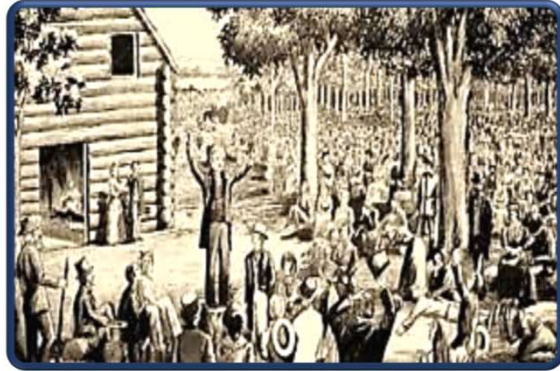


## CLASS 6

### The Restoration Movement

- Stone-Campbell History
- Restoration Theology
- Successes and Failures



## Stone-Campbell History

- During the religious ferment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening, a number of new preachers in across states began to questions the denominational increase and call for a return to a primitive form of the church based on the terms and ideas of the Bible.

Again as each Church is called by a different name, suppose we dissolve those unscriptural names and for peace's sake call ourselves Christians?...At present, I can see no better method than what I here propose; but if any one can display a more scriptural method to promote union, for the Lord's sake let him show it.

– James O'Kelly (1808)

- The two most active figures in this movement would be Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell



## Stone-Campbell History

- Barton Stone
  - In 1796 he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister, and in 1797 moved to Kentucky to become the Pastor for the Cane Ridge church
  - However, even at that time, Stone had significant reservations about the traditional Calvinist doctrines. Regarding his allegiance to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Stone stated "I do in as far as it agrees with the Bible."

"...I became convinced that God did love the whole world, and that the reason why he did not save all, was because of their unbelief; and that the reason they believed not, was not because God did not exert his physical, almighty power in them to make them believe, but because they neglected and received not his testimony, given in the Word concerning his son." - Barton Stone



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  - However, even at that time, Stone had significant reservations about the traditional Calvinist doctrines. Regarding his allegiance to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Stone stated "I do in as far as it agrees with the Bible."
  - As the revival spirit grew in the west, Stone was one of the prominent leaders among the Presbyterians, and even preached during the Cane Ridge Revival in 1801.
  - But his message that God's love was an opportunity for salvation to any person who would accept it led to expulsion from the regional Presbyterian Synod.



## Stone-Campbell History

- In 1803, Stone and some of his fellow preachers who had also been expelled for preaching the same message formed the Springfield Presbytery as an independent governing body.
- But in 1804, the group dissolved itself by a 'Last Will & Testament' which proclaimed the Bible as the only source of authority in religion, thus finding itself 'unscriptural.'
- This document also renounced denominational ordination, and called on all churches to act within their rights as part of the singular 'church of Christ.'



## Stone-Campbell History

- Following this action, Stone and other preachers began to found independent churches throughout Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee. These churches typically took the name 'Christian Church' or 'Church of Christ.'
- Besides their independence and autonomy, one radical change from their Presbyterian background was the practice of Baptism by full immersion.
- The movement grew quickly, and by 1830, members of 'Christian Churches' numbered about 15,000.



## Stone-Campbell History

- Thomas Campbell

- Campbell was devoted to unification of Christians across denominational lines
- A Scots-Irish Presbyterian minister who came to western Pennsylvania in 1807; within a year he would be suspended from his regional Synod for admitting non-members of the Presbyterian Church into communion.
- In 1808, he formed the 'Christian Association of Washington,' a religious society composed of members from many churches, for support of preachers of "simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men."
- Campbell's 'Declaration & Address' provided the charter for the organization, laying out its principles that ecclesial schism is unnatural and sinful to Christianity, and that only practices and ideas expressly authorized by Scripture should be made terms of establishing fellowship among churches.



## Stone-Campbell History

"That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures..." – Thomas Campbell, *Declaration & Address*

"...the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for ... the Old Testament Church..."  
– Thomas Campbell, *Declaration & Address*

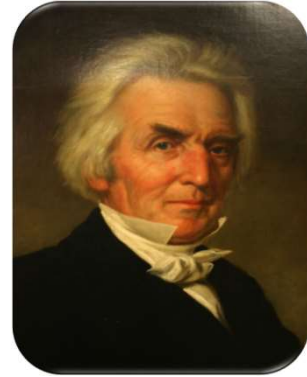
"Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament." – Thomas Campbell, *Declaration & Address*



## Stone-Campbell History

- Alexander Campbell

- Already influenced by Bible-based primitivist movements in Scotland, Alexander came to America in 1809 at age 21 to find that his beliefs aligned with those that his father had expressed in the Declaration & Address.
- After Campbell's study led him to renounce infant baptism in favor of immersive believer baptism, he and his father found fellowship among local Baptists, and from 1815 to 1834 they ministered for the Brush Run (Baptist) Church.
- In 1828, Campbell founded The Christian Baptist, a magazine devoted to "espouse the cause of no religious sect, except that ancient sect called 'Christians first at Antioch.'"
- Campbell's lively writing earned him many supporters throughout the country, including Barton Stone.



## Stone-Campbell History

- During the 1820s and 30s, Campbell became a prolific preacher, writer, and debater, earning a national reputation as a powerful figure in the plea for a "restoration of the ancient order of things."

"It was my pleasure to hear him very often as a preacher of the gospel, and I regard him as the ablest and most original expounder of the Scriptures I have ever heard." – James Madison (4<sup>th</sup> POTUS)

- While most of Campbell's early debates focus on more practical church matters like baptism, a series of publicized debates with renowned atheist Robert Owen in 1829 accelerated the movement.



## Stone-Campbell History

- Campbell's supporters, known as 'Disciples of Christ, included a contingent of frontier preachers that spread the message of restoration to the south and in the new western states
- After being acquainted for some years, in 1832 Stone and Campbell, realizing the harmony between their philosophies, formally united.
  - Many churches within the movements combined, retaining the names of either 'Churches' or 'Disciples of Christ.'
- By 1865, Christian churches had 200k members. By 1900, were the 5<sup>th</sup> largest 'Protestant' group in the U.S.



## Restoration Theology

- While many leaders among the 'Disciples' movement were influenced by the Rationalist philosophy of the day, most Restoration Preachers were middle-lower class and uneducated.
- In some ways, the movement follows from the transition away from Calvinist doctrines of salvation to a more 'Arminian' theology
- Walter Scott's '5-finger exercise':
  - Faith
  - Repentance
  - Baptism
  - Remission of Sins
  - Gift of the Holy Spirit





## Restoration Theology

- The Stone-Campbell movement was defiantly anti-denominational. It saw church distinctions under any name other than 'Christian' as a disservice to the holiness of God's church.
- The basis for the unification of all Christians was the dismissal of any and all elements of faith, like confessional creeds, which were not expressly authorized by Scripture.
- In turn, Scriptural Authority was defined in terms of the established precedent of the New Testament church as revealed in the Bible.
  - Thus privileging the NT paradigm over the OT, with emphasis upon the letters of Paul and especially the book of Acts



## Restoration Theology

- The Restoration Movement is the most thoroughgoing attempt among Christians in America to base matters of faith and practice on the simple but strict terms of Bible Authority.

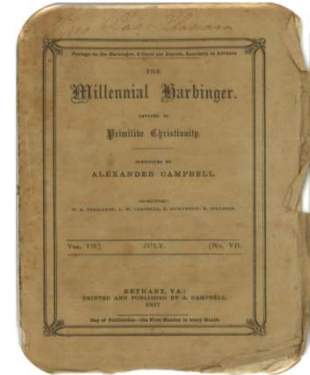
“...it belongs to every individual, and to every congregation of individuals, to discard from their faith and their practice every thing that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Saviour; and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined.”  
 – Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*

- Through this movement, a unique identity was formed on the basis of unique positions regarding church autonomy, the method of baptism (immersion) and the Lord's Supper (weekly), etc.



## Restoration Theology

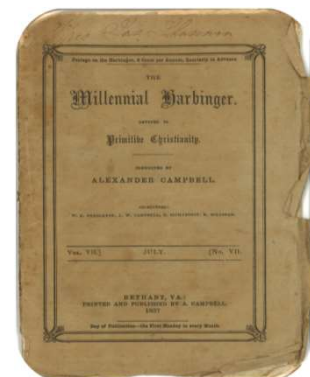
- Despite the foundational principles of the movement being based in issues of Bible Authority and Christian Fellowship, Restoration Preachers maintained an equal focus on the virtues of the faith for every-day life.
- With the lack of any central governing body, early unity among believers was manifested by informal means, most prominently in periodicals like *The Christian Messenger*, *The Gospel Advocate*, and Campbell's landmark periodical after 1830, *The Millennial Harbinger*, which expressed the developing ideas of the movement.



## Restoration Theology

- A strong sense of ‘millennialism’ among virtually all Restoration preachers fed the belief that the restoration of Christ’s church would be either the cause of social healing and salvation (post-) to usher in His Second Coming, or the prophetic warning of its nearness (pre-).
  - Leaders held different (pre- & post-) versions of Christ’s Return.

“This work shall be devoted to the destruction of Sectarianism, Infidelity, and Anti-Christian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development, and introduction of that political and religious order of society called THE MILLENNIUM, which will be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures.” – Alexander Campbell, *The Millennial Harbinger*

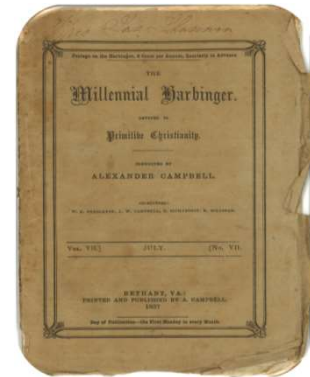




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“The Christian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been permitted to witness the accomplishment of wonderful events; Providence has stationed him on a sublime eminence, from which he can behold the fulfillment of illustrious prophecies, and look backwards upon nearly the whole train of events leading to the Millennium.” – Walter Scott



## Failures & Successes

- Unfortunately, tensions between the desire for unity on one hand, and on the other the potential for sectarian views which interpret those essential terms of unity differently, came to later manifest itself among Restorationist churches and leaders.
- The dilemma that faced many leaders across the movement was the standards of ‘loose’ or ‘strict’ interpretation of the restorationist appeal to “speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where it is silent.”
  - Founding of Campbell’s Bethany College (1840)
  - Founding of the American Christian Missionary Society (1849)
  - Introduction of the melodeon into worship, Midway, KY(1860)
  - Strong divide among abolitionists and slave-owners



## Failures & Successes

- The rising tensions in the movement manifested by ‘issues of unity’ were themselves the result not just of scriptural disagreements, but cultural factors as well which gradually swept the primitivist impulse from a disadvantaged sectarian movement, to an established denominational one.
- And so despite of its growing number of members, the Restoration Movement began to divide after the Civil War. By 1906, the U.S. recognized two separate groups:
  - ‘Churches of Christ’ were generally southern/rural/poor
  - Disciples of Christ’ were generally northern/urban/wealthy
  - Later in the 20th Century, independent ‘Christian Church’ congregations split from the ‘Disciples.’



## Failures & Successes

- Many historians of the Restoration believe that these two groups each represent a different emphasis of the movement, with the Disciples harboring unity and ecumenical cooperation as goals, while the Churches of Christ are more devoted to replication of Apostolic Church.
- While the Restoration goal to bring Christians together in unity and fellowship ultimately failed in ironic ways, key principles of the early preachers and leaders are still to be found in their historical heirs.
  - Devotion to New Testament Christianity as the basis for a simple and common understanding of the faith.
  - Congregational autonomy as its own form of ‘unity’ to exercise the faith independently from any human governing authority.



## Review Questions

A) In your own words, what is expressed by the following slogans?

- “We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent.”
- “...the Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things.”
- “...the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.”

B) What is unique about the approach that the Springfield Presbytery takes to the Bible, and to its own existence?

C) Does the apparent failure of the Restorationists to achieve lasting unity undercut the broader Biblical theology of the movement? If not, why not?

