924.

<sup>78</sup>"The Rev. F. E. Davison Commended For Stand," *Indianapolis News* (June 12, 1923): 1, 10; "Indianapolis Preachers Buffaloed!" *Tolerance* 2 (June 24, 1923): 3.

<sup>79</sup>"Indianapolis Preachers Buffaloed!" *Tolerance* 2 (June 24, 1923): 3. According to his autobiography, Davison also received letters of encouragement from Indiana authors Booth Tarkington and George Ade. Davison, *Thru the Rear-View Mirror*, 77.

<sup>80</sup>"Indianapolis Preachers Buffaloed!" *Tolerance* 2 (June 24, 1923): 3.

<sup>81</sup>Quoted in Becker, "Year of Peril," 377.

<sup>82</sup>The program for this conference is contained in *The Indianapolis Christian* 2 (February 1924): 2-3. Ironically, the Institute held this meeting at the Englewood Christian Church, now pastored by a staunch conservative Disciple preacher, O. A. Trinkle, who was also one of the leading organizers of the first North American Christian Convention. M. V. Foster is named as a Klansman in "Ku Klux Directory of Indianapolis Churches," *Tolerance* 2 (May 13, 1923): 9, and Johnson is identified in "Preachers and Their Prices," *Tolerance* 2 (April 1, 1923): 16.

<sup>83</sup>Kragenbrink, "Dividing the Disciples," 124. S. S. Lappin, "Local Church Life: Preachers as Klan Speakers," *Christian Standard* 60 (February 22, 1924): 527.

<sup>84</sup>"An Interview With Cincinnati's Klan Preacher," *Fiery Cross* (March 7, 1924): 6. According to an earlier article in the *Fiery Cross*, Baylor had delivered

a sermon at his home church in defense of the Klan. The unnamed correspondent reported that Baylor drew a large audience that included significant numbers from Indiana and Kentucky, and that “the local Klan threw a guard of more than one hundred men around the church as well as having a number scattered throughout the audience.” “Protestants Defended By Ohio Minister,” *Fiery Cross* (January 11, 1924): 2.

<sup>85</sup>Becker, “Year of Peril,” 378-80.

<sup>86</sup>“Pastor Resigns in Controversy with the Klan,” *Indianapolis Times* (July 31, 1923): 2.

<sup>87</sup>“Pastor Resigns at Christian Church, Cause is Withheld,” *Indianapolis Star* (October 8, 1923): 1.

<sup>88</sup>Richard K. Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1991), 79-81. See also Becker, “Year of Peril,” 381-84, and Irving Leibowitz, *My Indiana* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 211-13.

<sup>89</sup>“Program of the Indiana Christian Institute,” *The Indianapolis Christian* 2 (February 1924): 3.

<sup>90</sup>“Michigan City Ku Klux Roll,” *Tolerance* 2 (April 29, 1923): 3. “Preacher in Defense of Klan: Michigan City Hears Characteristic Harangue,” *Ibid.*, (April 8, 1923): 10. Ford was identified in a later issue as “Exalted Cyclops, Klan Lecturer, Civil Engineer, and teacher of a ‘100 per cent’ Bible Class.” “Squint Into Michigan City Klavern!” *Ibid.*, (September 2, 1923): 12.

<sup>91</sup>“Preacher in Defense of Klan: Michigan City Hears Characteristic Harangue,” *Ibid.*, 2 (April 8, 1923): 10.

<sup>92</sup>*1925 Year Book of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1925), 483. The African American Disciple churches were located in Lake, Marion, and Rush Counties.

<sup>93</sup>“Preacher in Defense of the Klan,” 10.

<sup>94</sup>Moore asserts that the Klan in Indiana was “concerned first and foremost with Prohibition enforcement and crime, with state and local political corruption, and with a wide range of other issues that affected individual towns and cities.” Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 11.

<sup>95</sup>Here Ford made specific reference to an unexplained event called “the Mer Rouge affair” and a series of Catholic church burnings in Canada. See “Preacher in Defense of Klan,” 10.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>“Klan Is Active Near So. Bend,” *Tolerance* 2 (April 22, 1923): 11.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup>*Fiery Cross* (April 25, 1924): 1.

<sup>100</sup>S. E. Homan, “From the Field,” *Christian Standard* 57 (July 22, 1922): 3807.

<sup>101</sup>“The Traitor Within,” *Fiery Cross* (April 18, 1924): 6.

<sup>102</sup>Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross*, 68. Monroe’s defense of “the separation of church and state” was standard anti-Catholic rhetoric.

<sup>103</sup>“Ice Cream Social,” *Fiery Cross* (June 20, 1924): 7.

<sup>104</sup>“Large Crowd Attends,” *Indianapolis News* (July 16, 1923): 3.

<sup>105</sup>“Klan Revival at Lebanon a Success,” *Fiery Cross* (Feb. 18, 1924): 1.

<sup>106</sup>“Preacher Quits Job for Klan,” *Tolerance* 2 (June 24, 1923): 8. The article further reports that Jones stirred up the Klansmen gathered at the Delaware

County fairgrounds in Muncie on June 2, 1923, just prior to the parade and the riot that ensued.

<sup>107</sup>Becker, "Year of Peril," 372n8.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 373.

<sup>109</sup>Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 154-55.

<sup>110</sup>Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross*, 108. West's church affiliation is listed in the *1924 Year Book of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1924), 469.

<sup>111</sup>"Will Not Revoke Mask Order," *Indianapolis News* (February 26, 1924): 27. See also Allen Safianow, "'Konklave in Kokomo' Revisited," *Historian* 50 (May 1988): 342.

<sup>112</sup>"Church Officers Bar Klan: Sunday School Class Demands Explanation," *Fiery Cross* (February 22, 1924): 5.

<sup>113</sup>Local Officers of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1925, Harold C. Feightner Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; *1924 Year Book of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1924), 325-404; *1925 Year Book of Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1925), 321-402. Except where noted, all of the information that follows in regard to Disciple ministers serving as "kludds" and other Klan officers comes from these sources. Restrictions on the use of the Feightner Papers prohibit the use of names. Marion County (Indianapolis) is the one major omission in the county officers lists.

<sup>114</sup>"Exalted Cyclops" was the title for the chief officer of a klavern, and a "Great Kludd" was a chaplain who presided over a "Province" or district composed of several counties. Indiana had thirteen provinces in 1925. See *Local Officers of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1925*.

<sup>115</sup>Some counties had more than one klavern. The Feightner papers contain no lists for the Marion County Klavern.

<sup>116</sup>Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 44-75.

<sup>117</sup>The following county klaverns had Disciples clergy serving as "kludds" or as other officers in 1925: Allen (two), Boone, Brown, Cass, Clay, Crawford, Daviess (two), Dubois, Elkhart, Fayette, Floyd, Gibson, Hamilton, Hendricks, Huntington (two), Johnson, Knox, La Porte, Madison, Miami, Monroe, Morgan, Orange, Perry, Pulaski, Starke, Union, Vanderburgh, Vermillion, Warren, and Wayne. In addition, two Disciples ministers were officers in the Arcadia and Alexandria klaverns.

<sup>118</sup>These towns included: Alexandria, Anderson, Decatur, Evansville, Fortville, Fort Wayne, Knox, La Porte, Lebanon, Martinsville, Michigan City, Nashville, Noblesville, Peru, Plainfield, Richmond, Rushville, Thorntown, Walton, and Winamac. All but six (Alexandria, Fortville, Michigan City, Plainfield, Thorntown, and Walton) were county seat towns. The average yearly offering for Disciples churches in Indiana was \$2244.15. This figure was obtained by dividing the number of churches (703) by the "Total Amount Given by Local Churches for All Purposes" (\$1,577,635.68), *1925 Year Book*, 483. All but one (Nashville) of these churches was above this average; most were well above it.

<sup>119</sup>Notations in the Disciples' *Year Book* indicated whether a minister was "in business but preaching occasionally" or was an "evangelist." See *1925 Year Book*, 321.

<sup>120</sup>These communities included: rural Bedford (two churches), Billingsville, Edinburgh, Floyds Knobs, Liberty, Marengo, Milltown, Montgomery (two churches), Owensville, Roann, Saltillo, Springville, St. Bernice, Troy, and West Baden. All seventeen churches in this category were well below the average yearly offering among Indiana Disciples churches.

<sup>121</sup>The average per capita giving by Indiana Disciples churches for state and national agencies during 1924-1925 was \$1.18, according to the *1925 Year Book*, 483. The figures for individual churches are found in the same *Year Book*, 464-83.

<sup>122</sup>*1968 Year Book of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1968); *1968 Directory of the Ministry: A Yearbook of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ* (Springfield, Il.: Directory of the Ministry, 1968).

<sup>123</sup>It is impossible to determine whether poverty of resources or aversion to theologically and culturally liberal ideas was the deciding factor. Since all five of these churches were very small, it seems likely that a combination of both factors was at work, and that these churches would have gravitated toward the "independent" position had they survived.

<sup>124</sup>The eleven churches that affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1968 were located in Anderson, Decatur, Evansville, La Porte, Lebanon, Martinsville, Noblesville, Peru, Richmond, Rushville, and Winamac. The three "independent" county seat churches were in Fort Wayne, Knox, and Nashville. Fort Wayne had two other larger Christian Churches that identified with the "Disciples" in 1968.

<sup>125</sup>These include the churches at Billingsville, rural Bedford (New Union), Fortville, Liberty, Marengo, Milltown, rural Montgomery (Bethany), Owensville, Plainfield, Roann, St. Bernice, Troy, Walton, and West Baden. The one urban (non-county seat) "independent" church was in Michigan City. This was the church whose pastor was the Reverend Donald C. Ford. *1925 Year Book*, 473.

<sup>126</sup>Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 184-91. In a study of the Klan in Tipton, Indiana, Allen Safianow concurs with Moore's assertion that the Klan drew its membership from a broad demographic base. On the other hand, Safianow finds less evidence to support Moore's description of the Klan as a populist movement that unified communities under the banner of "white Protestant nationalism." See Allen Safianow, "The Klan Comes to Tipton," *Indiana Magazine of History* 95 (September 1999): 203-31.

<sup>127</sup>Becker, "Year of Peril," 370, 384-86.

<sup>128</sup>Henry E. Webb, "A History of the Independent Mission Movement Among Disciples of Christ" (Ph.D. dissertation. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954), 305.

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