

The Christian Church in American History

Through the 1930's



(Callao Christian Church, 19th-21st centuries)

By Josh Stucki

Restoration Movement Literature

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CHAPTER 1

1000AD through 1803AD

“America’s Almost-Godless Beginning”

America almost began godless.

Yes, it’s true. But thankfully the Lord had another plan:

It has always been His practice to use people, and those people who were faithful shut down some of the devil’s darkest moves in history.

At the time of the birth of our nation, these people that God used were not Reformers. These men were not philosophers. They did not fancy themselves theologians, Doctors of Theology, or anything of the kind. Our church’s modern ancestry stems from a few brave people who decided to do ONE thing above all – go back to the Bible and the Bible alone.

It is therefore these people through whom we look back on American history – because it can accurately be said – that if these men had not gone back to the Bible – America would have very likely been a godless country forever from its birth.

The background for this study follows:

There were Icelanders (Vikings of a kind) who came to North America well before the Europeans came. However, their settlement was short-lived, and although they returned back to Greenland with some items from North America, they did not return.

Interestingly, Leif Erikson, who led the Icelanders, was not a believer in the Old Norse religion of his people, but a Catholic convert. Nonetheless, nothing of consequence came of his visit for North America as we know it today.

Christopher Columbus arrived in North America on or around October 12th of 1492. He used the cover of “spreading Christianity” wherever he went as a front to try to make a great deal of money in trade with the Asian continents.

He gave his proposal to various European monarchs until finally King Ferdinand of Spain received him after his wife had rejected Columbus' offer (she had been warned about his proposal in advance!).

Financed and equipped, Columbus took a total of four round trips to the Americas. Ironically, he never once claimed to discover or even be at a new land; he continually defended that he had landed on the Asian continent. His silly desire to maintain a false position enabled Amerigo Vespucci, an explorer and accomplished map-maker, to have the new land named after him instead.

Columbus' religion, as we said, was just a front for his desire to exploit, enslave, and profit from whoever and wherever he went. In summary, he began the slave trade of the Americas that would last for centuries thereafter. He also sold the natives' children as sex slaves and household servants. In summary, Columbus was not terribly intelligent and was also greedy, cruel, and covered it all with a false pretense of Christianity.

It is this background information that leads us into our story concerning the development of the church and America:

The Catholic church had been terribly corrupt for several hundred years by the time Columbus sailed, and he was a product of it.

The Protestant church would shortly be born at the hands of Martin Luther, Zwingli, John Calvin and other "reformers" who would really, ultimately, just begin new corrupt state churches over time.

By the time America was established, almost all there was were greedy, corrupt churches with different names acting in the same despicable manner.

Even the Puritans of the American colonies were generally viewed poorly at the time because they practiced asceticism, were not cooperative with other settlements, unintentionally had alliances with natives who savaged other settlements, and were even cruel to their own kind: if someone missed church three weeks in a row, for example, they were either cast out of the camp or executed.

The Salem Witch Trials made the reputation of the Puritans (and thus Christianity in early America) especially heinous, after they unfairly tried and executed many children and young women based on the accusations of witchcraft (many were simply mentally ill, malnourished, autistic, of low cognitive development, etc.).

So, by the time America declared its independence, it is entirely accurate to say that people were **SICK** of religion in general, because the religion they had been exposed to was cruel, greedy, corrupt, and forced. And the reputation was deserved, based on what was present at the time.

France, who had recently been through a sort of religious-cleansing, had revived atheism, humanism, and secularism, and since it had provided a temporary relief from the constant Roman Catholic and Protestant battles and thus the violence that had plagued French society for generations, it was well-received.

This resulted in certain new authors springing up like Voltaire who wrote about the supposed benefits of no religious belief and began forming entirely new humanistic philosophies - some from ancient literature, some from paganism, and some he simply made up - to legitimize his work.

For a time, this worked, and France had a short respite from the previous religious wars. However, the French Revolution was just around the corner, and the lack of religion did nothing to stop the previous violence into returning even more vengeful than before. Clearly, a lack of religion and Voltaire's writings were not the salvation of France.

It was during the Revolutionary War France was having their atheistic "revival." France helped America win the war against their arch-enemy Great Britain, and so they also felt the need to make sure the Americans would not adopt the British religion either (the Church of England), so they started translating and distributing various atheistic tracts, booklets, and full-size volumes.

They also joined forces with American anti-religion authors such as Thomas Paine and publishers such as Benjamin Franklin to turn America into a “new France” instead of a “new Britain”.

After the Revolutionary War was done, it was not shortly thereafter that there was a great ruckus over how religion would play a role in the new government. The ministers and preachers who were in the Americas at the time (some of whom fought and even helped lead in the war effort) wanted Christianity to be the official religion. However, there was great resistance to this idea, since “good Christianity” was almost entirely absent from the culture at the time (albeit outstanding Christian characters such as George Washington and Patrick Henry).

Hence, the Constitution does not use the word “God” like the Declaration of Independence does, and the first amendment attempted to establish neutrality (but not a negative or absence of) with regards to the new Congress and religion.

It was understood early on that each state could have its own religion if it wanted and, in the beginning, some did. However, by the early 1800’s, no state had an official religion any longer. The “why” of this is discussed in chapter III.

By the time the 18th century was ending, the Constitution had been ratified and George Washington had been made its first President. Yet, he lamented at the lack of Christian influence in both private and public life and lamented in letters to friends that he was afraid America would be snuffed out before it started if some sense of patriotism, religious identity and purpose, if morality from God were not soon established. The letters were almost written in the form of lamenting prayers, seemingly wandering if everything he had fought for and risked had been worthwhile.

Infidel clubs were far more common than churches, where young men and women would get together to study various (mostly French) secular, humanistic, atheistic, deistic, and even pagan (why not?) authors and then engage in various amoral revelry since in their minds there was no absolute

moral law against such things (and little or no political will either). President Washington, his friends, and others like them (there were few) truly wondered if they had created an even worse situation than from whence they came.

The churches at the time were impotent. Lengthy and theologically abstruse creeds were made rigid tests of fellowship. The clergy usurped the interpretation of Scripture and assumed priestly functions. The Bible was virtually a closed book to the masses, and it was not regarded to be a systematic and progressive revelation of God's plan of redemption. The doctrine of total depravity was carried to disgusting extremes. Bitter debate accentuated sectarian division that turned the forces of righteousness upon one another in the face of a moral and spiritual situation which called for united action on the part of the friends of God.

Methodism was checked in its effective growth. In three years - 1793-1795 - the denomination suffered an average loss of about four thousand members annually. There was a general decline in all church membership. So discouraging was the situation in the Episcopal Church that the bishop of New York resigned, believing the church would not continue much longer. Bishop Madison, of Virginia, shared the despairing conviction of Chief Justice Marshall that the church had gone too far to be revived. This is one of the primary reasons why the state churches never survived.

It was in all this darkness that a clear call back to the Bible came in 1793 with a group of Northeasterners who had grown tired of their motionless churches with their stagnant worship and dead community influence. They declared that they would be completely independent churches - like the country they now found themselves in - not guided by anybody but Jesus Christ and His Word.

This first group - called the James O' Kelly Movement - studied the Scriptures and discovered the idea that independent churches were Biblical, that a plurality of elders should oversee them (instead of the king/government), and salvation was not imparted to man, but a choice he had to make to follow God's terms of pardon or not. The movement was off to a great start, until

O’Kelly himself would not relent on the idea of sprinkling and infant baptism. The first split then occurred, and the O’Kelly movement eventually liberalized (basically, he became power-hungry). Therefore, the Congregationalists were born, who though still around today, are very small, shrinking, and among the most liberal of those who call themselves Christians to this day.

Nonetheless, the faithful from the O’Kelly movement continued in their work to bring the New Testament church back. They would later join with the Smith, Jones, Campbell, and Stone movements.

Elias Smith and Abner Jones also began a movement that emphasized again going back to the Bible and attempting to restore simple New Testament Christianity (this is the first time the word “restore” or, “Restoration”, was used in the movement). Elias Smith printed the very first religious newspaper in the entire world in 1808, and it talked about this very idea of restoring New Testament Christianity.

This paper would also begin the incredible distribution of literature, periodicals, books, tracts, and letters that would later go on to define the Restoration movement for nearly 200 years. This fact has influenced this author’s work in producing literature. It convicted this preacher that we need to be a reading/writing/preaching/teaching church as much as can possibly be done.

The O’Kelly movement and the Elias/Smith movements got things off the ground, but it was not until the Stone Movement began in 1803 that the Restoration Movement with God’s help would bring nationwide revival to America. It was truly Stone, later joined by the Campbell’s, that God would use to bring New Testament Christianity not only to the people nationwide, but to the highest levels of our government, where to this day the only minister to have ever addressed both houses of Congress simultaneously was Alexander Campbell in 1850.

The Cane Ridge Revival in 1801 got the spark started that would see Christianity in America explode and have influence into all parts of our country until very recent times. Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian minister at

the time who was very skeptical of his denominations' doctrines based on his own independent studies of Scripture, invited local ministers all around to join him in preaching at the camp meeting.

Since they were all from such different backgrounds, Stone instructed them that they could speak on anything they like if they preach from texts directly from Scripture. All agreed, and the witnesses of those who attended recorded that because of this, there was surprisingly great agreement among the 18 different preachers that spoke during this over 7-day long revival. Between 10 and 20 thousand people came, and the only reason it ended was because food could not be found within 10 miles of the Cane Ridge meeting house!

Communion was provided that Sunday for all who wanted to partake, which was a very novel idea at the time.

By 1803, Barton W. Stone shed the last of his denominational ties and became one of the first independent Christian preachers of the movement and certainly one of the most influential. As he studied the Scriptures more and more, he came to understand better how church government really was in the New Testament, the nature of God and Jesus (though his view was flawed in this area for most of his preaching career), and ultimately how someone is saved, which was revolutionary:

Under Calvinism, people cannot and will believe in God on their own. God must change their will supernaturally for them to have faith. Along with this supernatural change of will, a supernatural experience was supposed to be had by the person. Then, and this is true, though you will be hard-pressed for any Calvinist¹ to admit it - people would then have to come to church, ask for church membership, tell their supernatural experience story, and then be subject to a vote of the present church membership. Yes, people were supposedly "saved" by popular vote!

¹ Who are growing in number again; this is no coincidence as the darkness in this country flourishes. Both are reflections of fatalism, just using different terminology.

The early Restoration Movement presented a very different kind of salvation - where, yes - God does reach down to man, but He does not force His hand. Rather, it is up to every man to choose to believe and ultimately obey God. Instead of faith being some sort of supernatural experience, it is simply belief in testimony. Instead of repentance only being possible by God's arbitrarily will, men were responsible for choosing to obey God rather than their flesh. The Great Confession ("I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God") that the churches use to this day became the default confession of faith among believers.

While Stone's movement was progressing, the Campbell's had started to go down the same path, unbeknownst to the Stone movement. In fact, the two would not even be aware of the other's existence for decades and would not formally unite until 1832. Nonetheless, God was moving in these people, preparing each movement uniquely to join the rest and bring America to both economic and religious greatness and influence over the rest of the whole world as a result.

Author's Personal Note:

Reader, I hope you can see how similar our dark days are to the earliest ones in American history. And how did God bring revival then? By bringing people back to the Bible - by restoring His New Testament church - and continually doing so for every willing man and woman willing to work under that premise. If the American church ever wants to have that kind of influence again, that is exactly what we must continue to strive to do. Atheism, secularism, and humanism were virtually wiped out for nearly a century when people went back to the Bible and seriously lived out His Great Commission.

It is absolutely no coincidence that so many churches today are liberalizing, adopting humanistic positions, accepting secular practice, and embracing false doctrines such as Calvinism. Each of these either excuses the church from its genuine mission or gives it false assurances to simply sit back and let the communities around them despair. No! If we truly serve an

Almighty God - and we do - then revival is only around the corner for those who would embrace His Word and live it out exactly as He says.

I do not believe that mixing with denominationalism, liberalizing our message, as embracing these obviously-failing strategies or gimmicks are going to get us through the present morally-dark days of America. I believe only by doing what these men did and others like them have done - to go back to the Bible - to live out New Testament Christianity to its fullest extent regardless of what culture does, can we hope to see revival in our country again. I believe we can do it, and will do it, with God's help.

So, this book is more than a history lesson: it is an invitation. I do not invite anyone to a wimpy cause, or a watered-down cause, or liberal cause, or a humanistic cause. I invite you to a supernaturally-charged cause, the only true cause, led by the only true First Cause, all who ever was, is, and ever will be.

CHAPTER 2

1803-1832

“Christians United by Going Back to the Bible”

In the last chapter, the church in American history was discussed up to the early 1800's: it truly began as a sad time in America – the denominational churches were impotent, shrinking rapidly, some closing, with leaders leaving – while secularist literature, infidel clubs, and propagandists from outside the country attempted to promote a godless country from its inception.

It was not until 1793 and especially the ten years that followed that people did a truly radical thing for the time (it is equally radical today, when one examines the average church today) – they went back to the Bible. They interpreted the Bible with the Bible. They used Bible names for Bible things, accepted Bible history as real history, and began to live their lives as simple, New Testament Christians, forming simple, New Testament churches, independent, alive, and ready to take the Gospel into a wasteland of atheism, subjectivism, relativism, and relative morality. And they succeeded!

The Stone Movement's explosive beginnings occurred at the Cane Ridge revival, where for over a week tens of thousands of people came to hear a simple Gospel message preached for the first time. Oh, people had heard about God and Jesus of course, but they had never heard the Gospel presented right out of the Bible – and what a different story that is than from the mouth of corrupt tradition!

Stone and his contemporaries came to understand faith as something so simple anyone could grasp it – belief in testimony – or belief in what was preached. Instead of a supernatural experience God arbitrarily imposed on man, he himself could make the choice. Instead of having to proof one's conversion experience to a local church gathering and literally be voted on, confessing Jesus as Lord was all that was required.

Although baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins was still not understood or practiced in the very early stages of this near 60-year long revival

in early America, the momentum towards it was building as things like the Lord's Supper, faith, repentance, and confession were finally simply preached and simply understood by the masses. The movement was spreading quickly from Kentucky towards the Northeast, while God was preparing another movement entirely separate to also grow, catch fire, and unite with this already present movement getting closer and closer to His standards all the time:

A man named Thomas Campbell who lived in Scotland was a Presbyterian minister and school teacher by trade. His own study of Scripture was disillusioning him from his previous theological understanding, even more so that politics had divided the Scottish Presbyterian church many times over. He was a part of the "Seceder Anti-Burgher" Presbyterian Church, and had believed for a time that was the one and only true church, based on the instruction he had received and his upbringing.

The sheer hatred between churches that shared otherwise equivalent Christian doctrine troubled Thomas greatly. He wondered why politics had any place in dividing a church and could find no satisfactory answer. After a while and further grief (despite considerable economic success), his doctor prescribed him a trip to America. So leaving his son, Alexander, in charge of the home, Thomas took for America.

Upon arriving in America, Thomas received his overseas ordainment from his church back home, authorizing him to preach in America. However, he was told that his Seceder Anti-Burgher status remained, although the political issues had absolutely nothing to do with anything outside of Scotland. This grew Thomas more and more discontent, and after consulting for a time with other clergy friends as they studied the Bible together, Thomas and his friends broke from the Scottish Seceder Anti-Burgher Presbyterian Church and began a new independent organization called, "The Springfield Presbytery."

Even with moderate success, his friends' study of the Bible along with his own led them to believe that even their new organization did not fit the church Christ had ordained in the New Testament. So, they wrote a document called

“The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery” and dissolved the corporation. The original and Biblical idea of independent churches patterned after the New Testament was born!

A short while later, his friends and him did decide to start a non-binding, voluntary organization called “The Christian Association of Washington” in 1809. From this loose organization of independent churches and voluntary members came what would be a founding (though flawed) document for the movement entitled, “The Declaration and Address.” In this document, Thomas Campbell and his friends attempted to draft a plan for churches everywhere to adopt the Bible as their sole rule of faith and practice, and how practically to go about that.

This preacher had the opportunity in a class to read and critique the Declaration and Address. Like all man-made documents (including anything I write!), it has flaws, some significant. Nonetheless, the Stone movement too was also progressing towards a closer New Testament standard of Christian practice. Yet, completely separately, here was Thomas and those churches doing the same, completely unbeknownst to one another.

However, even with the explosion of Christian revival in the country growing, influencing all parts of society, Thomas was worried about something very personal – what would his son think who had been trained by Thomas in the Seceder Anti-Burgher Presbyterian Church, and was also an ordained minister of that denomination?

In the early American West, postal service was scant and sometimes unreliable, and there had been no communication between father and son for years while all of this was going on. Finally, Thomas received word that Alexander would be coming, and in 1812, he arrived.

After their joyous reunion, Thomas finally told Alexander all that had gone on and happened – leaving the Presbyterians, establishing the Springfield Presbytery, then dissolving it, forming new, completely independent churches, the Christian Association of Washington, the publishing and distribution of the Declaration and Address, etc. Thomas was sure Alexander would be

disappointed, or even angry that his father had abandoned their home's traditional denomination. However, Alexander had been on a journey all his own, having disbanded Presbyterianism, he himself embarking on a spiritual journey only to live as the New Testament prescribed!

Father and Son were both overjoyed and began their work together in great fervor. The Restoration Movement was now in Virginia, and growing like wildfire on the East Coast, Southeast, and through the Stone Movement, the Northeast and the West, ever while it expanded further!

From 1808 on, starting with Restoration Movement author Elias Smith, the very first religious newspaper would be published and magazines, periodicals, and books flowed from these new, independent, New Testament preachers and authors all over the country.

Almost overnight the infidel clubs disappeared (barely a mention in American history today), the humanist literature was removed, and the Bible was made widely available along with a high push for literacy enabling people to read and learn for themselves what God Word said. From 1800 to 1860 especially, there was a revival in America from these efforts that would truly know no equal since and set the country on its path to economic and social freedom and prosperity like none other until very recent times.

By 1811, both the Stone and Campbell movements were participating in the Lord's Supper weekly, still having no idea of each other's existence. In 1812, with son Alexander, Thomas and their other ministerial friends came to understand baptism by immersion for the first time.

This was an absolutely earth-shattering idea at the time: Presbyterianism had always mandated sprinkling and accepted no other form. Infant baptism was the baptism virtually all accepted and practiced. In the early days of the movement, there was great resistance to no longer practicing infant baptism; even Thomas himself was reluctant to give up the practice, in fear of alienating old believers now turned independent.

Nonetheless, Thomas was immersed as well as his son. Soon, they were baptizing others by immersion. Stone and his group independently picked up on this as well, and the 5-finger plan of salvation swept the nation as the simplest presentation of the Gospel ever given, welcoming every willing and able man, woman, and child to Jesus' saving grace.²

Infant baptism began to fade in the Restoration Movement, with the stark realization that it was not Biblical. Other denominational practices of the time such as – of all things – voting, universalism, the various tenets of Calvinism, and the clergy/laity divide all were rejected in favor of the New Testament pattern. Obviously, some of these things have crept back in through inconsistent, latter-20th century, non-Biblical influence.

The idea that America was “a Christian nation” was born at this time. “Manifest Destiny” was a common belief at the time also, and the Restoration Movement was on the forefront of it.³

In the first ten years of Alexander's regular publishing, he issued a magazine called, “The Christian Baptist.” At time, Alexander with friend and Evangelist Walter Scott were trying to work with other “free will” denominations as to getting everybody closer to a New Testament standard. Their attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, their compromises faulty (and even a step backwards in some cases), and finally it was decided they would just have to exist as Christians, in Christian churches, independent, moving ever closer to a New Testament standard, trusting God to provide and grow the seeds planted in the simple preaching of the Gospel message.

The view of “manifest destiny”, or that God was directing America himself to greatness, was itself made manifest in Alexander's writings. He changed the name of his publication to “The Millennial Harbinger”, and it

² Two hundred years before this, “Anabaptists” in Europe were severely persecuted by the Protestant and Catholic churches alike for practicing immersion (execution by drowning, in a bit of cruel irony, were common). But in America, these new immersionists were free to spread the Word and never called for persecution for those who disagreed. In fact, the Restoration Movement never sought the political oppression of others.

³ “Manifest Destiny” is the idea that God was behind not just the Restoration Movement but America's prosperity itself.

would remain so for the next thirty years. The idea that hastening the Gospel to all parts of America and the rest of the world would bring Christ's return more quickly was common and believed. This is ultimately a misunderstanding of Scripture, but nonetheless, was part of the development of the Christian church in America at that time.

As the movement grew, Campbell was invited to various debates with other religious leaders and eventually debated the prominent humanist/atheist of the time - Robert Owen:

In 1820, Campbell overwhelmingly won a debate against John Walker on the issues of baptism and circumcision, winning the crowd with the truth that the two have nothing to do with another, and baptism was for all penitent believers, not infants who could not understand or only for those who had so-called supernatural experiences.

Later in 1823, Campbell debated W.W. McCalla, who believed he could prove better than John Walker that infant baptism truly was Biblical. Campbell overwhelmingly won again, securing the intellectual crown among the religious scholars of the day. This made his writings and preaching even more popular, spreading all over the nation.

Finally, in 1829, Campbell was invited to debate Robert Owen, the prominent scholar of humanism and atheism of the day. The debate lasted over a period of a month, with each man giving 25 addresses each, one countering the other over that time. The total debates are transcribed loosely in a 500-page book that immediately became one of America's best-sellers.

In this debate, Owen tried to show all religions to be a sham, all the same, and altogether injurious to humanity. Campbell countered showing the reasonableness of the Scriptures, their consistency, and the simple hope of the Gospel message for all mankind. By the last address in the debate, Owen conceded, and Campbell's last address was 12 HOURS LONG. And I quote, "- "[Owen's] route was so complete that on April 17, 1829, he conceded to [Alexander] Campbell the remainder of the [debate] time. In a speech which last twelve hours, Campbell reviewed the nature and evidences of Christianity,

the grandeur, the power, and the adaptability of the gospel to mankind in all relationships and conditions of human society. He showed that Christianity was a reasonable religion – not seeking to make men happy or reformed by legal enactments or vain theories, but by implanting in the human heart, through the discovery of the divine philanthropy, that principle of life which fulfills every moral precept. Presenting the Gospel as a series of connected historical facts, resting on the infallible testimony of witnesses and prophecy, he dwelt upon its simplicity (as opposed to human authoritative creeds and systems) and the distinctive views of the Gospel which the Restoration Movement espoused. He then proceeded to show that all that was good in Owen’s social schemes had been plagiarized from the teachings of Christ and all the evil in them was the fruit of the devil.”

It was reported that only three people of the thousands present sided with Owen at the end of the debate – all believed to be family. Campbell’s victory was absolute and this led to his influence spreading not only to the cities and country alike, but to the very legislature of the United States’ government, where Campbell lobbied for emancipation of slaves and Gospel and literacy education nationwide.

James Deforest Murch writes, “President James Monroe of the United States is quoted as saying that he heard Campbell often and regarded him as ‘the ablest and most original expounder of the Scriptures’ he had ever heard. The friendships he made among the political leaders of the nation were later to result in an invitation to preach before a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States, the only minister of the Gospel to be extended such a courtesy in the history of the republic.”

In 1832, the Stone and Campbell movements officially met and united, demonstrating the amazing unity of mankind possible even among strangers when the Word of God is the sole rule of faith and practice in their lives.

Murch also writes, “T.W. Caskey (1816-1896) held fifty-six public discussions; Henry Pritchard (1819-1900) engaged in forty debates and is credited with destroying Universalism in Indiana; Benjamin Franklin (1812-

1878) held thirty regular discussions and engaged in many more written debates; Clark Braden (1831-1917) met E.L. Kelley, a Mormon elder, in Ohio in 1884 and virtually exterminated Mormonism in that state; W.D. Moore met Universalism's brilliant Dr. S.P. Carleton in Indiana and Ohio with the result that many Universalist churches closed their doors; John S. Sweeney (1832-1908) specialized in Methodists; O.A. Burgess (1829-1882) was mighty against old-world Calvinism as represented in the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches. D.R. Dungan, J.W. McGarvey, J.M. Mathes, L.B. Wilkes, and many others too numerous to mention were experienced debaters. So 'mighty in the Scriptures' were these advocates of the apostolic faith that by 1900 it was almost impossible to find opponents to keep up this form of 'military operation,' and religious debate became largely a matter of history."

Until 1860, the movement would enjoy almost unfettered growth and influence in America. The Civil War would split the nation, but amazingly, not the movement. It would not be the early 1900's the first split would occur, and most strangely, it was over (and still is) over the use of instruments in worship, an issue never covered in Scripture.

Thus the work of the church in American history was forged from utter darkness into one of the brightest lights the world has ever seen for the Gospel and freedom by God's use of these people in this independent Christian movement.

Our difficulties today in these realities boils down to one similar thread - will we continue to try to restore the church found in the New Testament? Will we allow outside pagan and other non-Biblical influences to come into Christ's church and turn it into something powerless, or will we lift the Word of God, stand on it, and in this hour of darkness again in America be an inextinguishable light like the world has not seen in a long time?

Chapter 3

Early 1800's

“The Amazing Debates”

Early American religion quickly gravitated to “Restoration” principles – going back to the Bible – and only the Bible, correctly appealed to this new, free, pioneering country.

Nonetheless, there was establishment opposition (as there always is and always will be). The Presbyterians had gained a foothold in the Americas before the Restorationists did, so they had the most to lose and indeed were losing members by the droves.

John Walker, a prominent Presbyterian scholar, challenged Alexander Campbell to a debate. He accepted.

A major debate among believers had broken out over infant baptism, with Walker and the Presbyterians defending the traditional-Reformation (not Restoration, but Reformation) understanding of baptizing newborns (drawing parallels with OT circumcision) and Campbell and the Restorationists defending the New Testament example of adult immersion.

The following is a basic outline of what Campbell successfully argued:

Alexander Campbell (Restoration) vs. John Walker (Presbyterian)

Regarding Circumcision and Baptism

Points made by Alexander Campbell:

1. Baptism was done to both men and women.
2. Baptism has no age specification--circumcision was always done on the eighth day.
3. Circumcision requires only Jewish descent--baptism requires only faith.

4. Circumcision could be done by parents, relatives or civil officers--baptism, at least by Presbyterians, was administered only by ministers.
5. The emblem differs--baptism signifies death unto sin, burial and resurrection unto Christ (Romans 6:1-4) while circumcision signified the separation of a Jew from all the rest of the human family.
6. Pedobaptists apply water to the face--Jews don't circumcise the face... Baptists apply water to the whole person but neither applies water to the precise part of the body where circumcision is focused.
7. Circumcision conveys no spiritual blessings--baptism conveys no temporal blessings...circumcision did convey temporal blessings while baptism conveyed spiritual blessings.

The result was a tremendous win for Campbell. Thousands of Presbyterians left denominationalism behind and joined those going back to the Bible and the Bible alone for the understanding of God's church and religion.

W. W. McCalla, who was a well-known, skilled, Presbyterian debater, challenged Campbell too.

Campbell let McCalla speak first, and then presented fourteen differences between baptism and circumcision:

1. Circumcision was for males only.
2. Circumcision doesn't require faith.
3. Circumcision administered on the eighth day.
4. Circumcision administered by parents.
5. Circumcision a mark on the body, not the face.
6. Circumcision not a duty of the child, but the parents, and baptism is never seen in that context.

7. Circumcision administered to all a man's slaves whether or not they believed.
8. Circumcision required no piety on part of parents. It was a mark of culture, not a state of the heart.
9. Circumcision ties the subject to the promise of Abraham.
10. Circumcision is a sign of the Genesis 17 covenant, not the New Covenant of Christ (Galatians 6:15).
11. Circumcision is not performed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
12. Circumcision is identified with the Law of Moses and will share its fate.
13. Circumcision does not profit, says Paul (1 Corinthians 7:19)
14. Circumcision did not exempt the Jews from baptism when they became Christians.

This debate went even better for Campbell than the first. This was Campbell's first exposure to Kentucky, where he had no subscribers to his newsletter. When the debate ended, Campbell had 5,000 new subscribers!

Finally, an up and coming popular skeptic challenged Campbell. This time, the debate would be over faith itself. In Europe, atheism was already all the rage, and seeds of unbelief were well-planted during the Revolutionary War. "Intellectuals" especially gravitated to the idea that the greatest mind in the universe was not God's, but theirs, and they could figure out life without divine assistance.

Below are excerpts from the debate. Campbell won resoundingly. Christians today still benefit from his points if we will only take the time to know them now:

One of Campbell's Opening Remarks:

"You must not think, my friends, that Christianity has come down to our times without a struggle; nay, indeed, it took the nation at first by the irresistible

force of its evidence. It was opposed by consolidated ranks of well-disciplined foes. Learned, cunning, bold, and powerful were its enemies. But experience taught them it was not only foolish, but hurtful to kick against the goads.”

Later in an Address by Campbell:

“Such were the army of the faith. They begin their career. Under the jealous and invidious eyes of a haughty sanhedrin at home, and under the strict cognizance of a Roman emperor abroad, with a watchful procurator stationed over them. They commenced their operations. One while charged with idolatry; at another with treason. Reviled and persecuted until their chief is rewarded with a cross, and themselves with threats and imprisonment. A throne in a future world animated them, and a crown of glory after martyrdom stimulated them. On they march from conquest to conquest, till not only a multitude of the Jewish priests and people, but Caesar's household in imperial Rome, became obedient to the faith. Such was the commencement.”

In response to Robert Owens:

“But now, let us ask, what boon, what honor, what reward have our opponents to offer for its renunciation? Yes, this is the question which the sequel must develop. To what would they convert us! What heaven have they to propose! What immortality to reveal! What sublime views of creation and a creator! What authentic record of the past! What prophetic hope of the future! What account of our origin! What high ultimatum of our destiny! What terrors have they to offer to stem the torrent of corruption! What balm and consolation to the sons and daughters of anguish! To these and a thousand kindred questions, they must, and they will answer, none; none at all. They promise to him that disbelieveth the Founder of the Christian religion; to him that neglects and disdains the salvation of the gospel; to him who tramples under foot the blood of the New Institution, and insults the Spirit of favor; to him who traduces Moses, Daniel, and Job; to him who vilifies Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, and John; to him who devotes his soul to the lusts of the flesh; who disdains heaven; who defies his appetites; who degrades himself to a mere animal, and eulogizes philosophy; to this man they promise eternal sleep, and

everlasting death. This is the faith, the hope, and joy, for which they labor with so much zeal, and care, and pain.”

STORY from Campbell/Owen Encounter: At the Campbell family burial plot Owen said he had an advantage over the Christian for he was unafraid to die. Robert Richardson records Campbell's response:

"Well," answered Mr. Campbell, "you say you have no fear in death; have you any hope in death?" After a solemn pause, "No," said Mr. Owen. "Then," rejoined Mr. Campbell (pointing to an ox standing near), "you are on a level with that brute. He has fed till he is satisfied, and stands in the shake whisking off the flies, and has neither hope nor fear in death."

Even with another astounding success, Campbell (like all men) are not invincible. He was challenged by a Catholic Bishop, John Purcell, in 1837, but did not prepare properly:

- Campbell presented well and truthfully, but did not document all sources
- His arguments were validated later, but he lost the debate as a result of the above
- His lack of ability to prove certain points at the moment taught him to be more vigilant and prepared in the future, and not assume wins in advance!
- 1 Peter 3:15 - “Always be ready to give an answer... with truth and grace.”
- Campbell’s career or influence was not halted, but nonetheless he never repeated the mistake.

A fifth debate, again with the Presbyterians, was arranged. There was great pressure from the European Presbyterian authorities for the American-Presbyterians to win back their lost membership. Even so, it was not to be.

N.L. Rice was sent by the Presbyterian authorities himself. He was likely the best scholar of the Reformation at the time, not just Presbyterianism. He would debate Campbell on baptism, the Holy Spirit, and creeds. A huge

amount of material was covered; volumes been written about it. Nonetheless, a quick (but insufficient) summary is below:

Presbyterianism (founded by John Calvin) among other Reformers and their denominations had become corrupt state religions themselves, persecuting similarly those who were dissenters.

- Campbell preached a simple, voluntarily Gospel message to all people; Presbyterianism preached Calvinistic predetermination (God chooses who goes to heaven, and thus - by default - chooses who goes to hell)
- Campbell and his father were previous Presbyterians
- Independent Presbyterians (still Protestants, just not identifying with the European Presbyters) had Massachusetts as their own religious state until 1833, which was the last state to give up its “official” religious status, so that loss was recent and stinging.
- The debate had national coverage by newspapers, magazines, editorials, etc.
- The debate ended with such a sound victory for Campbell and the Restoration Movement churches at the time that **the Presbyterians refused to publish the debate.**
- Instead, Campbell obtained the rights, published the debate notes himself, and converted a number of prominent Catholics, Presbyterians, unbelievers, and others to New Testament Christianity.
- Most personal to Alexander, is that the reading of the debate by his Uncle Archibald in Ireland converted him to New Testament Christianity as well!

Until the late 1800’s, Campbell’s debates would circulate widely among homes and scholars alike, and were bestsellers in that time. America was officially “flooded” with Bibles and New Testament literature, and “manifest destiny” (or the idea that “America is a country led by God”) was therefore in full on-pursuit.

Many other debaters, scholars, and authors came out of the New Testament churches at that time that literally filled every little nook, hole, and cranny in American literature. Reading the Bible as a textbook and a guidebook for life was standard in public schools; literacy was the number one goal of literacy so every man could read the Bible for themselves, and discover again and again New Testament Christianity as it is plainly spelled out!

Chapter 4

Early 1800's

“Why the Restoration Movement Cut Ties with Denominationalism”

I. In the early 1800's, the following movements were all forming independently, yet mostly paralleled in faith and practice:

- 1) Thomas Campbell, over in Ireland
- 2) Alexander Campbell, in the United States (merged with Thomas, father, in 1809)
- 3) Barton W. Stone Movement (merged with Campbell's in 1832)
- 4) Walter Scott Movement (merged with the above in 1822)
- 5) John Raccoon John Smith (merged with the above in 1830)

By 1832, it was a nationwide tour de force of New Testament Christianity!

Attempts to merge, meld, and compromise with denominationalism were unsuccessful and impractical.

At first, the Baptists (not the denomination – this was a generic term at the time for “immersers”), Campbell's, and Scott's were all pleased to have found one another. They shared immersion in common, by far the defining attribute at the time.

Baptism's meaning according to Scripture shortly became a big deal. They also shared the idea of independent, voluntary churches. As well, the Baptists initially rejected all creeds (at the beginning). However, as the idea to stick to the Bible became more and more paramount to the early Restoration leaders, it became apparent there could be no fellowship than skin deep with those who remained wedded to Reformation tradition:

Alexander Campbell tried to compromise, meld, mold, and compromise with the Baptists. Like Martin Luther, he tried to unsuccessfully “reform” what

was there instead of start over with the Bible. These compromises (that he tried to label, “cooperation”, “generosity”, and “recognition”) would be a definite black mark in the movement that was moving to inevitable, independent identity as unapologetic New Testament churches.

Nonetheless, Satan sowed his own seeds of dissent in the early Restoration churches. One of the first contentions was over hymnbooks:

Almost all early Restoration leaders, including the Campbell’s, were anti-instrument and tried to single-handedly establish the sung music of the new churches. This caused a rift between Campbell/Scott with Scott/Johnson that carried forth into other, more critical debates (attitudes started defining issues, as-is typical).

Campbell tried in the beginning to make baptism a “formal” forgiveness of sins, not an actual forgiveness of sins (some kind of glorified symbol) in an attempt to appease the Baptists. Naturally, this so-called compromise did not please either side. A sermon he preached at a Baptist church was the beginning of the end of his failed unity attempts with denominationalism:

Failed attempts (that happen to **THIS DAY**) to “balance” unity and New Testament Christianity. Scripture teaches that unity is a result of following the Scriptures, not a balancing act! (Matthew 6:33; John 17:20)

Modern-day ecumenicism has created a nation full of “milk” churches that simply can’t chew into the “meat” of Scripture because below the very surface, nothing can be genuinely dissected, discussed, or acted upon.

Many Christian churches today have declared on many issues “opinions” that Scripture plainly speaks about:

a) Women in eldership, women preachers, or church government issues in general - 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12

b) Calvinism - Romans 10:17

c) Supernatural gifts - 1 Corinthians 13 (and chapters 12 + 14)

d) Meaning of baptism - Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:27

e) Essentiality of the Lord's Supper - 1 Corinthians 10:16-18

Among many others.

Hint: Compromising/reforming/melding/molding didn't work for Luther. It didn't work for Campbell. It doesn't work today!

Another contention was the issue(s) of Scriptural "silence":

1) Instrumental music (no mention of public singing at all, actually)

2) Church buildings (Acts 3:1 - "Peter and John went to the temple...")

3) Name of church - no commandment as to a name in Scripture, but some made a needless test of fellowship about it. In the New Testament, there lots of varied examples of what the churches were called, with no one commandment with regards to it:

Romans 16:16 - "All of the churches of Christ send you greetings..."

Acts 8:1+11:22 - "The church in Jerusalem..."

Acts 13:1 - "The church at Antioch..."

Acts 20:28 - "The church of God"

Acts 16:1 - "The church in Cenchrae..."

1 Corinthians 1:2+10:32+11:22+15:29+2 Corinthians 1:1 - "The church of God in Corinth..." ("in Corinth" only in 1 Corinthians 1:2)

Galatians 1:2 - "the churches in Galatia"

Galatians 1:13 - "The church of God"

Colossians 4:16 - "The church of the Laodiceans"

1 Thessalonians 1:1+2 Thessalonians 1:1 - "the church of the Thessalonians"

1 Timothy 3:15 - "the church of the living God"

Hebrews 12:23 - “the church of the firstborn”

Revelation 2:1 - “the church in Ephesus”

Revelation 2:8 - “the church in Smyrna”

Revelation 2:12 - “the church in Pergamum”

Revelation 2:18 - “the church in Thyatira”

Revelation 3:1 - “the church in Sardis”

Revelation 3:7 - “the church in Philadelphia”

Revelation 3:14 - “the church in Laodicea”

Overall, “the church” is used in the New Testament 93 times, sometimes on its own, sometimes with one of the above modifiers.

4) Local church membership (all Scriptures apply to being members of Christ’s church universal)

5) Bible/Missionary Societies, Bible Colleges, and other Para-Church Organizations.

6) The introduction of liberalism into colleges and pulpits of New Testament churches.

EDITORIAL: This preacher has never understood the issue of silence. Logic 101 tells us that you cannot divide by 0; by definition, an argument from silence is meaningless (this is one of those rare instances where I can see how sometimes the outside world views religion as anti-intellectual). In Romans 14 and Galatians 5, Paul discusses matters of Christian liberty. As a wise preacher once told me, “Once we have finally figured out everything the Bible has already said, then we can argue about what it does not say!”

Chapter 5

Until 1863

“A Faithful Example: Raccoon John Smith”

I. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:10+11 - “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, “persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. “

Many people sincerely - but mistakenly - believe the only example in the Bible we can follow after is Jesus. Jesus is our primary example, but we have been given great treasure troves of stories, wisdom, and lessons to be learned from every Bible character - some what to do, and others, what not to do!

All the same, we can look at some men in recent history that God has used for much good, even in our own country. One man like this was “Raccoon” John Smith. Just like from Paul, we can learn from great men like Mr. John Raccoon Smith.

John’s family were strict, Calvinistic Baptists.

John anxiously desired to receive a supernatural experience to confirm his “election” but never received one. He refused to make one up, as he later suspected people had done.

Eventually, his constant searching and reading and service to the local church led him to be told that he had been “converted”, even if his experience was not necessarily vision-like or spectacular.

As much as it pleased John to be accepted into the fellowship, he maintained an element of doubt because of the fascinating stories of supernatural experiences others that had been told and continued to be told by others.

Very quickly he desired also to preach, but again, had not received a supernatural call to do so. He began with speaking out at prayer meetings, and this fueled his desire even more. He was reprimanded by the congregation because he could not tell of a supernatural experience of the Lord that validated his right to preach among them.

Eventually, he convinced himself he had been “called” and told others the same. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1808.

Tragedy then struck: while he was away on a family visit and preaching tour, his family’s cabin burned down with his two oldest children trapped inside. His wife never recovered from the shock of it, and she died in 1915. He still had his two younger children.

He moved again, was married again, and farmed to earn a living.

In the meantime, he continued to study the Scriptures and Christian publications beginning to flood the nation from the first generation Restoration Movement leaders.

By March of 1822, John could no longer justify his previous Protestant, Calvinistic, Baptist thinking with his study of Scripture. His wife of now 7 years agreed, and they decided together only to follow the Bible and allow it to take them wherever it led.

Like Alexander Campbell, John tried to reconcile with the Baptists to keep from splitting with them.

Also like Alexander, he failed. Calvinism, the Lord’s Supper, nature and purpose of baptism, church government, Testament authority, ministerial ordination, education, and duties, as well as church membership, and who could preach all separated from the Protestants of the time with the new Christians.

He would try from 1824 to 1830 to reconcile with the Baptists, but formally left in 1830.

Like all the early Restoration Leaders alike who discovered New Testament Christianity through a study of God's Word, he "went" just as Christ had prescribed to win souls!

Questioned by a Baptist what the difference was between baptism for the remission of sins and their Calvinistic mourner's bench (today, called an "Altar Call"): he replied, "One comes from heaven, the other from the sawmill."

While at a Methodist meeting where the preacher was about to sprinkle a baby, declaring to the congregation that this infant was about to be baptized "just as Jesus was", John drank the water out of the bowl and said, "Preacher, I just drank your Jordan [River]."

At another Methodist meeting, John witnessed a preacher once again sprinkling a baby and invited the preacher to come to a baptism the next day he was going to perform. The Methodist minister, in an ecumenical spirit, agreed. Upon the Methodist preacher's arrival, John proceeded to drag him into the river and the Methodist minister demanded to know what John was doing:

John - "I am going to baptize you."

Methodist Minister - "But I do not wish to be baptized!"

John - "Do you believe?"

Methodist Minister - "Sure I do."

John - "Then come along, sir. Believers must be baptized."

Methodist Minister - "But, I'm not willing to go. It certainly would do me no good to be baptized against my will."

John then let him go and pointed out that he had sprinkled an infant without consent just yesterday and the Methodist Minister from his own lips had just declared such a baptism would do no good!

John represented the Campbell movement at the famous handshake that united the Campbell and Stone Movements into one Restoration Movement for the Gospel on January 1st, 1832, in Lexington, Kentucky.

John stood and said, “God has but one people on earth. He has given them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commends them to be one family... Let us then, my brethren no longer be Campbellites or Stonites, New Lights, or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us all come to the Bible and the Bible alone, as the only Book in the world that can give us all the light we need.”

Barton W. Stone was so moved that he arose and offered Smith his hand in fellowship, depicted below, thus uniting the Christian Movements in Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere.

After a lifetime of successful ministry, his friends placed a tombstone on his grave that read:

“True, genial and pious... wise in the study of God’s Word, he gave up the Creed of his fathers for the sake of that Word. By its power he turned many from error. In its light he walked, and in its consolation, he triumphantly died.”

Alexander Campbell once said of John, “John Smith is the only man that I ever knew who would have been spoiled by a college education.”

He reportedly baptized around 2,100 people in his ministry.

Called by many, “The most colorful character of the Restoration Movement.”

Total schooling was four months, almost all reading, which birthed his love of learning of the Word of God for the rest of his life.

What we can learn from John “Raccoon” Smith’s example:

1) To “go” out and witness is Jesus’ command, naturally much more effective than waiting for people to come to us. Just “build it and they will come” is NOT evangelism!

2) Do not be afraid to question non-Biblical practices and demand they be replaced with Biblical ones.

3) Be clever in witness, holy in example, and useful in what needs done.

4) Do not let tragedy be the defining moment of your life. Let God redefine that life into one remembered for service unto Him.

Chapter 6

1860-1905

“The Civil War and Its Aftermath”

Our nation split over a variety of issues during the Civil War: this preacher will not assume to dive into the politics of the matter, but it is fascinating to note that while the nation was split during the Civil War, the Restoration Movement largely stayed together. Nonetheless, difficulties were mounting.

However, there were questions every Christian and church was asking:

- 1) Is it justifiable for Christians to participate in any war?
- 2) Is this particular war justifiable?
- 3) Is slavery Biblical – is it sinful, permissible, or condoned by God?
- 4) Was the war at root a secular war or a spiritual one, based on the issues?
- 5) Should the church attempt to take “an official stance” on wars?
- 6) Do the principles of the Restoration Movement dictate the above?

The movement largely stayed intact during this era because it mostly defended each local congregation’s independence on the above issues.

There were some tensions in the Movement forming after the first generation started to fade away. Some minor (not nationwide) splits occurred in the Movement as a result.

All of the major denominations had nationwide splits over these issues, but the Restoration Movement would not have a formal, unfortunate split over liberalism (necessary) and issues of silence (unnecessary) for another 50+ years.

Some difficulties were brewing, however:

In 1845, some ultra-conservative groups (the Tolbert Fanning/Tennessee movement in particular) were openly declaring apostasy on other Restoration

Movement churches because they took “non-negotiable positions” on the above, not allowing independence on these matters.

Naturally, since the Restoration churches were all independent churches, most did not take kindly being treated like they were “under supervision” by another church.

Robert Richardson and Fanning debated for 8 years in writing over the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion as well as strict morality and the civil war issues.

Benjamin Franklin (the preacher, not the inventor) cited uninteresting or superficial preaching in Indiana among other places causing stagnation (this problem has significantly resurfaced again and again!).

Issues where the Scriptures are silent would dominate the second generation Restoration leaders, which was and is incredibly unfortunate. It would take another generation before there would be a formal split over issues of silence, but this is where the non-instrumental churches got their start.

David Lipscomb in particular would take a hard prohibition stance on issues of silence. Campbell and Lipscomb would become particularly bitter in their public writings regarding each other as a result.

The first liberals started to appear, ala Jesse Ferguson in Nashville. The liberals of yesteryear would be semi-conservative moderates today, just to show how far our movement has gone “left” in theological matters today!

Although most of the Restoration leaders respected freedom on the issues surrounding the Civil War, a few took hard line stances and caused some minor divisions.

James Shannon rallied a small pro-slavery approach within the movement, and demanded the anti-slavery leaders to change their mind.

As a polar opposite, Pardee Butler demanded the pro-slavery leaders change their mind. This was another minor split.

Pacifism caused a few other minor splits:

- 1) T.M. Allen, Lipscomb, and J.W. McGarvey, all southerners, each advocated pacifism (no participation in the war).
- 2) In the north, Walter Scott, Isaac Errett, and James A. Garfield (yes, the President, as an elder in a Restoration church) all advocated “quelling the Southern Rebellion.”
- 3) Moses Lard was one of the few Northern disciples who agreed with T.M. Allen, Lipscomb, and J.W. McGarvey, advocating pacifism. Interestingly, Moses Lard was one of the most conservative first generation Restoration Leaders.
- 4) Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell both had sons who served in the Confederate Army (Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, p.503).

Some very hard feelings were had at the “American Christian Missionary Society” meetings:

- No significant southern representation
- Many of the representatives wore their “army blues”
- “Resolutions” were passed supporting the War
- Raccoon John Smith did not condone the war, but did not object either (first supported, but decided to attempt to remain neutral)
- James A. Garfield supported the Resolution.
- The “resolution” passed supporting the war.
- This attempt to try to speak for the movement outside the local church, outside the local eldership, attempting to dictate policy “denomination-style” was naturally very repugnant to many. Yet, miraculously, there was not a nationwide call for a split for nearly a generation later.
- Stupidly, more “resolutions” were passed in an attempt to try to overrule any Southern support at all.

- At this point, Isaac Errett tried to put a stop to the resolutions, saying they were doing more harm than good. His advice was not heeded.
- J.W. McGarvey also saw the destructiveness of what was going on. His influence was also denied on this point. He even called for the dissolution of the ACMS, realizing its denominational structure and destructive potential to the movement (he would later prove to be correct in the generation-later split).
- William K. Pendleton (Alexander Campbell's son-in-law) tried to undo the damage in the Millennial Harbinger (the largest religious newspaper of its time), but it was too late. The Society had NOT gone so far as to dictate doctrine, but in dictating policy, it still had exceeded its original intent and any Biblical boundaries.
- One minor positive of the ACMS is that it changed its missionary priorities to home from overseas after the war, to help the South recover. This may have been the reason why the movement did not split nationwide for another generation after the war.

Three new, primary regular publications began to dominate the movement:

- The Christian Standard (advocating for the ACMS continued existence) by Isaac Errett
- The Gospel Advocate (Lipscomb's journal, Southern sympathy, strong silence prohibition, strongly non-instrumental therefore)
- The American Christian Review (Benjamin Franklin's journal - very conservative, anti-denominational, "anti-innovation", died off well before the others above)

Some lessons we can learn from the above:

- 1) Organizations outside the local church, and therefore outside the auspice of local elders, always eventually fail and/or liberalize and then fail. They also always will necessarily divide otherwise united brethren.

- 2) Attempting to dictate doctrine and/or policy outside the local church/eldership denies Biblical church autonomy/independence.
- 3) Personal attacks levied via public letters just builds animosity. We do not win our brother, or especially the lost, through heated debate.
- 4) We should not argue issues from silence until all of the issues of Scripture itself are understood, obeyed, and united around (this is enough for anyone's lifetime!).
- 5) Issues outside the Bible must remain issues of liberty, even if it makes us uncomfortable to do so in our present culture.
- 6) Liberalism cannot be tolerated. It should be handled according to Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1ff), in grace and love, but it cannot ultimately be allowed to continue. Liberalism always gives birth to compromise, then sin, and finally dissolution.

Chapter 7

1906-1920's

“The Birth of the Non-Instrumental Church of Christ”

The Restoration Movement had a 112 year-long, united run from its beginnings in 1793 until 1905.

Satan tried to tear the movement apart with both important and trivial debate, but it was not until the question of the use of instruments in worship that common ground would not be found.

EXAMPLES OF CONTROVERSIES RESOLVED IN THE MOVEMENT:

SCRIPTURAL CONCERNS	ISSUES FROM SILENCE
How to be Saved (particularly, baptism)	Role of Hymnbooks
Nature of Christ	Water flowing or still for baptisms?
Inerrancy of Scripture	Baptizer and baptize both in water?
Polity (Government)	Baptism in river required?
The Paid Ministry	Name of Individual Churches
Communion	TV, movies, radio, other technology
The Trinity	Dancing, clapping, music specials

Yet, it would not be until the issue of instruments in worship that the fellowship would finally break:

THOSE IN FAVOR	THOSE OPPOSED
Instruments in NT - Rev. 5:8, 14:2, 15:2	Innovation of human origin (at least in NT church examples)
No prohibition - Rom. 4:15, 5:13	No command or example in NT church
Instruments all over OT	Argument that instruments in OT irrelevant
“Psalms” (often accompanied by instrument) were commanded in NT - Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17	Charge that “Psalms” changed definition to singing without an instrument for about 200 years (not accepted widely by scholars)
They aid in congregational worship	No instrumental music by church until authorized by Pope around 600AD (this point ignores a lot of early church history)

Although the non-instrumental churches are still strong, conservative, and growing even to this day, many congregations and their preachers no longer consider this a salvation issue, but an issue of unity with their long-standing brethren.

Urbanization of the North resulted in concentrated pockets of wealth - heavy industry, factories, oil, mills, and the railroad among other developments resulted in great economic growth for many of the well-to-do in the North. This resulted in ornate church buildings, and finally - organs - being bought for large sums of money and installed in churches, much like ancient cathedrals.

The economy of the South, especially after the Civil War, was devastated and “primitive” by comparison, largely focused on agriculture still. This

resulted in many more rural, poorer, less monetized congregations meeting in places where instruments were not only absent, but a far off idea if ever one.

So when the wealthy churches of the North started spending big money on organs, while the average church in the South barely managed to pay their preacher with fruits of their agriculture after a loss in the Civil War, resentment built up towards these churches.

Central Christian Church in Cincinnati built a new church building in 1872 for \$140,000 including \$8,000 for an organ. Benjamin Franklin, the preacher, commented that the building cost ten times what they had put into missions for the past ten years.

On top of this, the church held “secular” concerts and fundraisers to pay for these items.

This, among other stories, resulted in the first signs of a permanent split coming. In 1883, a publisher named John Rowe started naming the two groups separately over the Instrument. In 1889, a meeting of over 6,000 anti-instrumental believers gathered in Sand Creek, Illinois to publish a letter called “The Address and Declaration” (a play on words from Thomas Campbell’s original “Declaration and Address”).

With no significant efforts rising to national prominence to try to heal this divide, J.W. Shepherd petitioned the United States of America for a separate listing in the national Census for the non-instrumental Churches of Christ. At the time, instrumental believers outnumbered the non-instrumentals by 3x. Today, it is the REVERSE!

It is important to note, that although many of the following were long dead by the time the non-instrumental split occurred, many of the first generation Restoration Movement leaders were non-instrumental before it was even a nationally-debated issue: Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb, J.W. McGarvey, and Moses Lard.

There has been some healing over time. Many instrumental and non-instrumental churches regard each other as brothers and sisters of Christ, even if they do not worship together.

Chapter 8

The 1930's

“The Split with Liberalism”

The 1930's split with the liberal wing of the Restoration Movement was a major and unfortunate split within the movement, but it was not for “new” reasons. Every time a Bible-believing movement has a split over liberalism, the same basic concepts are questioned and divided over:

- 1) Morality (of man)
- 2) Exclusivity (of salvation)
- 3) Deity (of Christ, or question the character of God)
- 4) Infallibility (of Scripture)

But again, this is nothing new:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 - “That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.” (NASB)

Judges 21:25 - “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

When else did these things fall into question in Bible history? Some examples:

A. Cain - Genesis 4

1. Morality - murder and no sense of personal responsibility
2. Exclusivity - deism
3. Deity - questioned God's omniscience
4. Infallibility - did not believe God's Word to be binding

B. Noah - Genesis 6

1. Morality - angels mixing with human women, overall moral despotism

2. Exclusivity - paganism

3. Deity - questioned God's omnipotence

4. Infallibility - laughed off God's Word

C. Some of Joseph's sons (Reuben and Simeon, for example) - their stories weave in and out of Genesis chapters 34-49 along with Joseph's

1. Morality - murder, deception, cruelty

2. Exclusivity - adopting ideas from pagan religion

3. Deity - questioned God's omnipresence

4. Infallibility - Lost their prime place in inheritance for flagrant disobedience of God's Law (before Moses)

D. First generation of Israelites out of Egypt - Exodus 32, Numbers

1. Morality - complaining, unbelieving

2. Exclusivity - golden calf

3. Deity - questioned God's omnipotence

4. Infallibility - Ignored God's warnings about repeated complaining and unbelief, lost their right to the promise land (Moses, Aaron, and Miriam did too!)

E. 400 years during the book of Judges

1. Morality - "each man did what was right in his own eyes" - Judges 21:25

2. Exclusivity - rampant paganism

3. Deity - questioned God's authority

4. Infallibility – human judges with great personal flaws because Law was being ignored, anarchy was prevalent

F. High Priest Eli (1 Samuel 1)

1. Morality – corruption, bribes
2. Exclusivity – pagan influences
3. Deity – questioned God’s authority
4. Infallibility – corrupt priests making the Law of God appear ineffective

G. End of Samuel’s life (1 Samuel 8)

1. Morality – corruption, bribes of his sons
2. Exclusivity – pagan influences
3. Deity – questioned God’s authority
3. Infallibility – questioned God’s Word because His priests were corrupt

H. Middle to end of Saul’s kingship (1 Samuel 13)

1. Morality – became jealous, proud, and corrupt
2. Exclusivity – replaced God’s commands with his own ideas
3. Deity – questioned God’s authority
4. Infallibility – God’s Word was replaced with Saul’s edicts

I. Most of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 1)

1. Morality – infidelity, polygamy, pagan worship
2. Exclusivity – rampant paganism (1000 foreign pagan worship places!)
3. Deity – questioned God’s authority

4. Infallibility – God’s Word was tested to its tester’s ruin!

J. The entire length of the Northern Kingdom’s existence (about 200 years) (1 and 2 Kings; 1 and 2 Chronicles)

1. Morality – pluralism, corrupt kings (all 20 bad!)
2. Exclusivity – rampant paganism
3. Deity – completely excluded God’s Law and authority
4. Infallibility – God’s Word was non-existent

K. Part of the Southern Kingdom’s existence (1 and 2 Kings; 1 and 2 Chronicles)

1. Morality – compromise in most areas at most times
2. Exclusivity – paganism weaved in and out of culture
3. Deity – questioned God’s authority and omnipotence
4. Infallibility – God’s Word was obeyed then ignored, repeat

I. Inter-testament period (between New and Old Testaments)

1. Morality – legalism (1 Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 3:4-9)
2. Exclusivity – No paganism, but “denominationalism” crept in (Luke 6:46; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 4:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
3. Deity – God the Law-Giver became one of three definitions of God (all inaccurate – Liberal, Legalistic, Separatist) (John 17:16; Romans 12:2)
4. Infallibility – God’s Word was hedged, expanded, minimized, reshaped – anything but obeyed as-is! (Matthew 15:13, Mark 7:13)

When else did these things come into question during history after the New Testament was completed? (Some examples)

A. Roman Empire

1. Morality - no moral law was enforced unless it was politically expedient

2. Exclusivity - Rome went from paganism to pluralism with emperor worship to birthing the largest, most corrupt religious organization the world has ever known (the ancient Roman Catholic Church)

3. Deity - adopting the Greek gods to changing their names and redefining some legends to become the Roman gods (plus adding some more); then, lifting up the emperor to be worshipped. Finally, Roman Catholicism tried “forced membership” for several centuries to epically poor results.

4. Infallibility - Scripture went from being ignored to corrupted to ignored again

B. Renaissance

1. Protestantism traded Catholicism for denominationalism

a. Much of denominationalism was much of the same thing: forced membership, arbitrary moral law, genocide of those politically inexpedient

b. Revelation 17:5 - the prostitute of Revelation had offspring!!

2. Secularism became the worldview of the elite

- Includes agnosticism, deism, atheism, secular humanism, or any other worldview that left God out of the workings of man.

a. Spread to various European countries, especially France

b. France's secularism would influence secular culture for ages to come, including our own

c. The American Revolution was heavily influenced with French secularism and it was the rise of the independent Christian church that buttressed this movement and kept America strongly Christian for over 100 years (about 1800 to 1900)

d. Famous inventors, scientists, and the wealthy of the 17th century until about the Civil War were a minority secular group that would, through the academic world, spread their views down through the population in time (we see the fruit of this everywhere today, of course)

The longtime Restoration Movement (now 100 years old in its united form at this point) had a liberal element that could no longer function with the rest:

1. "The Disciples of Christ", taking that term from Alexander Campbell's writings, would establish themselves as their own denomination that exists even today

2. Alexander Campbell's writings about unity were picked apart and taken out of context to support their views of "unity at all costs"

3. It began with the concept of the "pious unimmersed" - those living like Christians but not baptized Scripturally-speaking

4. It then evolved into complete cooperation with other denominations in social welfare work and missions

5. Finally, the acceptance of anybody from any religious background willing to meet their requirements for membership (instead of Scripture's) came about

The following were issues of liberalism dividing the movement at the time:

1. Morality - mistresses, drinking, dancing, clubs
2. Exclusivity - denominational acceptance, other religious background acceptance
3. Deity - Jesus = Christ, but was he or is he? Was Jesus deity? Was Jesus a creating being? Later on, was Jesus just an idea, myth, legend, or mere good teacher?
4. Infallibility - Bible was inconsistent, contradictory, collection of writings from some known and unknown authors, questionable reliability, was said to contain racial, immoral, and hate-filled material
5. Salvation - nature of, how to, meaning, life after death

There were some additional issues that divide the movement to this day:

1. Social issues - homosexuality, abortion, live-in situations, etc.
2. Moral issues - Biblical mandates or societal norms?
3. Membership issues - Scripture or church define?
4. Teleological issues (issues of purpose) - what is the mission of the church?

The effects of the 1930's split were as follows:

The 1930's Split in the Restoration Movement did **FAR MORE** than just cause a schism in the Christian churches:

It was the vehicle through which liberalism finally began its virus-like spread through churches, colleges, 20 years later in public schools, denominational church liberalism, culture, society, and family. Of course, these effects are evident to this day.

HALF of “Christian” colleges became liberal because of this liberal movement:

1) Campbell’s Bethany college went from being a conservative preacher training school to one of the most liberal secular colleges in the nation

2) Yale and Harvard, originally religious schools, became liberal HQ’s

3) Religion, originally the “highest” of all degrees at all schools, slowly was relegated to bottom-barrel education to non-existent in most colleges today

Denominational rise and splits peaked from the 1930’s split through the 1970’s.

Today’s “non-denominational, independent” movement is not the rebirth of New Testament churches, but largely rejection of denominational failures, much like denominationalism was originally, largely a rejection of Catholicism

20% of US citizens today are non-affiliated, an all time high – this is a rejection of all religion, as religion not by God’s pattern as prescribed in the New Testament does not save, work, unify, improve, or edify anyone!!
(Philippians 3:17)

This allowed secular culture to blend with the church and vice versa and cause everything from church splits to schisms to lowering of standards to “the worship wars” to just about everything divisive

So what is the cure for all these modern church ills, largely born of the 1930’s liberal split?

1) The same as it has always been – back to the Bible – to follow God’s pattern

2) Following God's commandments through Christ and His Apostles as described in the New Testament

3) Following church government as solely described and exercised in the New Testament

4) Comparing all things to the Scriptures to see if they are true (the Bereans in Acts 17)

5) "No book but the Bible, no creed but Christ, no name but Christian!"

6) Doing and reviewing this EVERY GENERATION!

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