

The Principle of Remnant Restoration

O.T. LITERARY LAYERS OF REDEMPTIVE CYCLE

Reading the Minor Prophets Together

MARCH 19, 2018 / DAVIDSSCHROCK

There is an intentional ordering in the Minor Prophets, better termed The Twelve. Historically, these 12 books are always found together and typically in the same order. For that reason, a unified study of their message is valid and valuable. To get a sense of his argument and how the twelve prophets are unified, let me share some observations—first on the structure of the Twelve, then on the plot of the Twelve.

The Structure of the Twelve

1. There is an historic unity and arrangement of these books.

Against those who believe the arrangement of the Twelve is imaginary or impossible to determine, observe,

Centuries ago, the ancient community of faith joined these works and thereafter considered them one work. This canonical action merits analysis; and because the chronological and geographical arrangements are inconclusive, it must also be noted that the existence of the book in its final form warrants a literary analysis.

2. There are three repeating themes in the Twelve—sin, judgment, and restoration. The Twelve are structured in a way that demonstrates the sin of Israel and the nations, the punishment of the sin, and the restoration of both from that sin. These three emphases represent the heart of the content of the prophetic genre. The Twelve's external structure therefore reflects its literary type.

3. The three prophetic themes suggest a tripartite structure.

Since the major thematic aspects of the minor prophets and their neighbors are the sin of the covenant people, the purging of that sin, and the reclamation of the sinners, it is best to envision a tripartite structure of the Twelve. Various sub-structural units will emerge, each one related to its larger heading, but three divisions will dominate.

As the following points suggest, [this] proposed outline of the Twelve is developed from careful reading of the text that both makes great sense of the genre & the plotline of the Prophets.

4. The tripartite structure can be organized as follows:

Introduction		Hosea 1–3	
SIN: COVENANT & COSMIC	Complication	Hosea 4–14	<i>Spiritual Adultery</i> Confronts the covenant-breaking sin of Israel and Judah; identifies law-breaking as spiritual adultery / idolatry. Israel Judah
			<i>Indifference</i> Focuses on matters of the heart and the coming Day of the Lord. Israel Nations (3:4–8)
		Introduction Joel	Nations (1:1–2:16) Israel (3:1–6:14)
		Amos	<i>Specific indictments</i> Collates the accusations of Hosea and Joel; specifies the types of sin. Judah (7:1–9:15)

			<p><i>Lack of compassion and violent boasting over others</i></p> <p>The promise of Amos 9:12 (possession of Edom) is fulfilled here</p>	Edom
		Obadiah		
			<p><i>Same sin as Edom</i></p> <p>Jonah has the same contempt for Nineveh that Edom had for Jerusalem, a sin for which God punished Edom—lack of compassion, nationalistic pride</p>	<p>The Prophets</p> <p>Israel (symbolized by Jonah)</p>
		Jonah		
			<p><i>Summary and intensification</i></p> <p>Micah repeats the themes already introduced. Sin must be removed. Hope is also offered.</p>	<p>The Nations (ch. 1–5)</p> <p>Israel (ch. 6–7)</p>
		Micah		
JUDGMENT: COVENANT & COSMIC	Crisis	Nahum	<p><i>Judgment on the Nations and Mercy No More</i></p> <p>While Yahweh pardoned and preserved Nineveh in Jonah, now he was</p>	Nineveh

bringing judgment.
This serves notice to
the nations that God
will bring judgment on
all who do not repent
and recognize him as
Lord.

*Judgment on the House
of the Lord*
The same God who
judges the nations will
send the wicked nation
of Babylon to exile his
own people.

Habakkuk

Judah

Threat to
Judah (1:2–
2:3)

Threat to the
Nations
(2:4–3:8)

**Falling
Action**

Zephaniah

*Summary and
Transition*
The book describes
the Day of the Lord,
the effects of the
Lord’s judgment, and
the restoration that
comes afterward.

Promise of
restoration
to all (3:9–
20)

		<p><i>Introduces the theme of Restoration</i> The temple is rebuilt and the people of God find hope in the restoration of the house of David.</p>	
Haggai			Judah
		<p><i>Apocalyptic Visions of Restoration</i> The city of Jerusalem is repopulated and home once again to the glory of the Lord.</p>	Judah
Zechariah			The Nations
		<p><i>Final promise of a coming restoration</i> Picking up the theme of Zechariah, the impure priesthood is removed and a new covenant messenger will bring a new era of salvation.</p>	Judah
RESTORATION: COVENANT & COSMIC	Resolution	Malachi	The Nations

** This outline created on the basis of *The Unity of the Twelve* by Paul House.

5. A summarizing sketch of the twelve books will help solidify the unity of the Twelve.

Sin: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah

This brief look at the first six minor prophets in no way exhausts the ways the books mount their case against iniquity. Still, some foundational assessments arise. Hosea attacks the spiritual infidelity of the covenant people. Joel repeats that theme, then inaugurates the discussion of the sins of all people. Amos, of course, summarizes these notions, and adds much detail about outward transgression. Obadiah, drawing on Amos 9.12, continues to reveal how foreign nations displease Yahweh and at the same time leads into Jonah by denouncing heartless neighbors. Jonah highlights the inward-outward sin of nationalistic spiritual prejudice.

Micah provides, like Amos, a summary of other books, and includes keys to repentance and faith. As a group these books are a cohesive unit. They work as a structural whole with a common goal of presenting a devastating picture of sin and its consequences. At this point the wisdom of placing the books in their canonical order is apparent. If the remaining six books fulfill a distinct purpose as well as Hosea—Micah, then the Twelve as a whole is a powerful unit indeed.

Judgment: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

It is, therefore, fairly clear that Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah all chronicle the certainty of God's punishment of iniquity. Whether one nation or many, individual or group, great or small, all will fall prey to the fearful judgment of God. Lest this wrath seem overwhelming, however, these books teach that 'the just shall live by faith' (Hab. 2.4), that God is still sovereign (Hab. 3.17-19), that Yahweh is punishing justly (Nah. 1.3), and that a remnant can survive that dreadful time (Zeph. 3.6-20). But sin does have direct and telling consequences. Assyria, Israel, and all the surrounding nations are under Yahweh's control. Though the punishment seems harsh, yet it is just.

Restoration: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The last three books in the Twelve therefore work together in a very coherent way to consummate the images of hope that appear in the first nine prophecies. Rather than interpreting these prophecies as mere echoes of earlier, greater prophets, one should view them as the final piece of a larger structural whole. They systematically answer questions about who will be restored, what will be restored, and how both will be restored. To remove these works from the Twelve would impoverish both the literary and historical significance of the prophetic message. Without Haggai-Malachi the other books become shadows of what they are when completed by these post-exilic writings.

The Plot of the Twelve

6. Readers must have a pre-understanding of plot.

House cites Aristotle and other literary critics to describe what a plot is. In short, a plot has a beginning, middle, and end, where a crisis or series of crises escalate until a point of resolution. Thus, he defines the term like this,

Plot is a selected sequence of logically caused events that present a conflict and its resolution by utilizing certain established literary devices (introduction, complication, crisis, denouement, etc.).

While a technical understanding of plot is not needed to read Scripture, it does help to have categories for organizing the material we find.

7. There are 5 primary characters in the Minor Prophets.

1. Yahweh
2. Israel
3. A remnant within Israel
4. The nations
5. The prophet

By keeping an eye on these five characters, the plot line of the Twelve becomes more visible.

8. A viable plot line becomes visible when we keep the three themes and five characters in view.

The conflict and resolution of the Twelve relates to prophets communicating how Yahweh will judge the sins of Israel and the nations, after which he will bring restoration. Following this storyline, Paul House writes,

Conflict and resolution in the Twelve are closely related to the book's sequence of events and development of characters. Sin, punishment, and restoration occur because of the activities of the major figures, and all these aspects are fueled by a chief conflict.

At its most basic level the Twelve's conflict revolves around Yahweh's attempt to forge Israel into a faithful nation. This goal can only be achieved if Israel will keep its covenant with its Lord. Yahweh uses every possible means to get Israel to keep her covenant promises and eventually has this goal for the chosen nation completed. A secondary, but vitally important, goal is to redeem all the peoples of the world. Since Yahweh is the creator of the universe, this desire is quite natural. God's power will be evident to all when Israel and its neighbors worship their creator as sovereign God. It could be argued, therefore, that the conflict in the minor prophets is the rebellion of the whole world against God. Perhaps, but Israel is the focal point of the prophets' preaching, so it is best to concentrate on that group as the key to the restoration of the universe.

9. In conjunction with the structure of the book, a workable storyline can be adduced.

Using the aspects of plot set forth earlier it is possible to divide the Twelve into the following parts:

Introduction to the plot's major problem (Hosea and Joel); **Complication** of the plot's chief problem (Amos—Micah); **Crisis Point** of the plot (Nahum & Habakkuk); **Climax and Falling** action (Zephaniah); denouement, or **Resolution**, of the plot problem (Haggai—Malachi). Malachi completes the Book's resolution and provides a **Concluding Admonition** to the chosen people.

Using the literary categories of comedy and tragedy, House argues that the Twelve are essentially a work of comedy, written in a period of tragedy. Though the books recount many horrific aspects of Israel's sin and God's judgment, the ultimate message is filled with hope. At the end of the story, God will restore his people—thus, making it a comedy.

10. A literary unity undergirds the good news of the Minor Prophets.

While House's work requires further study and has been supplemented by many works since 1990, the payoff of reading the Twelve as one unified book is seeing how the message of the prophets both addresses sin *and* offers hope. Because different books emphasize different themes, these books need one another to give a full gospel presentation.

Or to say it better, it is the intention of the canonicle (the one who arranged the Twelve) to awaken Israelites to their sin, to warn them of impending judgment, and to seek God while he may be found. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2nd Tim. 3:16–17), the Twelve serves all generations of God's people, convicting us of sin and giving us hope (Romans 15:4).

For this reason, we should seek to read the Twelve in its canonical arrangement, because when we do, we find a powerful and unified testimony that leads us to Christ, the very objective found in Malachi 3–4. Not surprisingly, the Twelve finishes the book with two chapters that foretell the coming of the Lord and prophet like Elijah who will prepare his way. All in all, the placement and content of this final word confirms the need to read the Twelve together.

Reading the Twelve

To be sure, there may be some clarifying that needs to go in the outline listed above, especially in the way House groups the first six books under the banner of sin. But on the whole, it seems appropriate to the text and the overall message of the Old Testament to read the Twelve together. And in this way of reading, we will find a balanced message of sin, judgment, and restoration.

Even more, we will find a twelve-panel book that looks forward to Christ, not just in some isolated verses (like Micah 5:2), but in the whole tenor of the collection. From Hosea to Malachi we find an eschatological message that grounds itself in the history of Israel and points us ahead to the Messiah who is coming. In this way, a unified approach to the Twelve helps us avoid the twin errors of Christ-less historicism and text-less Christo-centricism.

In my estimation, that is the goal of any approach to the Old Testament—to read the Minor Prophets on their own terms *and* in those terms to see how they relate to the whole Bible. Truly, this is the value of reading *The Unity of the Twelve* and then returning to the Minor Prophets to see how they work together.

Isaiah's Layered Literary Structures

Literary structures are a way of organizing the content and carry their own message over and above what appears on the surface. Analyzing structures reveals the underlying themes and concepts of the Book of Isaiah. Its layered holistic structures attest to a single author—Isaiah.

1. Antithetical Themes of Isaiah's Seven-Part Structure

Isaiah's Seven-Part Structure divides the Book of Isaiah into two halves of thirty-three chapters each. Seven pairs of antithetical themes in the first half parallel seven pairs of the same antithetical themes in the second half. Within that structural arrangement, Isaiah establishes prophetic and theological concepts that deeply impact the book's message, particularly as it relates to the end-time.

Ruin & Rebirth (Isaiah 1–5; 34–35)

Rebellion & Compliance (Isaiah 6–8; 36–40)

Punishment & Deliverance (Isaiah 9–12; 41–46)

Humiliation & Exaltation (Isaiah 13–23; 47)

Suffering & Salvation (Isaiah 24–27; 48–54)

Disloyalty & Loyalty (Isaiah 28–31; 55–59)

Disinheritance & Inheritance (Isaiah 32–33; 60–66)

The above seven pairs of antithetical themes reveal a divine pattern in which ruin precedes rebirth, punishment precedes deliverance, humiliation precedes exaltation, suffering precedes salvation & disinheritance precedes inheritance. This shows that to ascend to higher spiritual levels a person or nation of God's people must descend through trials, prove loyal to God under all conditions, and comply with his law and word while resisting the temptation to be disloyal or rebel.

According to this pattern, the higher a person or nation ascends spiritually, the greater the preceding descent through trials that test their loyalty. In each case, a higher law & word of God must be observed in order to ascend further. Every ascent is characterized by God's re-creating the candidate nearer to his own image and likeness. It is accompanied by the candidate's receiving a new name pertaining to the new spiritual level and by an appointment to a higher spiritual calling.

As a synchronous holistic structure—in which all parts of the text interconnect concurrently or *synchronously*—Isaiah's Seven-Part Structure transforms the entire Book of Isaiah into an apocalyptic prophecy. In that sense, Israel's ancient history, as selectively represented in Isaiah, functions as an allegory of the end-time, in which the names of ancient persons and nations act as codenames of persons and nations that exist [until] the end of the world.

2. Trouble at Home, Exile Abroad, Happy Homecoming

A three-part literary structure resembling early Egyptian narrative patterns, Trouble at Home, Exile Abroad, and Happy Homecoming functions like a three-act play in which the people of God (1) break their covenant with him; (2) are cast out of their Promised Land; and (3) finally return, renewed and reconstituted. As a linear holistic structure, Trouble at Home, Exile Abroad, and Happy Homecoming follows a timeline reaching from Isaiah's day [until] the end of the world.

Israel in its Homeland Rebels against God (Isaiah 1–39)

God Disperses Israel among the Nations (Isaiah 40–54)

Israel's Elect Remnant Returns from Exile (Isaiah 55–66)

A national consciousness pervades the first part of this threefold structure as Israel dwells in the land God promised Israel's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A universal consciousness pervades the second part as Israel's twelve tribes spread throughout the earth, populating new lands and intermarrying with other nations. An individual consciousness pervades in the third part.

3. Apostasy, Judgment, Restoration, Salvation

A four-part structure based on a literary pattern in the Ugaritic myth of Baal and Anath conveys a Hebrew prophetic message. As a linear holistic structure, Apostasy, Judgment, Restoration, and Salvation connects Israel's ancient apostasy and judgment with its demise by the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

Numerous mini-cycles of apostasy, judgment, restoration, and salvation in the Book of Isaiah further show how Israel's God deals with his people collectively and individually when they transgress his law and word and he attempts to convince them to repent so that he may restore them to a state of blessedness.

As a divine pattern on an *individual* level, a person may suffer God's judgments in life that are a consequence of transgressing his law and word. When those undesirable effects of personal choices influence one to return to God, on the other hand, it is often the kind intervention of a friend whom God sends into one's life that provides the final push toward returning to God.

4. Covenant Curses and Covenant Blessings

A two-part structure resembling the curses and blessings of Hittite and Assyrian emperor–vassal treaties consists of covenant curses that predominate in the first part of the Book of Isaiah and covenant blessings that predominate in the second. The blessings and curses of the Sinai Covenant enumerated in Deuteronomy 28 follow the same pattern, except that Moses cites first the blessings, then the curses. All depends on whether Israel keeps or breaks God’s law and word.

God’s People Suffer the Consequences of Wickedness (Isaiah 1–39)

God’s People Enjoy the Fruits of Righteousness (Isaiah 40–66)

In the [contractual] context of the Book of Isaiah, God’s people have transgressed his law and word that are the terms of the Sinai Covenant and they now come under condemnation. Only those who repent and renew the covenant with Israel’s God ultimately experience its blessings. Exceptions to the curses/blessings pattern occur: even when people collectively suffer the curses, God delivers the righteous; and even when they collectively enjoy the blessings, the wicked remain cursed.

People’s *individual* lives that manifest patterns of covenant blessings and curses, on the other hand, vary so widely that one cannot judge another’s fortune or misfortune as a blessing or curse. Instances of transgressing God’s covenant followed by curses, for example, may be compounded by inherited generational “iniquities” or dysfunctional patterns that factor into one’s standing before God. Likewise, a person’s prosperity serves as no indicator of personal righteousness.

5. Isaiah's Zion Ideology of Proxy Salvation

A literary pattern possessing Jebusiteroots—possibly dating to Melchizedek king of Salem—involves the *fullness of time* mediatory role of a descendant of David. Called Zion ideology, it consists of (1) God's destruction of the wicked; (2) his deliverance of the righteous; and (3) the intercession of a Davidic king. A historical precedent occurs when an angel of God slays an Assyrian army of 185,000 men besieging Jerusalem at King Hezekiah's intercession on behalf of his people.

God Destroys the Wicked of His People and the Nations (Isaiah 1–39)

A Davidic King Intercedes on Behalf a Repentant Remnant (Isaiah 36–38)

God Delivers the Righteous of his People and the Nations (Isaiah 40–66)

Forty mini-patterns of Zion ideology appear in the Book of Isaiah in which the word *Zion* or its equivalent occurs in conjunction with (1) the destruction of the wicked; (2) the deliverance of the righteous; and (3) a codename or alias of God's servant.

6. Test One, Test Two, Test Three

Three major tests try the loyalties of God's [persecuted] people: (1) an arch-tyrant who conquers the world and demands all peoples' allegiance in the pattern of the ancient kings of Assyria and Babylon; (2) an [imperial] equivalent of the ancient Babylonian empire, whose socio-economic structure was grounded in the manufacture and sale of idols or false gods; and (3) ecclesiastical leaders who excommunicate and disfellowship God's servants for their zeal and love of the truth.

The Archtyrant Demands All People's Allegiance (Isaiah 1–38)

Babylon's Idols Seduce People away from God (Isaiah 39–48)

Ecclesiastical Leaders Persecute God's Servants (Isaiah 49–66)

The three tests parallel three tests to which the Greek gods of myth subject Odysseus: (1) the one-eyed Cyclops who attempts to take Odysseus captive resembles the king of Assyria/Babylon, an end-time Antichrist; (2) the sirens who seek to seduce Odysseus compare with Babylon and its idols; and (3) the false suitors of Odysseus' wife, who waste his substance during his absence and who challenge him on his return, resemble leaders who abuse their ecclesiastical authority.

God's children who compromise liberty and "make peace" with the arch-tyrant "weep bitterly" in the end when their hopes are dashed (Isaiah 33:7–9; 36:16). Those blind and deaf who "trust in idols and esteem their images as gods retreat in utter confusion" when God empowers foreign enemies against them (Isaiah 42:17–18). Persons whom their ecclesiastical leaders "abhor" and "exclude" for the truth's sake (Isaiah 66:5) God exalts in the end (Isaiah 61:7, 9; 65:13–15).

7. The Servant–Tyrant Parallelism

A literary pattern contrasting the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14 with the King of Zion in Isaiah 52–53 in a series of twenty-one antithetical verses identifies the suffering figure of Isaiah 53:1–10 with the King of Zion of Isaiah 52:7, showing they are the same person (*Literary Message of Isaiah*, 173–79, 211–24). Depicting his descent phase through trials and afflictions that precedes his ascent phase as King of Zion, this literary configuration attests to one divine Savior.

**The King of Babylon Exalts Himself and Is Humiliated
(Isaiah 14)**

**The King of Zion Suffers Humiliation and Is Exalted
(Isaiah 52–53)**

Differentiating the King of Babylon from the King of Zion is his exalting himself in order to become “like the Most High [God].” Pursuing a counterfeit of glory, he ends up being cast into the lowest Pit (Isaiah 14:13–15). The King of Zion, on the other hand, consents to being judged as the lowest of men while serving as a proxy savior to his people (Isaiah 53:3–10). This pattern defines the true path to glory and infers that the King of Zion becomes like the Most High God.

As humanity’s preeminent exemplars of righteousness and wickedness, the King of Zion and King of Babylon constitute role models that all people follow either for good or for evil. Manifestations of pride—as in exalting oneself over others in thought, word, or deed—inevitably lead to humiliation. And vice versa: a humble attitude—as in acknowledging one’s nothingness before God and complete dependence on him for all things—is a prerequisite for ascent to glory.

The Three Cycles in Isaiah 13-17

*The short one following Babylon
Each has reference to a Gentile nation*

I have been convinced by studying the text that the three cycles are the way Isaiah laid out these divine messages. We see Babylon mentioned first in each: in A. (chapters 13/14) then in B. (chapter 21), and in C. as the earth, world, and city. That is persuasive, and it helps to interpret chapter 24. That, in turn, is a major help in interpreting Revelation. Follow the thread in the **second item** of the three cycles:

A. Isaiah 14:28-32

²⁸ This oracle came in the year King Ahaz died:

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you **Philistines**, that **the rod that struck you is broken**; from the root of that snake will spring up a viper, its fruit will be a darting, venomous serpent. ³⁰ The poorest of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety. But your root I will destroy by famine; it will slay your survivors.

³¹ Wail, O gate! Howl, O city! Melt away, all you Philistines! A cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there is not a straggler in its ranks. ³² What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation? "The **LORD has established Zion**, and in her his afflicted people will find refuge."

B. Isaiah 21:11-12

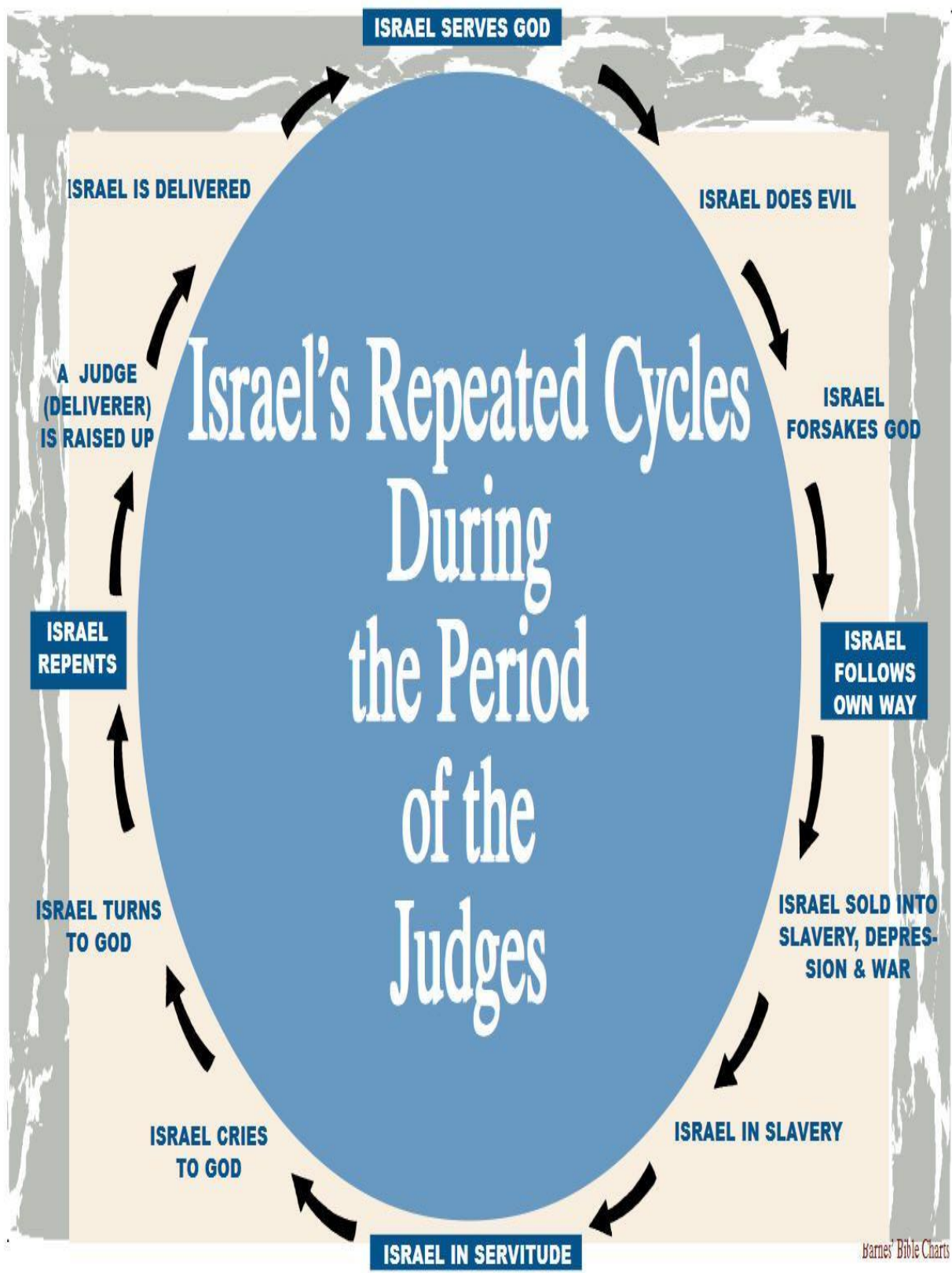
¹¹ An oracle concerning Dumah: Someone calls to me from **Seir**, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?" ¹² The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again."

C. Isaiah 24:21-23

²¹ **In that day the LORD** will punish the powers in the heavens above and the **kings on the earth** below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished **after many days**. ²³ The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on **Mount Zion** and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously.

Alec J. Motyer says in Isaiah, An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale OT commentaries):

The present poem sums up the series which began with 14:28-32. Against premature Philistine rejoicing, Isaiah warned of a great Davidic king to come; to the inquiring Edomite (21:11-12) he spoke of prolonged waiting; but the climax still comes only *after many days* (24:22d); the king deadly as a serpent (14:29) will *punish* (24:21); the darkness (21:11-12) will be swallowed in brightness (24:23a); the long progression of day and night (21:11-12) will end as *moon* and *sun* are transcended (24:23a); and the promised king (14:30) will be the Lord. (p.168)





Theme verse

Judges 21:25 - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

Application lessons

Othniel is a fantastic example of personal faith

Ehud was a spiritually committed man and was courageous use your weakness for God

Deborah had amazing faith in God and anything that needed to be done. Give God praise

Gideon was confident in obeying God's will. we need confidence in God not self confidence

God cannot be bargained with

Cycle of Sin

Judges: a cycle of sin and deliverance

by [Jeffrey Kranz](#) | Jul 8, 2013 | [Bible Books](#)

Judges is the account of how Israel behaves between the death of [Joshua](#) and the leadership of a king. Instead of remaining loyal to God and following His laws, these generations of Israelites wander in their faith, worshiping idols, indulging in violence, and descending into chaos.

Overview of Judges

The book of Judges features a host of characters. It's here we find the stories of well-known Sunday school staples like the reluctant warrior Gideon and the strongman Samson. We also find a few brief appearances of important characters from the [Torah](#), like Caleb and Phinehas ([Jdg 1:12–15](#); [29:27–28](#)). The book lists [12 titular judges](#), corresponding to the [12 tribes of Israel](#). Because the book of Judges covers such a broad stretch of time and space, it's more important to examine the structure of the book itself, rather than the characters. The book of Judges falls into three large sections, each of which has some mild overlap: the introduction, the judges, and an appendix of stories that show the state of the nation.

I. Introduction (1–3)

This section briefly lays out a few challenges that the nation of Israel faces, then frames the rest of the book.

First is the **death of Joshua**. During the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan, God had endorsed two national leaders: Moses for the first generation, and then Joshua for the next. The God of Israel parted the Red Sea for Moses and later parted the Jordan River for Joshua—both times giving the nation a clear sign that God planned to protect and provide for those who followed these leaders. The people of Israel were loyal to God during Joshua's lifetime—but when Joshua dies, God doesn't choose a successor. The individuals, families, and tribes of Israel are responsible for abiding by God's laws themselves.

Second is that the **Torah is forgotten**. Generations after Joshua forget [how the Lord rescued Israel from the gods of Egypt \(Ex 12:12\)](#) and made them his special nation in the wilderness. They forget [Moses' call to choose God's blessings](#), and his warnings about the destruction that awaits if the nation is disloyal to their God.

Third is the **influence of the land's original inhabitants**. Some of Canaan's native people survived Joshua's conquest of the land, keeping their cities, their cultures, and their religious practices. When the people of Israel mingle with the Canaanites (and especially when they intermarry), their loyalties become divided between the God of Israel (who gave them the land) and the gods of the Canaanites. When Israel worships other gods, the Lord revokes his protection. This results in foreign people groups invading and oppressing Israel, until things reach a point at which the people of Israel cry out to God for help. When they do this, God sends a deliverer (called a **judge**) to rally the people, overthrow the invaders, and give the nation peace. Peace, that is, until Israel strays again, and the cycle repeats.

II. The Judges (3–16)

This section again states the cycle that Israel and God find themselves in, then tells the stories of 12 judges whom God raises up to deliver Israel. This section falls into two sections, with a leading group of seven “former judges” and a group of five “latter judges” afterward. Each group of judges follows a similar pattern—the first and final major judges experience God's Spirit, and the final major judges are even announced by angels. But when coupled together, both sets of judges show that Israel's leaders aren't getting better—they're getting worse.

The former judges section begins with **Othniel**, a member from a *prominent family* (the late, great Caleb). The *Spirit of God* comes on Othniel, he restores peace, and the story moves on. **Ehud** and **Deborah** both take their turns delivering Israel from the cycle after this. This section climaxes with the story of Gideon, a judge *announced by God* who leads a militia to score miraculous defeats against Israel's enemies. The *Spirit of God* comes on Gideon, and the people of Israel try to make him king (he refuses). After he dies, his son tries to claim the throne, throwing Israel back into chaos. (Shamgar, Tola, and Jair are mentioned in this section, but briefly.)

The latter judges section opens with **Jephthah**, an illegitimate son from a *prominent family*. The *Spirit of God* comes on Jephthah, but the military leader's efforts still end in tragedy. Minor judges Izban, Elon, and Abdon get brief mentions. But the section ends with **Samson**. A miracle child heralded by *divine announcement*, he grows up to become a one-man army against Israel's enemies. When the *Spirit of God* comes upon Samson, he is able to accomplish feats of supernatural strength.

Whereas the former judges section boasts four major judges, the latter section only includes two—half as many. Both sections begin with a judge from a wealthy family, but while Othniel is associated with the God-fearing Caleb, Jephthah's father beds a prostitute. The final major judge in both sections wins miraculous victories, but while the people of Israel propose making Gideon king, the people actually *hand Samson over to their enemies*. Despite God's help, Israel's leadership is sliding from bad to worse.

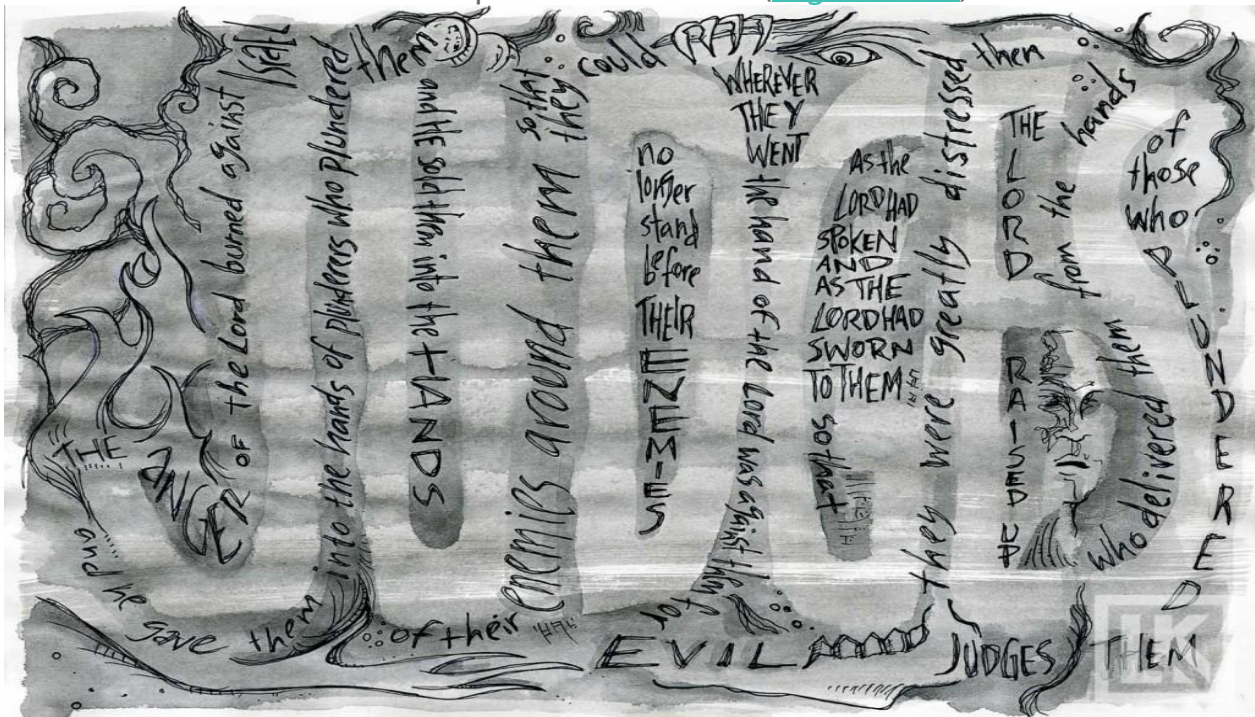
III. The Nation

The third act opens with yet another story about Samson, as the book transitions from showing the decline in Israel's leadership to showing how the nation overall has descended into chaos. Samson is taken prisoner by Israel's enemies. Elsewhere, a family of Israelites sets up their own invented god, with their own invented priesthood. Elsewhere still, an entire tribe of Israelites abandons their territory and raids another town—becoming the oppressors themselves. And Judges ends with the most chaotic story of all, in which rape leads to murder, murder leads to war, war leads to an entire tribe almost going extinct, and the solution being ... more rape.

It's moral chaos, and for every episode, the author reiterates that **this is what happens when there's no king in Israel.**

Theme verses of Judges

"The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them." ([Jdg 2:14-16](#))



Judges' role in the Bible

The period of judges is a dark era in Israel's history. This book shows how persistent Israel is in forgetting the Lord, and how faithful God is to discipline and deliver His people. It's in Judges that we see Israel's need for a Messiah, a godly king. Because there is no good king in Israel, everyone does what is right in their own eyes ([Jdg 21:25](#)).

Both Judges and [Ruth](#) tell us how bad things were in Israel before God gave them a king, but anticipate the coming of the good king David. The writer of Hebrews references several characters from Judges as examples of Old-Testament characters who gained approval through faith. Though Judges describes the consequences of unbelief in grim detail, we also see is a series of vignettes displaying the powerful, positive effects of faith in a faithful God.

Literary Structure of Judges 4

The overall structure of the book of Judges is set up in such a way to show the deterioration of the nation of Israel as well as their need for a King. The two introductions of the book, paralleled with the two epilogues, the chiasmic structure of the book, and the use of *leitwords* are just some of the ways that the author makes these points. Chapter four is no exception. This chapter gives us the story of Deborah and Barak and their rescue of the people of Israel from the hands of Jabin and his general Sisera.

One way that we see how this chapter was intentionally fit into the narrative of the book of Judges is the author's use of a janus. A janus is a literary device that directs the reader backwards into previous narrative and forward into the upcoming narrative. Verse 1 begins with "After Ehud died..." This looks backward to the previous narrative of Ehud and his deliverance of the Israelites from the hands of Eglon. Verse 2 ends with, "The commander of his army was Sisera..." This looks forward to the story that is going to be told in narrative form in this chapter and in poetic form in chapter 5.

Another tool that the author used to show how this story fits into the author's overall picture of the downfall of the nation of Israel was to use a refrain that is used throughout the book of Judges. Verse 1 contains the phrase "the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord." This refrain was first used in Judges 2:11. This falls within the "second introduction" of the book. The purpose of this introduction was to shed spiritual light on the state of the Israelite nation. This refrain is also used throughout the book of Judges to begin each cycle of judges. This refrain is found in Judges 3:7 & 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; and 13:1, introducing the cycles of Othniel, Ehud, Deborah/Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, respectively.

Another sign that the author intentionally used this account in his effort to show Israel's need for a king is the use of the *leitword*, king. The Hebrew word for king, מֶלֶךְ, is used 4 times in the fourth chapter of Judges. The word is found in verses 2, 17, 23, and 24. This is another indication of the author's intentionality of including this story in the account of the Judges.

Now that we have seen how the author has used poetic devices to place this chapter within the accounts of the Judges, I want to look at a few devices within the chapter that the author used.

The author of this story gives us a short synopsis of the story in the introduction and conclusion of this chapter. If we take verses 1-3 and verses 22-24 without the intervening verses, we can see a much briefer version of the story. But if we look even closer we can see that this introduction and conclusion together has some parallelism in it.

Taken by themselves, the introduction and conclusion have a chiastic structure:

A Ehud dies & Israel does evil in the eyes of the Lord	vs. 1
B Lord gives Israel to Jabin	vs. 2
C Sisera is instrument of oppression	vs. 3a
X People cry out	vs. 3b
C' Sisera dead	vs. 22b
B' Lord delivers Israel from Jabin	vs. 23
A' Israel grows in power and Jabin dies	vs. 24

This parallel structure shows us the author's basic intention for the story. We begin the story by seeing Israel sliding into the weakness that comes from doing evil in the sight of the Lord (A – vs. 1) and we end the story with Israel gaining in power over the Canaanite king (A' – vs. 24). In verse 2 (B) we see that the Lord gives Israel into the hands of Jabin, King of the Canaanites, and in verse 23 (B') we see that the Lord delivers Israel from the hands of the Canaanite king. Part a of verse 3 (C) shows us how the means by which the Israelites were oppressed. Part b of verse 22 (C') shows us the means by which the oppression of the Israelites was lifted. In part b of verse 3 we see the reason that God intervened and came to the rescue of his people.

According to the combination of the introduction and conclusion of this chapter, we can see the cycle that the author of Judges uses throughout his book: Israel sins, God sends foreign oppressors, Israel Cries out, God sends relief through the Judge. This is the overall, big picture that we are to get from this chapter.

We have seen how the author used poetics to place this chapter into the flow of the book of Judges and how the author set up the cyclical nature of Israel's and God's actions in this chapter. Now, I want to look at one point that I think the author was trying to make in this chapter and how the poetics of the narrator are used to make that point.

The point that I see that the author was trying to make in this chapter is that the men of the nation of Israel had abdicated their role as the political, military and spiritual leaders of Israel.

The first tool that the narrator used was comparison of the expected norm. We see this in the account of the exchange between Deborah and Barak. Deborah is introduced to us as the wife of a man of Israel and a leader of the nation of Israel (vs. 4-5). During this period of Israel's history you would expect a man to be leading the nation. This introduction to Deborah leads us in a different direction.

But that is not the only indication of this comparison of the expected norm. Verses 6 & 7 tell us of how Deborah summoned Barak and told him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River, and give him into your hands."

Based on other instances of Hebrew narrative where a command is given by God to one of his agents, we would expect a response something like, "So Barak took ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor" (see Exodus 17:5-7). But that is not Barak's response. Instead, Barak responded by saying, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go" (vs. 8). Barak does the opposite of what we would expect him to do.

Debora responds by saying, “Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman” (vs. 9). The author’s point is seen in this comparison with the expected norm. We would expect a man to be leading the nation of Israel and to be eager to go up against the enemies of God after receiving a prophetic word, but we do not.

As I mentioned earlier, the first two verses of this chapter form a janus passage. In the second half of the janus we are introduced to Sisera as the instrument of oppression. In my opinion, Sisera is the focus which is used to show how the men of Israel have abdicated their positions of leadership in the nation of Israel.

This comparison falls within a larger, chiasmic parallelism that makes this point throughout the whole of the narrative:

A Lord will draw out Sisera for Barak	vs. 6-7
B Sisera given to a woman	vs. 9
C Sisera with his Chariots	vs. 13
X Lord defeats Sisera’s chariots	vs. 14-16
C’ Sisera on foot without his chariots	vs. 17
B’ Sisera killed by Jael (a woman)	vs. 18-21
A’ Jael draws in Barak to see Sisera	vs. 22

It struck me while looking at this chapter that although Jabin is named as the oppressor, it seemed that Sisera played a much larger role than Jabin. So I looked at the story of Sisera in light of the comparison made in verses 6-9 and saw how Sisera's story made the point of men losing the glory. We see in verses 6-7 (A) that the Lord promised to draw Sisera out for Barak, and in verse 22 (A') we see that Barak is drawn in by Jael to see Sisera's dead body. In verse 9 (B), Deborah tells Barak that Sisera will be given to a woman, and in verses 18-21 (B') Sisera is killed by a woman. In verse 13 (C), we see Sisera with his chariots, and in verse 17 (C'), we see Sisera on foot. And the whole story turns on verses 14-16 where we are told how the Lord defeated the armies of Sisera. Barak was to receive the glory of overturning Jabin and killing Sisera, but because of his refusal, we are left with the scene of him witnessing, first hand, the consequences of his refusal to lead the people of Israel. The men of Israel failed in their roles as protectors of Israel. But God still had grace on the people and rescued them anyway.

We also see in this particular passage that the men of Naphtali were unfit to be king. If they were not willing to be the Judge of Israel, they were not fit to hold the office of King.

The narrator of the book of Judges has given us implicit signs of his evaluative viewpoint. This can be seen throughout the book of Judges as well as in the particular story of Deborah and Barak.

RECURRING CYCLE IN JUDGES

The theme of Judges is a cycle of apostasy, oppression, penitence and deliverance that is seen repeatedly throughout the book. It is a vicious cycle of sin, servitude, supplication and salvation that repeats itself over a period of about 350 years from 1370 to 1050 B.C. The title of the book is taken from the outstanding characters and prominent figures who deliver God's people. These Judges were actually "Saviors," or "Deliverers" who led the people during the turbulent years in Israel's history. The Key Verses are 2:11-23.

I. SIN	II. SERVITUDE	III. SUPPLICATION	IV. SALVATION
The people go into apostasy. They rebel against God.	God sends an enemy nation to conquer and chastise them.	The people pray for deliverance.	God answers their prayers by raising up a deliverer to free them and give them peace. These deliverers are the Judges.
3:7	3:8	3:15a	3:10–11 Othniel
3:12	3:13	4:3	3:15b Ehud & Shamgar
4:1	4:2	6:6	4:4 Deborah & Barak
6:1a, 10	6:1b	No reference	6:7ff Gideon
8:33–35	Ch. 9	10:10	10:1–5 Tola & Jair
10:6	10:7–9	13:8	11:1 Jephthah & others
			13:24; 14:1

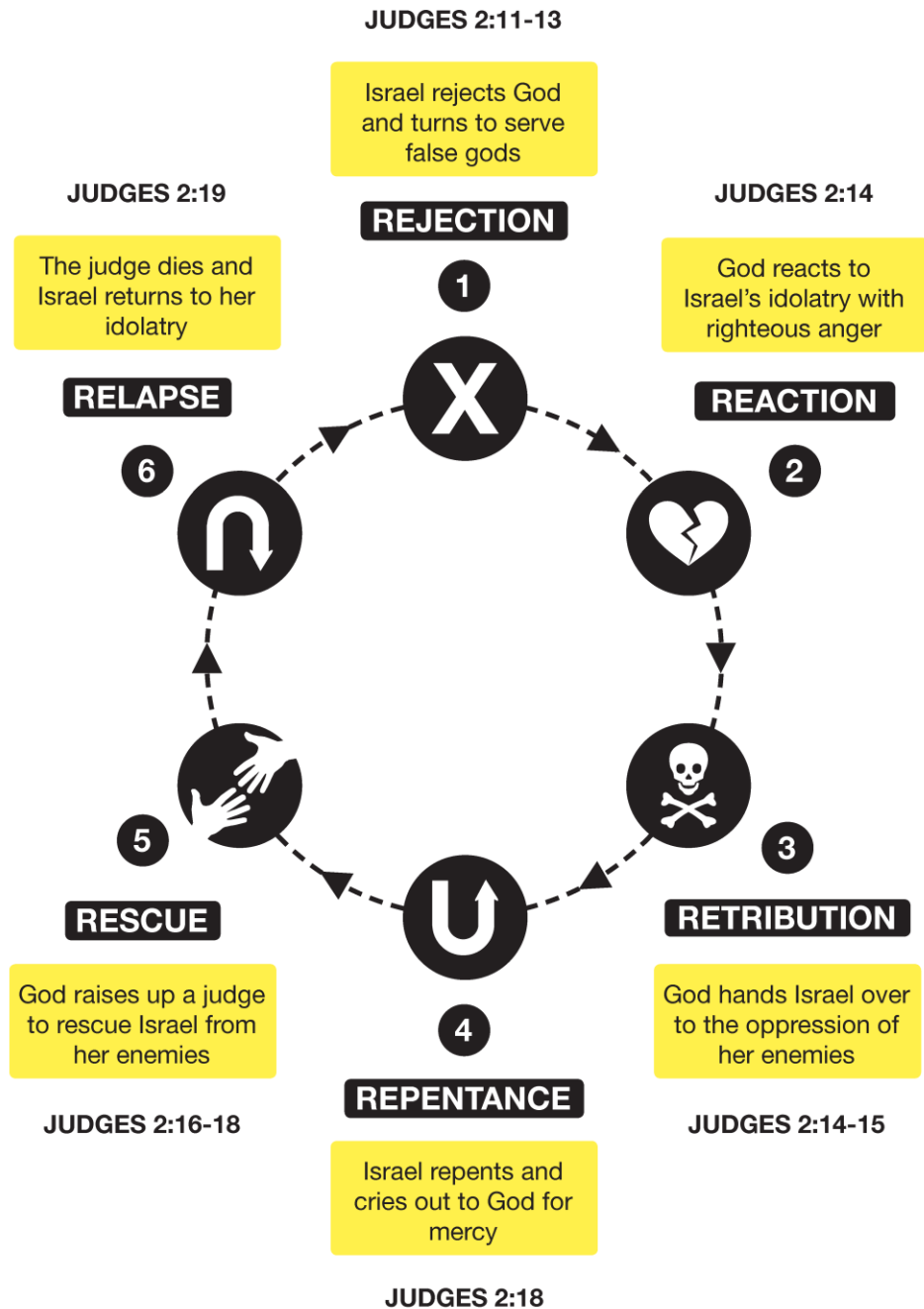
Title: Recurring Cycle in Judges

Series: Introduction to Bible Books

THE CYCLE OF JUDGES: REJECTION & RESCUE



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The Cycle of Decline and Revival	Judges 3:7-11	General
1) They knew not the Law (Judges 2:10)	Sin (7)	Rebellion
2) Forsook God and served Baal (Judges 2:11-13)	Servitude (8)	Retribution
3) God delivered them into hands of enemies (Judges 2:14)	Supplication (9)	Repentance
4) They cried unto the Lord (Judges 3:19)	Salvation (10)	Rescue
5) God raised up a deliver (Judges 2:16)	Silence (11)	Rest

Excursus: The Covenant Pattern of Apostasy, Punishment, and Restoration in Select Passages from Israel's Ancient Traditions

In Israel's scriptures, after God's people commit apostasy their restoration is made possible due to their covenant relationship with the LORD. The Deuteronomic tradition emphasizes warnings to ancient Israel against turning away from God and the Mosaic covenant. When Israel obeys the covenant, this brings blessings; when the people reject it, this brings curse and punishment. If Israel returns (ἐπιστρέφω/בָּשָׁׁׁ) to the LORD and obeys the covenant commands, this brings restoration from curses (Deut 30:2; cf. chs. 27–30). The Israelites must not turn aside from God's commandments if they wish to live long and prosper in the land of promise (e.g., Deut 5:32–33; 17:11, 20). If they forget the covenant stipulations and follow other deities, God will expel them from the land and cause them to perish, but if they repent God will remember his covenant with their forefathers and they will be restored (4:23–31; 11:16–17; 13:1–18; 17:12; 19:11–13; 29:17). The LORD promises to never leave nor forsake Israel, and yet in almost the same breath God affirms that he *will* forsake them if they forsake him (Deut 31:6, 8, 16–17). Knowing beforehand that Israel will turn away from God, God commands Moses to write a song the Israelites are to remember while in a state of apostasy and expulsion (31:19–22, 29–32:43). The purpose of the song is to testify of God's justice and mercy before Israel in hope of their repentance and restoration. The pattern of apostasy, punishment, and restoration found in the Deuteronomic covenant provides the backdrop for similar patterns in Israel's ancient traditions.¹⁰³

In Judges six cycles of Israel's defections and restorations are recorded. The people's apostasy is described in terms of turning from the ways of their fathers and from obeying God's commands (Judg 2:17). They turn to other gods (Judg 2:19; 8:13), and forget and forsake the LORD to serve Baal (Judg 3:7 cf. 10:10; 1 Sam 12:9). They "do evil in the eyes of the LORD" (e.g., Judg 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1), and so God hands them over to their enemies (Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 13:1 cf. Neh 9:27; Ps 106:41). The cycles of backsliding thus result in God permitting the surrounding nations to oppress Israel. In the midst of such punishments, the Israelites turn to God who then remembers his covenant relationship with his people and raises up deliverers to restore them (Judg 2:10–23; 3:7–11; 3:12; 4:3; 6:6–7; 10:6–16). The epoch is epitomized by lawlessness in which everyone did what they saw fit, evidently because no king was in the land (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

Judges perhaps originally functioned as an apologetic for Israel's monarchy and was written between the turbulent times of 722–586 BCE when Israel was repeatedly warned by prophets about their idolatry and liaisons with foreign nations. During these times divine punishment would come by way of other nations, especially the Assyrians and Babylonians, but restoration would also take place (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:46–50; 2 Chr 6:36–39; 36:1–23). The sins of Manasseh during this period are remarkably similar to the book of Judges in which everyone did what was right in their own eyes (2 Kgs 21:2). God's prophets proclaim that since Manasseh committed more evil than the Amorites before him, God would wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish. He would forsake the remnant of his inheritance and hand them over to their enemies (2 Kgs 21:13–14, 26). In another rendition of Manasseh's apostasy found in 2 Chr 33:10–13, however, Manasseh rather than Jerusalem is punished, and he humbles himself before God after being captured by the Assyrians; thus God restores him back to his kingdom.

Hosea provides another example of apostasy, punishment, and restoration. Northern Israel's defection is portrayed in terms of being an unfaithful wife and adulteress (Hos 1–2). The children of Hosea's wife are named "not loved" and "not my people," implying God's rejection of Israel (1:6, 9) as a result of Israel forsaking and forgetting his covenant by consulting other deities and engaging in prostitution and drunkenness (Hos 4:10–13 cf. 5:4–7; 6:7; 7:2; 9:10). The people of Israel are destroyed for lack of knowledge because the priests practice fertility rituals and fail to give proper religious instruction (4:6–19; cf. 2:8–10; 8:4–6; 10:1–8; 13:1–3). Israel's punishment includes natural and military calamities (1:5; 2:9–12; 4:3; 5:7; 10:14–15) and also exile described as going back to "Egypt" (8:13; 9:3–17; 11:5).

This turn of events not only recalls one of the curses of the Deuteronomic covenant (Deut 28:68), but in Hosea Egypt seems to be a codename for Assyria. God nonetheless calls Israel to turn back to him (Hos 5:4; 6:1; 7:10; 14:2–3). God would heal the waywardness of Israel's adultery if the people return to him (Hos 2:15; 4:4–5; 8:14; 13:6), and he would also bring them back to their original relationship with him in the wilderness so that they could be his people once again (2:14–23). In the imagery of fertile vegetation they will once again be restored to their land and abide in covenant blessings (14:1–7; cf. 2:23; 3:5; 6:1, 11; 11:10–11).

In the Isaianic tradition, the children of Israel have turned from the LORD to serve other gods, have despised the Holy One of Israel, and have rebelled against him, and so it is predicted that their country would be left desolate (Isa 1:4–9; 5:24; 6:1–10; 57:17–18; 59:13 cf. 53:3; 65:11). The LORD's rejection of Israel is depicted in the imagery of a creditor who sells a slave, and a husband who divorces his wife (45:13; 50:1; 52:3 cf. 54:6–7; 62:4). Israel will also suffer from spiritual blindness and dullness of hearing (6:9–10). But God only temporarily forsakes them (49:14; 54:7; cf. 42:14–16). As a woman cannot forget her children, so the LORD cannot forget Israel (49:14–15). A remnant will survive the impending disasters (Isa 1:9; 4:2–3; 10:20–23; 46:3 cf. Mic 2:12), the blind will once again see and the deaf hear (e.g., Isa 29:18–19; 35:5), and God will establish a new era depicted in the imagery of water in the desert and a new exodus plight (35; 40–44; 51; 63).

Jeremiah prophesies that Israel's enemies will rule over them because they forsake the LORD. The people will know that it is an evil thing to desert God (Jer 2:13–19 cf. 1:16; 17:13). They forget God and turn to serve idols and Baal (2:11; 5:7, 19; 9:12–14; 18:15; 19:4–6; 22:9). Judah is called an apostate who refuses to return to the LORD (3:6–12 cf. vv. 14, 22; 2:19; 4:1; 5:1–6). God claims that since the days he led their fathers out of Egypt they have been a stiff-necked people. The generation of Jeremiah is under divine wrath (7:24–29; 12:7–13; 15:6; 16:11; 23:33–40). God's abandonment of Israel is most graphically portrayed in terms of the destruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem and the captivity of its people by the Babylonians (Jer 39–45; Lam 1–5). Despite their exile, God assures the Israelites that they have not been utterly forsaken; God will eventually destroy their captors (Jer 51:5). God will once again restore the Israelites even though he had rejected Israel and Judah, and he will establish a new covenant with them (31:36–37; 33:24–26).

God permits Ezekiel to see a vision of idolatry in the very temple of God. The idolaters are killed by divine judgment, and the glory of God departs from the temple area (Ezek 8–10). Israel did not forsake the idolatry and prostitution that it started in Egypt (20:30–32; 23:3, 8), and so God will pour out his wrath against them and they will be scattered abroad (20:33–34). The LORD will bring them into the desert of the nations to execute judgment on them just as he had judged their fathers in the wilderness. After God has purged them of their rebels, he will bring them again into a covenant relationship with him (20:35–38). In the valley of dry bones, God declares that he will save the people of Israel from their backsliding so that they will not defile themselves with idols any more (37:23). They will forget their unfaithfulness (39:26), and the glory of God will return and dwell in the prophetic new temple (Ezek 40–48).

We can glean a few relevant observations regarding the pattern of apostasy, punishment, and restoration found in Israel's scriptures. First, Israel's defections are frequently described in terms of breaking the covenant (Lev 26:15, 44; Deut 31:16, 20; Judg 2:1; Isa 24:5; Jer 11:10; 31:32; Ezek 17:15–19), transgressing the covenant (Deut 17:2; Josh 7:11–15; 23:16; Judg 2:20; Hos 6:7), or forsaking the covenant (Deut 29:24–25; 1 Kgs 19:10; Jer 22:9). Covenant language thus provides an established foundation for God's reciprocating nature in relation to Israel's obedience and disobedience. When Israel forsakes God, God forsakes Israel (cf. Deut 7:6–7; 31:6–16; Judg 2). Second, Israel's apostasy characteristically leads to punishment or exile or both, in keeping with the Deuteronomic covenant of curses that include, among other things, disease and natural catastrophe (e.g., Deut 28:20–24), captivity by foreigners (28:36–37), and culminating with a return back to Egypt and slavery (28:68). We notice such punishments of exile primarily in relation Israel's captivity by Assyria (e.g., Hosea) and Babylon (e.g., Jeremiah).

Third, when Israel repents of its rebellions, God remembers his covenant and restores them (Deut 4:23–31; 2 Kgs 17:36–41; Jer 14:21; cf. Pss 77[78]; 80[81]; 105[106]:44–48; Zech 3; Mal 2:10–12 with 4:5–6). The promise of restoration is normally given to a remnant who are purified and restored through repentance or who do not fall away (Deut 4:28–31; Judg 2–6; 1 Kgs 19:14–18; Ezek 20:35–38). The nation of Israel may suffer corporate judgment—such as a military slaughter (2 Chr 28:6) or a generation that goes into captivity (Jer 7:24–29)—but because of God’s promises with Israel’s forefathers God does not forsake all the Israelites (Jer 5:10, 18; 31:36–37; cf. Mic 7:18–20).

The pattern of apostasy, punishment, and restoration carries over into early Jewish writings (e.g., Tob 14:4–6; CD 20.1–8; 4Q393 3.3; 4Q504 4.7; 2 Bar. 85.1–9; *Jub.* 1.5–25; Ps.-Philo 12.4; Philo, *Rewards* 152–63, 172; *t. Demai* 2.9; *b. Bekhorot* 31A). One prominent example is found in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The various tribes of Israel are predicted to fall away in the last days and suffer divine punishment through their captivity and being scattered abroad, but their restoration to God is also normally predicted if they repent (cf. *T. Naph.* 4–7; *T. Ash.* 7; *T. Gad* 8). The people of tribe of Issachar will align themselves with Beliar and evil desires, and so they will be scattered among the nations. But their children will be restored to the land if they return to the LORD (*T. Iss.* 6). The tribe of Zebulun will abandon the LORD to worship idols. They will be taken captive until the time of the end, but their repentance and deliverance from Beliar is also predicted (*T. Zeb.* 9; cf. *T. Jud.* 23.5; *T. Dan* 5.9; *T. Naph.* 4.3). The tribe of Dan will commit apostasy and follow the deeds of the Gentiles such as committing sexual promiscuity. Their prince will be Satan. They will suffer captivity and the plagues of Egypt, but God will have mercy on them if they turn back to him (*T. Dan* 5).

Distinct from its predecessors in Israel’s scriptures, and reminiscent of New Testament and Hellenistic Jewish authors, apostasy in the *Testament of the Twelve* centers on committing vices, and there is a preponderance of sexual sins (e.g., *T. Reu.* 3; *T. Iss.* 4; *T. Ash.* 5; *T. Benj.* 6). *The Twelve* not only reflects the language of responsibilities of Jacob’s heirs from Gen 49 but also the covenant of blessing and curses in Deuteronomy. A well-noticed pattern in *The Twelve* centers on the theme identified as sin-exile-return. This pattern is often introduced with a remark about the tribe’s apostasy in the last days (*T. Levi* 10.2; 14.1; *T. Iss.* 6.1; *T. Zeb.* 9.5), and restoration involves a return from captivity with God’s intervention on account of the tribe’s forefathers or the tribe’s repentance (*T. Jud.* 23.5; *T. Iss.* 6.3; *T. Zeb.* 9.7; *T. Dan* 5.9; *T. Naph.* 4.3).

Some of the emergent Christian writers who were familiar with Israel’s scriptures and Jewish traditions seem to be informed by this repetitive pattern of apostasy, punishment, and restoration, but they reconfigure it to embrace the punishment and recovery of apostate Christ-followers. Both Matt 18 and 1 Cor 5 seem to adopt the idea of expulsion from the Deuteronomistic tradition, but the apostate’s “exile” in such cases is from the Christ community rather than from Jerusalem or the promised land. Paul, who considers Israel of his day to be apostate, interprets from the scriptures a hope of Israel’s complete restoration, grounding it at the culmination of the ages when Christ returns (Rom 9–11).

Frequently the New Testament authors switch the order of punishment and restoration. As we have seen repeatedly, final condemnation of the apostate is reserved for judgment day. Until then, the Christ-followers attempt to restore fallen comrades regardless of whether they are Jewish Christians (Jas 5:19–20; Jude 22–23; cf. Matt 18:15; Luke 22:31–32) or Gentile Christians (Gal 6:1; 2 Cor 2:5–8; 2 Tim 2:24–26). In a significant way, their motivation to recover fallen comrades seems rooted in Jesus’ command for all believers to love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Jas 2:8; 4:11; Gal 6:1–5; cf. Jude 21–23).¹

¹ Oropeza, B. J. (2012). [*Churches under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. iii–266). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

The Cycle of the Judges

Speaker: [Jack McNiel](#)

Passage: [Judges 2:11-19](#)

The period of time during the book of Judges is called the time after the conquest. During the time of Joshua the nation of Israel had remained for the most part faithful to God.

They were told to utterly destroy the nations from the land. They did not always do that. They did not drive them completely out of the land and failed to destroy the heathen nations as they were commanded.

"And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel." - [Judges 2:3,4](#)

Yet, they angered God by their failure to do what all He had commanded. Thus, the Lord did not drive out all of their enemy, so that they would become a snare, to test them.

And in Judges we see what happened as a result of their failure to do all that God commanded them. And, the end result shows us just how far they fell into sin.

- [Judges 21:25](#) - *Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

The Cycle of the Judges

- Sin - Israel chooses idolatry
- Servitude - Israel is enslaved or made to suffer
- Sorrow - They sorrow, begin to cry out to the Lord, and offer supplication.
- Salvation - They were sent a judge restored to repentance, and a time of rest and peace would follow.

Israel's Fall into SIN During the Judges

- [Judges 2:1-3](#)

God made a Covenant with Israel that He Would Never Break

- [Genesis 17:7-9](#)

A Covenant Which He Fulfilled

- [Joshua 21:43](#)

God fulfilled the promise that he would lead them into the promised land. The land covenant which He had made with Abraham was fully fulfilled.

God had Warned of the Danger of Influence

- [Deuteronomy 7:1-4](#)

Why did they sin?

- [Judges 2:10-13](#)

-- They knew not God.

-- The 2nd Generation failed to develop their parent's faith.

The Irony of the Situation

- The nation had followed God out of bondage into freedom.
- Then next generation left Him, returned to idolatry, the worship of Baalim, and they were returned to bondage.

Israel's Fall into SERVITUDE During the Judges

- [Judges 2:14,15](#)

God had warned them what would happen if they broke His covenant.

- [Deuteronomy 4:15-31](#), *The Lord is a consuming fire.*

God is **hot** in his anger toward the nation of Israel.

- [Psalm 79:5](#), *He is a jealous God.*
 - Delivered and sold them into the hand of their enemy.
 - The hand of the lord was against them for evil.
 - Opposite of [Romans 8:28](#)
 - Evil = harm, calamity

Israel's Cry of SORROW & SUPPLICATION During the Judges

- [Judges 2:18](#)

God had promised that if they repented He would deliver them.

- [Deuteronomy 30:2-3](#)

In their sorrow they had but one place to God and that was God.

The oppression would bring them to their knees.

- Physically, the nation would be humbled by the oppression.
- But more importantly, it would bring them to their knees spiritually.

Israel is brought into SALVATION during the Judges

- [Judges 2:16,18](#)

God had promised if they would turn back to Him, He would bless them.

- [Deuteronomy 30:8,9](#)

God raised up judges.

- Judge = vindicator, deliverer,
- Judges were raised by a special appointment of the lord, to deliver Israel from, and avenge them of, their adversaries.

A period of peace would last as long as they remained faithful.

- As long as the judge lived
- After the judge died, the people would begin to stray.

The Cycle Repeated

- [Judges 2:19](#)

The Sad Reality

- [Psalm 9:17](#), A generation grew up not knowing God.

They refused to follow God's commandments

- [Proverbs 14:34](#)
- [Psalm 33:12](#)

They Cycle bean in the days of Othniel

- Sin 3:7
- Servitude 3:8
- Sorrow 3:9
- Supplication 3:9-10
- Peace 3:11

For over 400 years the cycle repeats, over and over, again and again.

Lessons Learned from the Judges

God Means What He Says

- [Deuteronomy 31:16-17](#)

We are never more than one generation from apostasy.

- [Deuteronomy 6:4-6](#)
- [Ecclesiastes 12:1](#)

We are to teach the next generation. We are to instill a love of God in their hearts

If we forsake God, His hand will be turned against us.

- [Matthew 12:30](#)

When we forsake God, we become slaves to sin.

- [John 8:34](#)

Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

- [2 Corinthians 7:10](#)

Only when we are humbled will He have mercy.

We learn that God is willing to forgive

- [Isaiah 1:18](#)

God will forgive us if we turn back to Him.

All the judges who redeemed Israel were just a foretaste of the redemption that would come through Jesus!

- [Romans 5:8-11](#)

That great judge has come to deliver us from the oppression of sin, that is the great Judge Jesus Christ.

The cycle of the judges is something we do not have to live with in our life. But, don't we repeat the cycle? You don't have to remain caught up in the cycle of sin, servitude, sorrow and salvation. You can break the cycle of sin with Jesus Christ.

If you are struggling with sin, you've been freed from the bondage but like Israel you've gone back into the bondage of sin, you can repent and pray for forgiveness. If you are a Christian, but struggling with sin, you can confess your sins and He will forgive you.

If you are still in bondage to sin, having never been freed from bondage, like Israel was in bondage to Israel. Jesus died for you to deliver you from that bondage, if you've never become a Christian you can be made free through belief in Jesus as the Son of God, repentance of your sin, and confession of His name. You can be baptized to wash away your sin, and have that rest and peace that comes from the salvation of the Lord. – Oak Grove Church of Christ

Bringing Order Out of Chaos

Here's another spiritual principle that has far-ranging implications—especially in terms of helping us to take control of our lives. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, one thing is extraordinarily clear: *God is a God of Order*.

The very first thing God did after he created the universe was to organize the universe—to separate light from darkness, to divide the water and the land, to bring clarity to the chaos. Now, of course these images aren't scientific. They aren't meant to be. Sacred Scripture should never be confused with a high school physics textbook. The point of Scripture is to present the deeper, underlying truth about life. And the tremendous truth being conveyed in the opening pages of the book of Genesis has to do with the nature of God.

God is simple in substance. God is Purity. God is Order. That's the truth to get into our heads.

And when God became Man in the person of Jesus Christ, he demonstrated those same characteristics again. Christ came into the world to perform a certain mission—the salvation of humanity. And he did it with extraordinary speed, order, and effectiveness. He was born in a very simple manner and then spent the first thirty years of his life in total, hidden quiet, preparing himself. Once he began, it took him only three short years to accomplish his objective. In three years he turned the whole world upside down—and it hasn't been the same since. Three years! That's efficiency for you! That's God.

When Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, he did something else that showed this characteristic. When the apostles discovered his empty tomb, they noticed something very interesting. They noticed that the burial shroud that had been used to cover Jesus' face was rolled up neatly in the corner. Such a tiny detail. But what significance! It means that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the first thing he did was to tidy up! The first thing he did was to put everything in its proper place—to clean his tomb before leaving it forever. And of course, that's to be expected. After all, Christ is God. And God's nature is to be orderly and clean.

What we've got to keep in mind here is that the thing most contrary to God is *sin*. The act of sinning is simply the act of turning away from God, right? Well, when we turn away from God—and then move in the opposite direction—what invariably happens is that we begin to take on qualities that are *different* than God; qualities that are *contrary* to God; qualities that are *opposite* to God. And that includes disorder. Sin, in its very nature, is division. It's disintegration. It's a falling apart—a breakdown of order. When we're not acting in line with God's will for us, that kind of disintegration happens to us on the inside—in our soul. There's an internal collapse that's not immediately perceptible to the people around us; an invisible chaos that we're sometimes not even aware of, even though we usually *feel* it in the form of unhappiness. Straightening up and putting things in order is always a good thing to do. The reason is that it's a sign you're trying to be in union with God—who, as we said, *is* order.²

² DeStefano, A. (2014). [*A travel guide to life: transforming yourself from head to soul*](#). New York City, NY: FaithWords.

REMNANT RESTORATION: SELF-EXTRACTION

What does the Bible mean when it refers to a remnant?

Question: "What does the Bible mean when it refers to a remnant?"

Answer: A remnant is a left-over amount from a larger portion or piece, whether it is food, material from which a garment is fashioned, or even a group of people. Although remnants could be looked upon as worthless scraps, and many times are, God assigned high value to those of His people whom He had set aside for holy purposes, those He labels as "remnants" in several places in the Bible. To begin, in [Isaiah 10](#) the story is told of the Lord's judgment upon the Assyrians. In verse 12 God says, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes." He continues in verses 17-18: "The Light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briars. The splendor of his forests and fertile fields I will completely destroy, as when a sick man wastes away."

God then relates how His people will turn back to Him as a result of this tremendous display of His strength—His utter destruction of most of Assyria: "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God" ([Isaiah 10: 20, 21](#)). He goes on to assure the remaining Israelites that they need not fear the Assyrians, for soon He will destroy them.

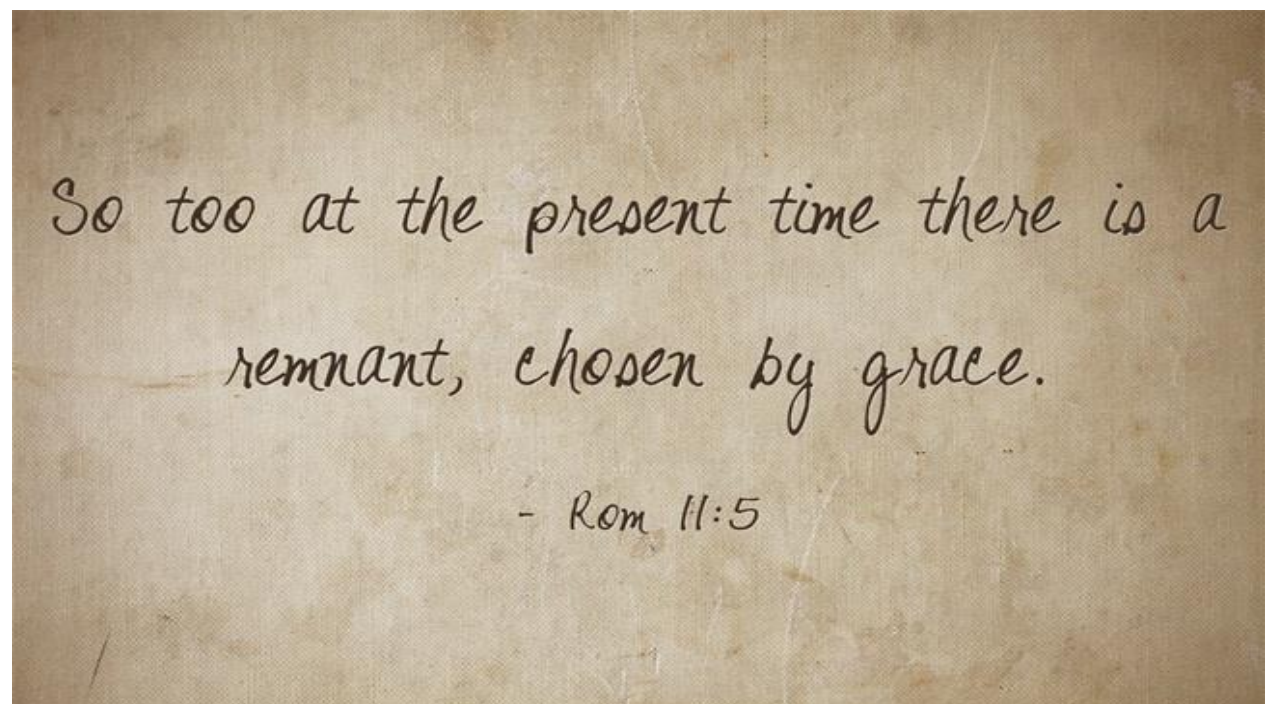
There are other remnants—those left over from a larger group—in the Bible, even though the word *remnant* isn't used to describe them. Noah and his family were the remnant saved out of the millions on the earth before the flood ([Genesis 6](#)). Only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a very small remnant, indeed ([Genesis 19](#)). When Elijah despaired that he was the only one left in Israel who had not bowed down to idols, God assured him that He had reserved a remnant of 7,000 “whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” ([1 Kings 19](#)).

[This] can also be seen in the New Testament, as carried through from the Old Testament: “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out His sentence on earth with speed & finality’” ([Romans 9: 27-28](#)). This implies that great multitudes of the Israelites would be cast off. If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost, and this was just the point which Paul endeavored to establish. While the word *remnant* means “what is left,” particularly what may remain after a battle or a great calamity, in this verse, it means “a small part or portion.” Out of the great multitude of the Israelites, there will be so few left as to make it proper to say that it was a mere remnant.

[Of course, the most blessed remnant is that of the true Church. Jesus made it clear that this remnant would be small when compared to the number of people on the earth throughout history. “Many” will find the way to eternal destruction, but “few” will find the way to eternal life ([Matthew 7:13-14](#)).] - GOT QUESTIONS

A Remnant of People

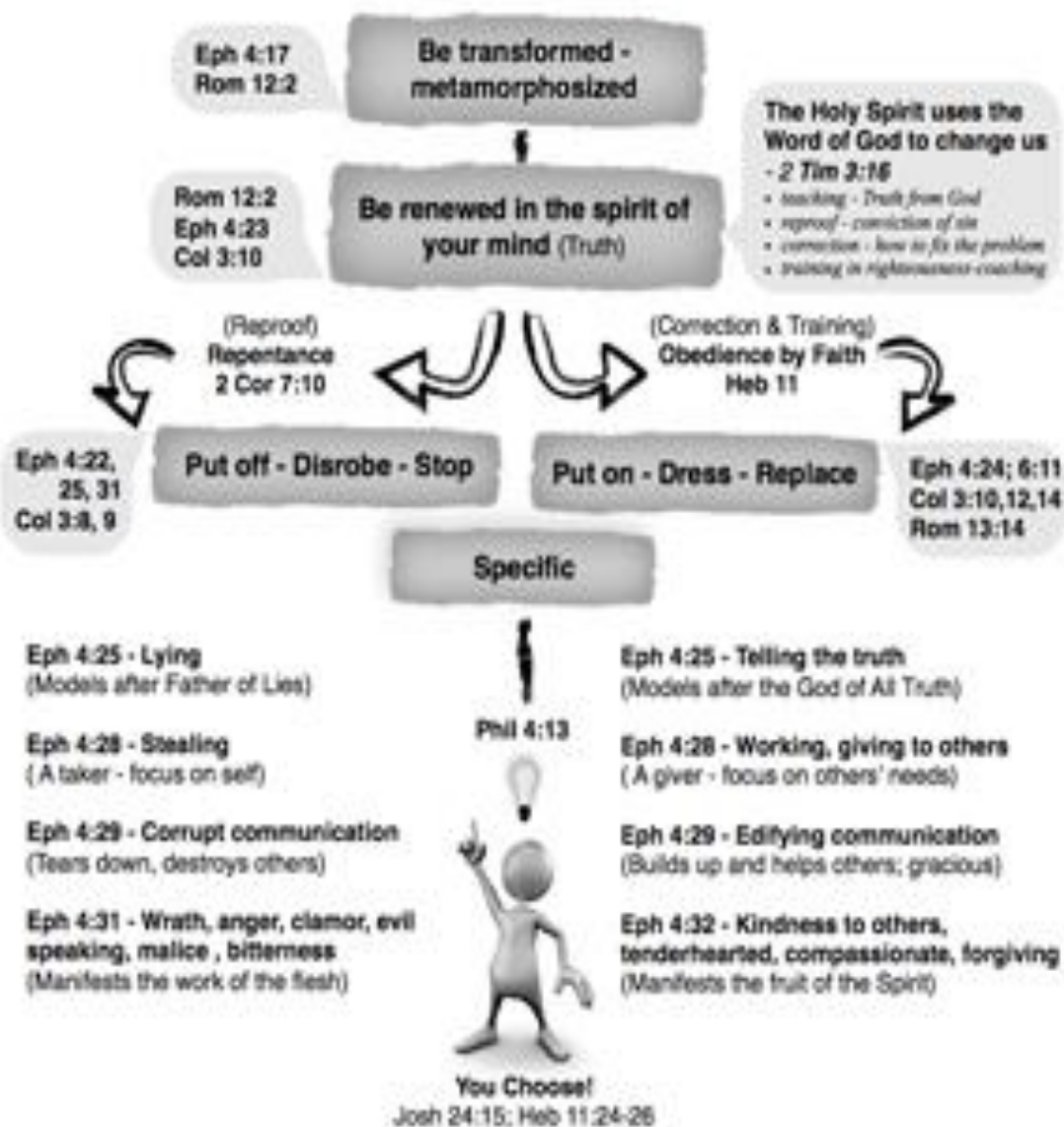
When Joseph was unfairly treated by his brothers and sold into slavery, he later became second in power next to Pharaoh and said “**God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors**” (Gen 45:7). Also, “**When Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking [an enemy nation] with a great blow until they were wiped out, and when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities**” (Joshua 10:20) this was not good. Joshua told the nation of Israel “**Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God. For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you**” (Joshua 23:11-13) so here, a remnant of a foreign nation left in the land would come back to haunt them and in fact, it did.



Change Model Diagram



A Command to Change!



Churches under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation

The General Epistles and Revelation

B. J. OROPEZA

Apostasy in the New Testament Communities

1st Peter

Identity, Perseverance, and the Persecution of Marginalized Christians

The letter of 1 Peter addresses a large cluster of predominantly Gentile congregations in Asia Minor. By and large their suffering was brought about by Gentile outsiders who persecuted them (4:1–6, 14–19). The author stresses their identity as transients in the present society so as to reinforce a distinction between themselves and their surrounding culture (1:1–5; 2:1–9; cf. 4:16; 5:14b). Although the author opposes their assimilation with the larger society, he admonishes them to live a “soft” difference that loves and does not vilify their enemies and attempts to win them over through blessing them and exemplifying a holy lifestyle (e.g., 2:12–3:6). In the imagery of the exodus-wilderness plight of God’s people, the author views them as the prophetic Diaspora and sojourners making their way through a metaphorical desert to the final eschaton (cf. 1:1, 13–19; 2:11).

But whereas the threat in 1 Peter centers on conformity with the sinful practices of outsiders as a result of persecution, the threat in Ephesians is more complex, coming not only by way of conformity with Gentile vices but also false teachings from diverse sources, from Jewish religious customs to pagan magic to the imperial cult. As well, virtually nothing is said about this community’s suffering through persecution, and unlike the disenfranchised Asians in 1 Peter, those addressed in the Pauline churches of Asia Minor must be warned against committing apostasy as a result of wealth and greed.

2nd Peter

Denying the Parousia and Distorting Paul—Apostate Teachers in the Community

The letter of 2 Peter reflects a community of recipients acculturated with Hellenistic thought and language as well as having some knowledge of Jewish traditions. They are probably Gentile Christians who belong to churches previously influenced by Paul (cf. 2 Pet 3:15). The Petrine author warns them against false teachers inside the church, who have brought with them an eclectic blend of worldly philosophies and corrupt ethics. The passage 2:1–3:4 borrows from Jude, but it is not clear that they face the same opponent. The author of 2 Peter reconfigures information from Jude to address the specific situation of his recipients. It is possible that the opponents are a dissident Pauline group who have distorted the teachings of Paul's gospel of grace and delayed *parousia* and use such teachings as a license for immoral living (3:15–16). The author considers the opponents to be false teachers and apostate Christians (2:1, 20–22), and assimilation to immoral ways of Hellenistic outsiders seems to be a major threat they pose. Unless entirely stereotyped by the author's vituperative language, vices such as greed and sexual excesses seem to be practiced by the opponents (2:3, 14, 18).

From our author's perspective, the false teachers were once redeemed by Christ but are now apostates. They deny his lordship by means of their immoral lifestyle and denial of the *parousia* (2:1, 20–22; 3:3–7). They are said to teach "heresies," (2:1), false teachings that stray from the centrality of the apostolic message, belief in Jesus as Lord, and obedience to Christ's ethical precepts.

Their apostasy is also described in terms of two ways: they turn from the way of righteous to the way of Balaam, which triggers for the recipients thoughts about Balaam as a false prophet who leads astray the Israelites and instigates them to commit fornication with outsiders, Moabite women in this case (2 Pet 2:15; cf. Num 25). They reject Christ's ethical precepts and have become all the worse for it, similar to Jesus' story of the man who is cleansed of one wicked spirit and then becomes worse when seven spirits possess him. Their apostasy reverts their conversion and cleansing from sin, and it is depicted as a dog returning to his vomit and a washed pig returning to the mud (2 Pet 2:20–22). They were once authentic believers who are now apostates and will suffer eschatological destruction (3:10–12; cf. 2:1, 3–6, 9; 3:16). Unstable Christians and new converts are especially susceptible to the false teachers, and all Christians need to practice virtues with faith as the foundation so that they do not fall away, whether as gradual defectors (1:5–13), precipitate defectors (2:18), or intellectual doubters (cf. 2:1; 3:1–4). They must also beware that they do not apostatize from the stability they enjoy through the truth of the Christian message (3:17–18). The *parousia* has been delayed so that all people, both Christians and non-Christians, would repent and be saved (3:8–9). This repentance is presumably open for the apostate teachers as well. Those who do not repent will be destroyed at the eschaton.

THE THREAT OF ASSIMILATION

The opponents in 2 Peter, similar to Jude's opponents, are said to deny Christ, revile angels, and practice immorality related to greed and sexual promiscuity. The opponents in both letters speak against the eschaton. In Jude they seem to deny the coming judgment related to the *parousia*; in 2 Peter they not only deny this (2:3–10) but also the imminence of the second coming (3:1–4). In fact they seem to doubt that the event will ever take place (cf. 1:16–21). The evidence is too slim for us to equate the opponents of both letters, especially given the vituperative stereotypes both texts articulate against them. Jerome Neyrey and others suggest the opponents share similarities with the Epicureans; others suggest, less plausibly, that Gnostic-like opponents are in view. The author's use of lawless terms to describe the opponents may suggest this group is antinomian.¹⁶ They turn from the holy "commandment" to commit apostasy (2:21). Then again, it was conventional for writers to describe end-time opponents of God's people as lawless (e.g., 2 Thess 2:3, 8; *Barn.* 15.5; *T. Dan* 6.16).

There may be some credibility to the author's unique claim that they have distorted Paul's teaching (2 Pet 3:15–16). Given the descriptions of the opponents' conduct in this letter and the immediate context in which the author encourages righteous and blameless living (cf. 3:13–14), the false teachers may have abused Paul's instructions related to grace in order to support their immoral behavior. More than this, it is possible that they twisted Pauline teachings related to the delay of the *parousia* (3:1–4, 9; cf. 2 Thess 2:1–3), again perhaps to justify their lax moral conduct. Similar to the wicked servant in Jesus' story of the Thief in the Night, they think they could live immorally because the lord is delaying his coming (Luke 12:41–46; Matt 24:45–51; cf. 1 Thess 5:1–9). The Petrine author may be familiar with both Jesus and Pauline traditions regarding the necessity of moral preparation in view of Christ's return as a thief in the night (cf. 2 Pet 3:10–11). *We can therefore suggest that the opponents are perceived by the author as immoral, and abuse Pauline teachings to justify their behavior. The author considers them false teachers and apostate Christians (2:1, 20–22); the threat they pose for the audience is assimilation with "pagan," Hellenistic ideas. Not only have they brought into the churches their immoral behavior but possibly an eclectic blend of teachings from several sects, philosophies, or streams of thought.*¹⁹

The letter is primarily deliberative rhetoric, intending to persuade the recipients through reminder, teaching, and exhortation to think properly or take action, mainly in the future, in relation to spiritual growth and eschatology.

Revelation

Overcoming Assimilation and the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor

THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR (2:1–3:22)

The main purpose of Revelation is to motivate the churches in Asia Minor, comprised of Gentiles and Jews, to perseverance in view of the short time before Christ's return. They are to avoid assimilation with the Roman system that would compel them to adopt its socioeconomic values and participate in the imperial cult. For the author, **assimilation leads to apostasy**. Through John's prophetic use of the voice of the glorified Christ and depictions of graphic visions portraying the fates of the righteous and wicked, the audience is encouraged to proper behavior and godly fear, and warned of the eternal consequences that will plague them if they do not repent of spiritual negligence and various practices that Christ detests. The Christian communities in this region struggle with internal dangers of apathy and the promotion of lax boundaries between the church and the Roman world. They face external pressures and harassments to conform to the religious and economic mores of a society that paid homage to wealth, social status, and Caesar as Lord. The Christians must be overcomers persevering until Christ's *parousia*, and thus they will be rewarded on the last day. If they apostatize by succumbing to the Roman system, they will be numbered among the vicedoers as cowards, idolaters, fornicators, and liars for denying Christ, and their eternal place will be excluded from the beloved city (21:7–8; 22:14–15).

The church in Ephesus stands fast against the Nicolaitans and Christian leaders who claim apostolic authority but teach false doctrines and exploit congregations, akin with the false teachers mentioned in the earlier Pastoral and Johannine letters (2:1–7). But these believers have failed to maintain their original fervency, which exemplified itself in the motivation to do works for the sake of loving one another as well as their neighbors and God. Similar to the church in Laodicea, their condition may have developed from a preoccupation or acquisition of wealth, and in this sense these churches have compromised with the Roman economic system (3:14–22). However, the Ephesians may have lost it, they now lack love. Likewise, the church of Sardis struggles with some type of spiritual apathy even though it was once a vibrant congregation (3:1–6). Some of its members are already considered apostates being spiritually dead to Christ. A second group is about to fall away, and only a small remnant has remained spiritually faithful to Christ, uncompromised when it comes to assimilation. All three congregations suffer from gradual defection; through lack of zeal and negligence their members have been lulled to a spiritual slumber and are now in a backslidden condition.

They are also in danger of divine judgment, and so the Christ of Revelation calls them to repentance. The consequence of not repenting would be that the Ephesian and Laodicean congregations will be removed from Christ's presence and no longer belong to him. The church in Sardis will be unprepared for Christ's *parousia* and members erased from the Book of Life. In essence, if these churches remain unrepentant they will be excluded from the New Jerusalem when Christ returns, and on judgment day they will face the second death, the Lake of Fire.

Divine judgment, however, is conveyed on a corporate level for these communities; repentant individuals within these churches would seem to escape the punishment determined for the church as a whole. Restoration after punishment is not mentioned probably because the letters are viewed in light of the imminent return of Christ—*now* is the time to repent.

The churches in Pergamum and Thyatira have compromised by eating food sacrificed to idols and committing fornication, practices that are associated with the doctrine of "Balaam" (2:12–29). The latter vice, however, is shorthand for their comingling with Roman society; it may not be literally denoting sexual immorality unless the term includes intermarriage with non-believers. These churches desire upward mobility in the socioeconomic order at the expense of compromising Christian commitments. A prophet in Thyatira code-named Jezebel has influenced the congregation and functions as a prelude to the Whore of Babylon by seducing her clients to eat idol meats and commit fornication. Christ has been patient with her but now her judgment is inevitable because she refuses to repent. The judgment that she and her colleagues and disciples will face is primarily temporal, taking place before the *parousia* so as to warn other churches not to follow her ways. Although her immediate disciples will be "killed," the possibility of restoration may be left open for Jezebel and her other constituents. Unrepentant members in Pergamum, however, would seem to face divine judgment when Christ returns.

Only the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia escape accusations and the threat of judgment (2:8–11; 3:7–13). The former has suffered poverty, perhaps as a result of socioeconomic discriminations from outsiders, and both churches seem to face conflicts with local synagogues. These churches have remained faithful despite local harassment; Philadelphia will escape future tribulation, but members of the congregation in Smyrna will soon suffer imprisonment. Both churches are encouraged to continue in faithfulness and not fall away.

The Beast, the False Prophet, and the Whore of Babylon are viewed as persecuting the churches, and these images primarily represent the imperial cult and the economic system of Rome (Rev 13; 17–18). The Christians must overcome them to participate in the New Jerusalem. A special protection is given to the 144,000 and the woman who bears the male child (Rev 7; 12). Even though the Dragon's mission is to destroy the saints (Rev 12) he will not succeed in destroying the woman (Jewish Christians) or her children (Gentile Christians).

The book of Revelation ends with a warning that Christians must not distort the content of the book's prophecies. To do so would incur divine judgment upon them whereby they would be excluded from the beloved community and suffer the same destruction as unbelievers and apostates (22:18–19).

We find in Revelation a group of Christian communities in Asia Minor that face temptations similar to the churches in this region in other New Testament writings. The danger of apostasy related to wealth, prominent in Laodicea and Ephesus, is especially a temptation in the Pauline church of Ephesus, where Timothy is instructed against the love of money and encouraged to have his congregation members dress modestly and be generous with their wealth (1 Tim 2:9; 6:9–10, 17–19). The churches in the area are also warned specifically against greed (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). Likewise, the Christians in the homily of Hebrews, another community that may be in Asia Minor, are warned against wealth (Heb 13:5). These examples suggest that early Christian communities in Asia Minor struggled to find a proper balance between spiritual purity and socioeconomic status. In Revelation, Rome offers them a way to economic security via the imperial cult: they could continue buying and selling as long as they take the mark of the Beast.

Some of the church members in Thyatira and Pergamum maintain a similar attitude regarding idol meats as do the “strong” in 1 Corinthians, without realizing that the times had changed and the leniency Paul once communicated to his church on this issue had now given way to more serious threats from the imperial cult and economic compromise. Needless to say, the voice of Paul on this issue did not win the day with many Christians at the dawn of the second century. On the other hand, the voice of Jesus in the gospels is repeated and perpetuated behind the prophetic warnings to the seven churches in Revelation. The warning that they not deny but confess his name sounds similar to Jesus’ warnings that those who deny him in the present age will be denied by him in the age to come (Rev 2:13; 3:5, 8; cf. Matt 10:32–33; Luke 12:8–9; Mark 8:34–38). And the church in Ephesus was losing its first love (Rev 2:4), which seems to be the reverse of Jesus’ command to love God and one another, the hallmark of Christian identity (e.g., John 13:35; Mark 12:28–31). Moreover, Jesus predicted a similar apostasy of Christians losing their love in the end times (cf. Matt 24:10–12). No doubt the Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century still believed in the imminence of the second coming, and from their perspective Jesus’ sayings related to perseverance and apostasy in the end times had special relevance for their situation.

THE NATURE OF APOSTASY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

[The] final factor is that the Christ-followers commit apostasy through committing *vice or being assimilated with the non-Christ society*. Many of the New Testament warnings fall into this category. The Gentile congregations in particular are often warned that sin and vices can lead to falling away, that is, their reversion back to their pre-converted status as idolaters (1 Cor 10; Rev 2), fornicators (1 Thess 4; 1 Cor 5–6; cf. Heb 13:4), or practitioners of other vices (e.g., Gal 5:19–21; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Eph 5:3–5; 1 Pet 2:11; 4:2–6; Rev 21:8; cf. Rom 1:18–32).³

³ Oropeza, B. J. (2012). [*Churches under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. iii–266). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

The
REMNANT
Past and Present

by
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THE REMNANT
PAST AND PRESENT

IT is at once interesting, instructive and encouraging to trace through Scripture the history of what is called "The Remnant."

There are points of similarity and points of contrast in the Jewish and Christian remnants which we cannot go into just now, inasmuch as our object in referring to both is to illustrate our special theme, namely, that in darkest days we find a devoted remnant dear to the heart of God, the heart of Christ, and who are addressed in the most tender and endearing terms, comforted by the most precious assurances, and cheered by the brightest hopes. This we believe to be the special subject laid upon the heart to present to the whole Church of God, for the purpose of encouraging every member of the beloved body of Christ on the face of the earth to stand apart from all that is contrary to His mind as revealed in His word, and to be found in the position, attitude and spirit of the true Christian remnant, waiting for the coming of our beloved Lord. I shall merely refer to one point which marks the distinction between the two remnants in the clearest way. It is this: the Jewish remnant is cheered by the hope of the Sun of righteousness; whereas to the Christian remnant is granted the far higher, brighter and sweeter privilege of looking out for the bright and morning Star. A little child can understand the difference between these two things. The morning star appears in the heavens long before the sun rises; and in like manner the Church will meet her Lord as “the bright and morning Star” before the beams of the Sun of righteousness fall on the God-fearing remnant of Israel.

And now a word, as to Laodicea. Nothing can be more vivid or striking than the contrast between it and Philadelphia in every respect. We have here the last phase of the professing Christian body. It is just about to be spewed out as something insufferably nauseous to Christ. It is not a question of gross immorality. It may to man’s eye present a very respectable appearance; but to the heart of Christ its condition is most repulsive. It is characterized by lukewarmness and indifference. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth.” How awfully solemn to find the professing Church in such a condition! And to think how soon we pass from the attractions of Philadelphia—so grateful to the heart of Christ, so refreshing to His spirit—to the withering atmosphere of Laodicea, where there is not a single redeeming feature! We have heartless indifference as to Christ and His interests, combined with the most deplorable self-gratulation. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and *have need of nothing*; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”

How solemn is all this! People boasting of their riches, and of their having need of nothing, and Christ outside. They have lost the sense of divine righteousness, symbolized by “gold,” and practical human righteousness, as symbolized by “white raiment,” and yet full of themselves and their doings—the very reverse of the dear Philadelphian company. There, He reproves nothing; here, He commends nothing. There, Christ is all; here, He is actually outside, and the Church is all. In a word, it is perfectly appalling to contemplate. We are just at the close. We have got to the last solemn phase of the Church as God’s witness on the earth.

Yet even here, in the face of this most deplorable condition of things, the infinite grace and changeless love of the heart of Christ shine out in all their undimmed lustre. He is outside; this tells what the Church is. But He is knocking, calling, waiting: this tells what He is, eternal and universal homage to His name! “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” The gold, the white raiment and the eye-salve are offered. Love has various offices to discharge, various characters in which to clothe itself; but it is the same love still—“the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever,” even though it has to “rebuke and chasten.” Here His attitude and His action speak volumes, both as to the Church and as to Himself. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: *if any man* hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to *him*, and will sup with him, and *he with Me.*”

In the church of Sardis the remnant is spoken of as “a few names”; in Laodicea there is an “if” as to one; but even if there be a single hearing ear, if there be one to open the door, that one is assured of the high privilege, the immense favor, of supping with Christ—of having that precious one as Guest and Host. “I with him, and he with Me.”

When the corporate witness has reached the very lowest point, individual faithfulness is rewarded with intimate fellowship with the heart of Christ.⁴

⁴ Mackintosh, C. H. (n.d.). [*The Remnant: Past and Present*](#) (pp. 1–32). New York: Loizeaux Brothers.

The Jewel of Consistency

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) May 24, 2012

By Bob Waldron

In an article by George Cornell, AP religion writer, we learn that a Presbyterian scholar, Dr. Arthur F. Glasser, has discovered that religious tolerance indicates a spiritual vacuum. Sounds good! Let me quote. “We’ve become so mushy-headed and tolerant in America that people say any religion is okay, but the fact is that they can be demonic. Such relativism is the curse of Biblical faith.” Several of his statements are worthy of circulation. “Many people are so jaded that they uncritically accept any idea that comes down the pike.”

Much of what the dean of Fuller Theological Seminary had to say was addressed to the mass suicide in Guyana. “In all this tide of relativism, the flood of eastern cults and the assumptions that any religion is okay as long as it’s sincere, we’ve tried to face the situation and say plainly that there is truth and there is error.”

In my experience it is such a novel thing to hear such statements from denominational leaders that I would like to encourage this thinking among them. Therefore, I want to avoid the temptation of sarcasm and yet point out a few problems for denominational preachers and leaders who would reason in the manner of Mr. Glasser. Let me quote once more: “Tolerance, in its best sense, is a virtue” and “we must allow for a measure of differences, listening to one another, and learning, a principle of the ecumenical movement.”

Frankly, this last statement, in the ecumenical context, means that whereas we should not be mushy-headed enough to tolerate the far-out cults, we should be mushy-headed enough to continue tolerating enormous differences on everything from organization to what is necessary for salvation.

Tolerance and ecumenism are like father and son. The grandfather is a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. The existence of ecumenism demands tolerance. The movement the ecumenical unity has involved the discounting of more and more that might be important enough to differ over. In other words, when there are vast differences between two or more parties, they can achieve togetherness in three ways. (1) One side can be converted to the other side. (2) Both sides can give up their positions. (3) Both sides can be converted to the truth. The ecumenical movement has been accomplished primarily by the second method. Such a course, however, creates more and more tolerance for different ideas and directly fosters as “anything goes” attitude. When this attitude boils over in the acceptance of such cock-eyed cults as the Peoples’ Temples, we are shocked. Trying to keep ecumenism alive while not tolerating cults is like trying to have a mild fatal illness.

Those denominational leaders who have taught that “one religion is as good as another” and “it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere” are going to have to count the cost. If they say it does matter whether one is sprinkled or immersed, whether one is “once saved always saved” or not, and whether one is born totally depraved or not. If, on the other hand, it does not matter which one of these positions one holds, then they will need to decide which of the possible following answers is the reason why. (1) Everything is true. There is no false doctrine. Two plus two is one, two, three, four, or whatever. One is saved by faith only as well as not by faith only. It is all true. (2) Everything is false. There is no truth. Anything one believes is false, so it does not matter.

If it does not matter what one believes, these are the only two valid possibilities why not. If we once grant that both truth and error exist, then they differ, men can tell the difference, and we cannot blithely ignore the difference.

What a dilemma: on the one hand to see the proliferation of personality cults or to give up the beauties of ecumenism. There is an alternative. Reject denominationalism and make the Bible the sole rule in faith and practice.

Truth Magazine XXIII: 41, p. 663
October 18, 1979

The Language of Ashdod

By Johnie Edwards

It seems that many churches of Christ are trying to be like the denominations around them. Like the Jews of old, they are saying, in principle, "Give us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). We seem to be having a language problem in some quarters. It reminds us of Israel as Nehemiah wrote: "In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew's language, but according to the language of each people" (Neh. 13:23-24). More and more we see expressions being used like the denominations around us...

Truth Magazine Vol. XLIV: 12 p13 June 15, 2000



**“If the foundations be
destroyed, what can
the righteous do?”**

Psalm 11: 3

Historical Observation

- The core values and deep beliefs of an individual, church, or other group are best seen when an organization is under stress or has to make critical decisions.
- These values and beliefs compose the boundaries that will guide the decision
- Organizations conflicted deeply at this core will struggle fraternally & fight - *“A house divided against itself cannot stand”*
- Without clarifying internal boundaries we set up potential conflict and struggle.

Borders Of God's Word

- ✓ If our core beliefs and the boundaries that are established by them are found out of sync with the Word of God we have only four(4) options:
 - We can live in stressful cognitive dissonance
 - Acknowledge & embrace the values by which we are presently living & leave God out of equation
 - Construct an environment for expression and exercise of our real boundaries and beliefs
 - Repent & restore transforming by God's Spirit so as to authentically embrace Kingdom values



ACCORDING TO THE PHILOSOPHER PLATO – TO ESCAPE INSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION & TO RESTORE PREVIOUS BLISSFUL STATE – PRINCIPLED MINORITY MUST ESCAPE AND BEGIN AFRESH ANOTHER & SEPARATE COMMUNITY

*Math Beyond
Revelation 22:
Multiplication
& Division*



**Dividing By Way Of
Leadership Loyalty
& Human Opinions**

*Math Beyond
Revelation 22:
Multiplication
& Division*



**Multiplying By Way Of
Accountability Toward
Multiple Hierarchies &
Governing Institutions**

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Coincidence View

A prominent view of tradition holding from the time of Irenaeus (circa 175-200 A.D.) until the mid-fifth century was the coincidence view. This view makes no distinction between the scriptures and the oral presentation and transmission, in custom and practice, of the apostolic message. Materially, the two are locked together as a total statement of the way of salvation.

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Coincidence View

For Irenaeus and his successors there was a second important coincidence. The teachings of the bishops in those churches founded by the apostles coincided with the teaching of the apostles. Thus, the bishops were, effectively, the true keepers & interpreters of the message!

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Supplementary View

This view has had major currency in Western Christianity (especially the Roman Catholic Church) since the fourth century. The essence of this view is that Christians owe equal allegiance both to the New Testament and to the constant developing body of tradition that emerged in the church.

Scripture and tradition were two distinct [equal] sources of revelation.

As a logical extension of the coincidence view, by the high Middle Ages, some claimed that the teaching office of the church (magisterium), thru the instrumentalities of tradition and Spirit, was empowered to interpret and supplement the revelation of God in scripture.

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Supplementary View

Since the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563), and especially since Newman (1845 – 1890), tradition, in these circles, was viewed as an unfolding in various and distinct forms of what was implicit in the original revelation. A critique similar to that which was made of the coincidence view may also apply to the supplementary view, i.e. – “When does doctrinal development cease and perversion begin?”

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Common Mind Approach

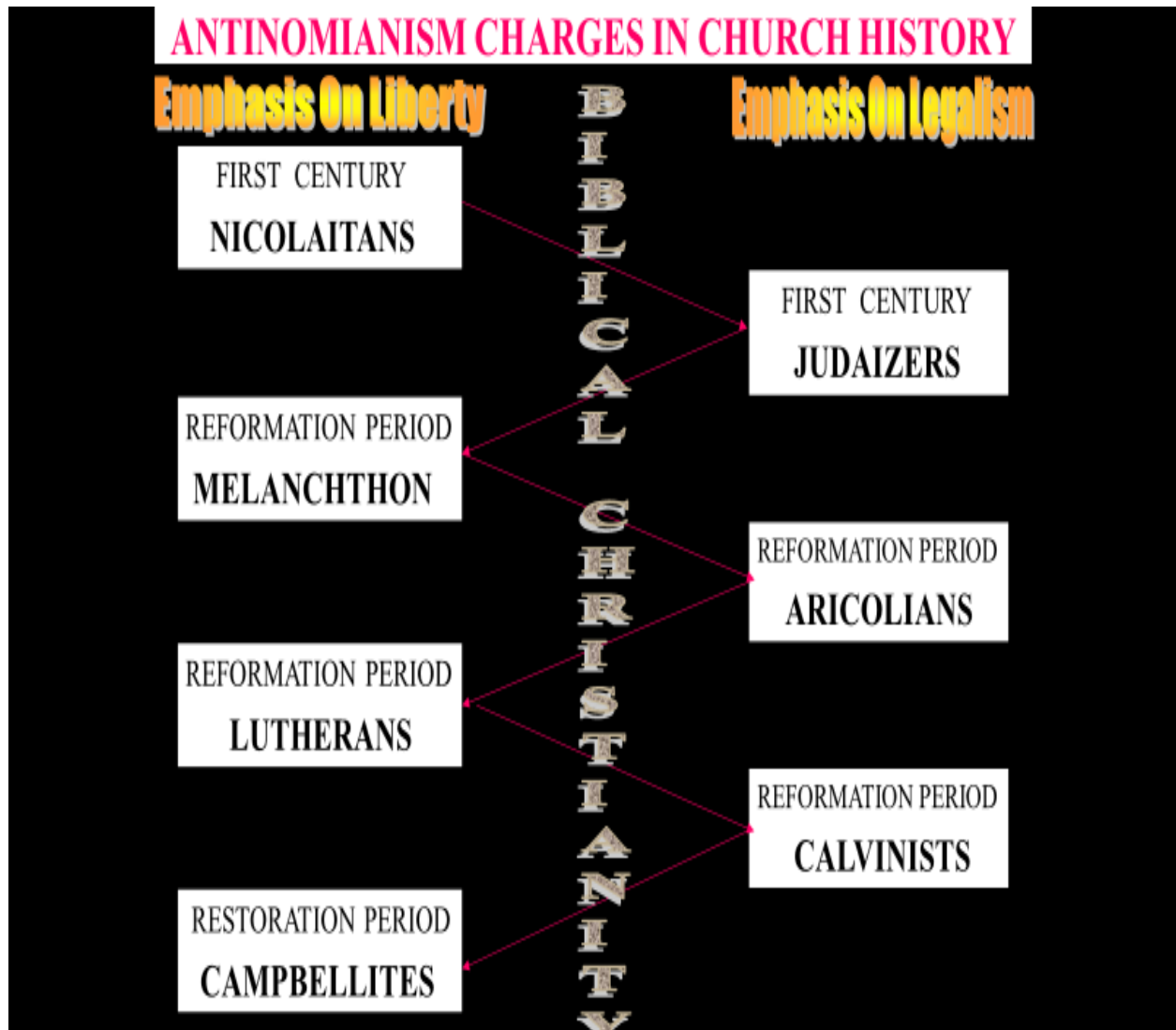
This view holds that there is a qualitative difference between the message of the apostles and the teaching of the bishops. Yet, scripture is of much less assistance if it cannot be normatively interpreted. Here the principle that the authoritative message of Scripture is found thru an appeal to the common mind of the church, arrived at through open and public discussion among a broad spectrum of respected leaders & interpreters, is crucial. This view of principle placed Scripture and tradition in proper perspective. Scripture was the codification of the apostolic message. Tradition was that body of practices and interpretation of Scripture, informed by the rule of faith (itself drawn from scripture), that served as the basic depository of the common mind of the church as to how it should understand the apostolic witness.

New Math Of HUMAN TRADITION



The Common Mind Approach

As a movement that sought to proclaim the gospel in its total purity and to restore the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) to their appropriate role as places where the divine benefits are mediated, the Campbell-Stone heritage has a major stake in a tradition view that appeals to the common mind of the church. Thus, when Alexander Campbell set out to defend the practice of baptism of remission, he repeatedly sought to justify the various aspects of the procedure and meaning of baptism by making appeals, not only to Scripture, but also to the works of teachers throughout history.



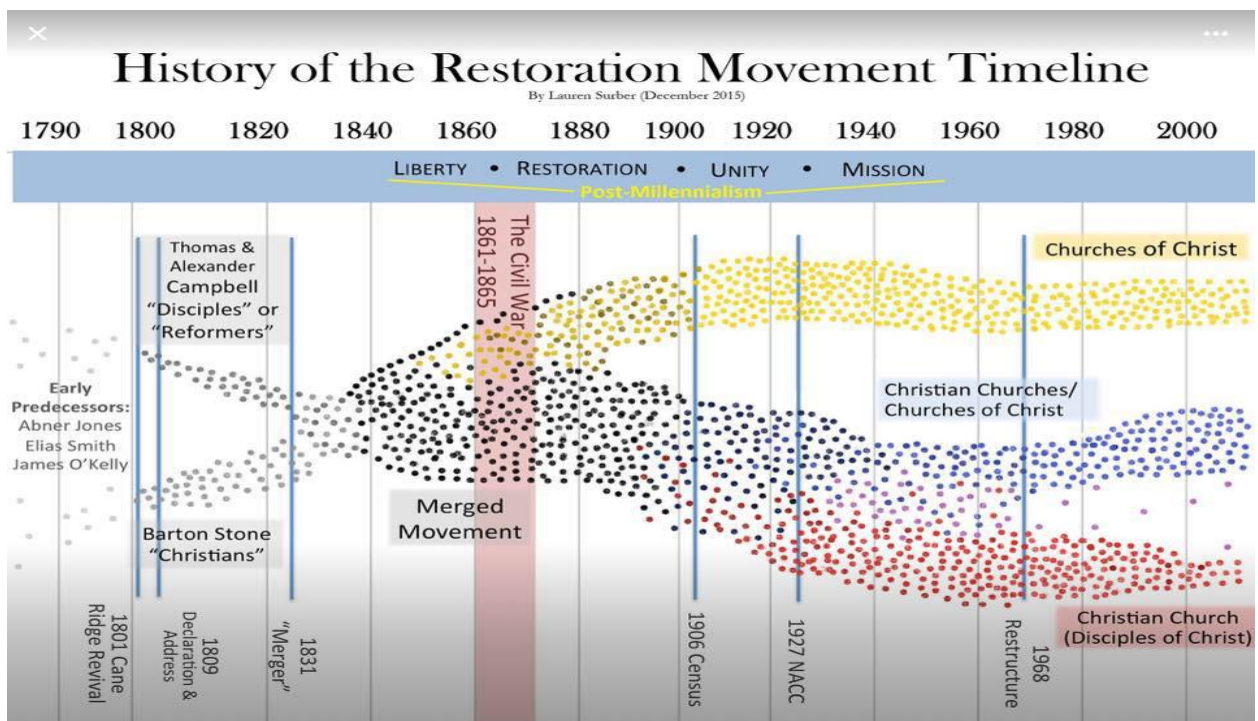
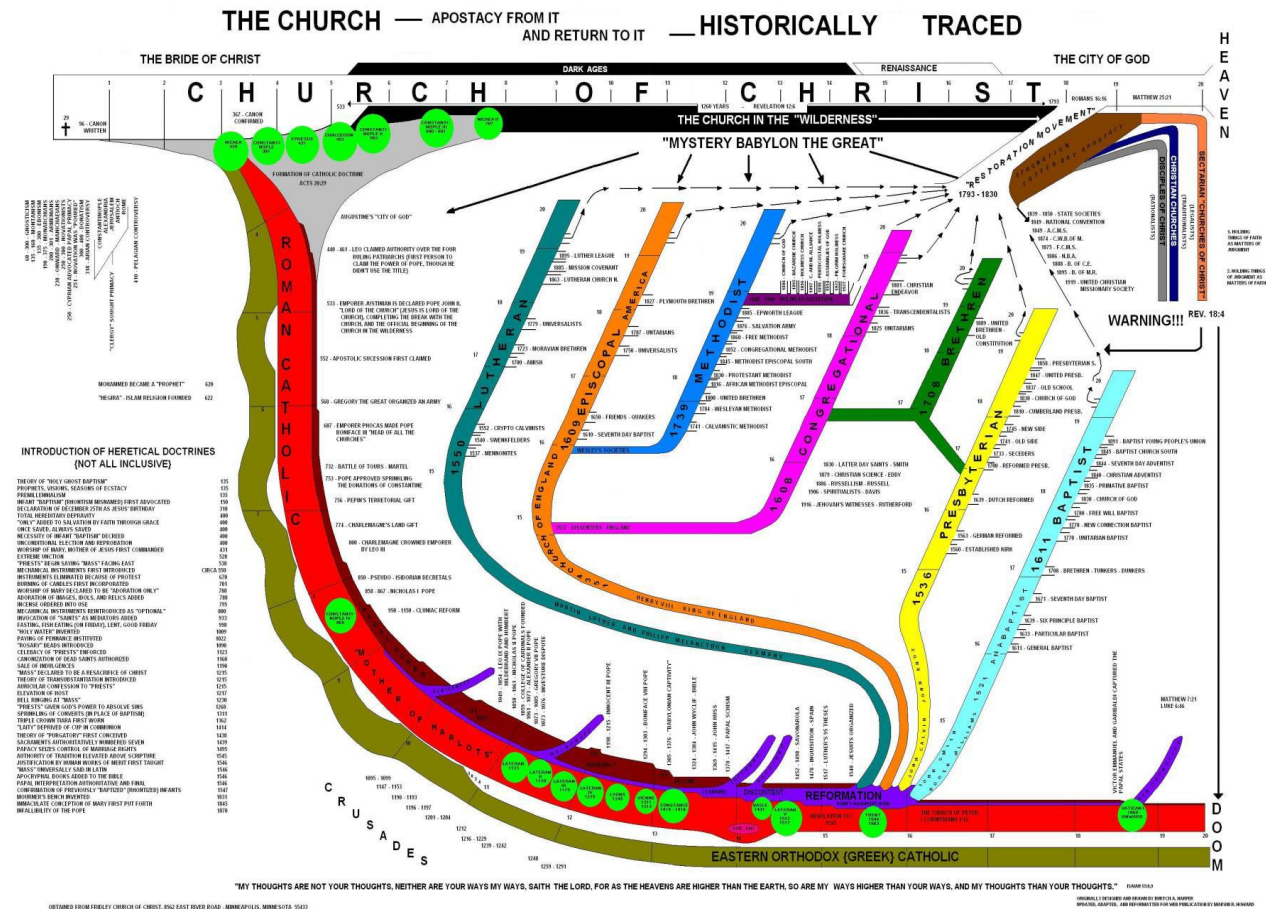
Restoration Valued Tradition Descriptively Not Normatively

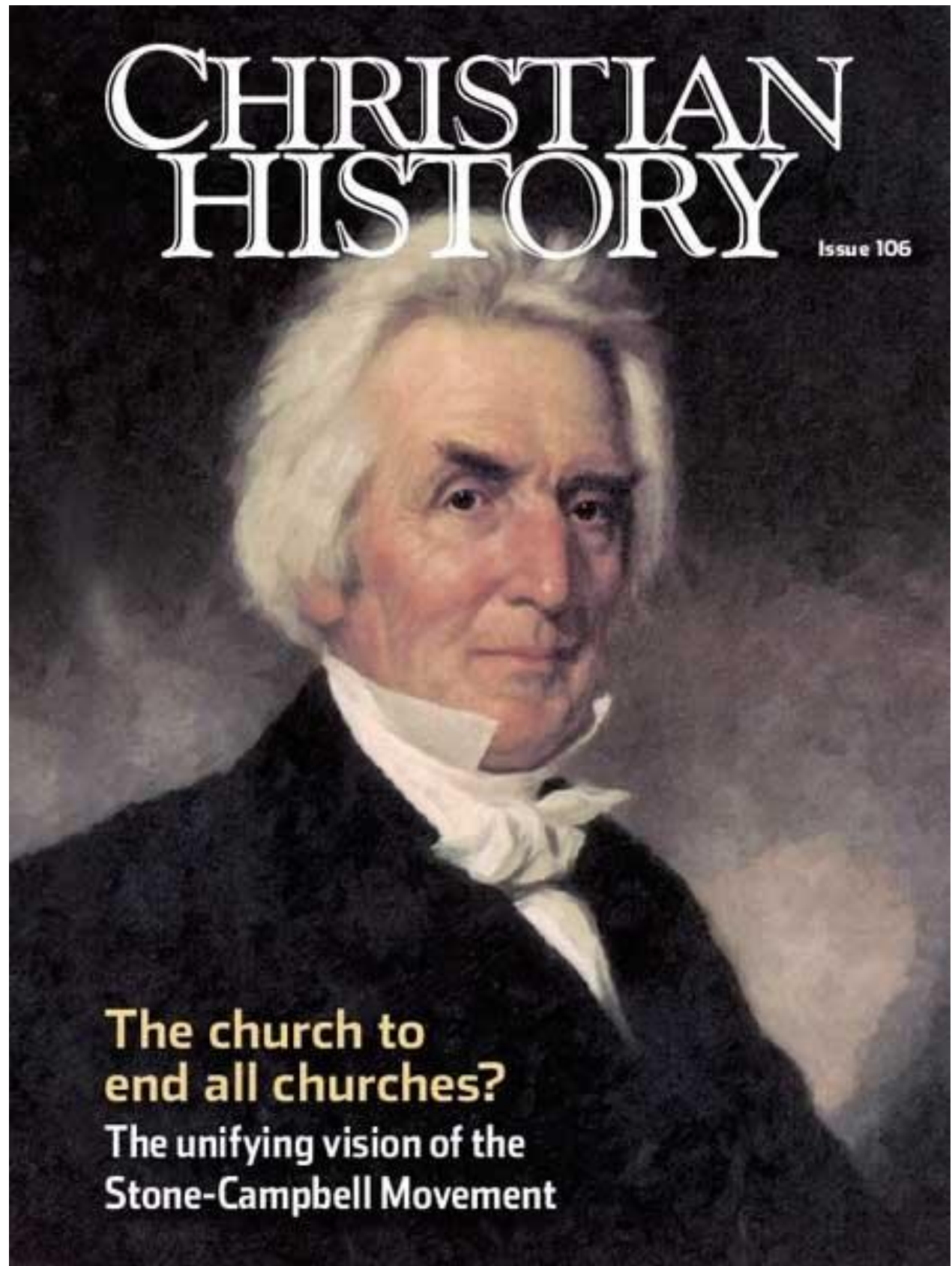
❖ “I believe the Christian religion in the West, as it habitually read the Bible backwards through the [Greek -influenced] lenses of later Christians, largely lost track of the forward story line of Adam, Abraham, Moses, and so on, within which Jesus had emerged. It unwittingly traded its true heritage through Jesus from Judaism for an alien heritage drawn from Greek philosophy and Roman politics. Through this profound & unconscious syncretism (or mixing of sources), biblical data was reframed by the Greco-Roman narrative.”

– Recent from Author Brian McLaren

From Needful Boundaries Unto Necessary Divisions

BASIS FOR UNITY	FUNDAMENTALS
A Person	Jesus Christ
A Principle	Restoration
A Privilege	Just Christians
A Platform	One Faith
A Plan	Simply Obey
A Power	The Gospel





CHRISTIAN HISTORY MAGAZINE

The church to end all churches?

The unifying vision of the Stone-Campbell Movement

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©2013 Christian History Institute. **Cover:** "Alexander Campbell" (Courtesy of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society).

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Did you know?

SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM STONE-CAMPBELL CHURCHES



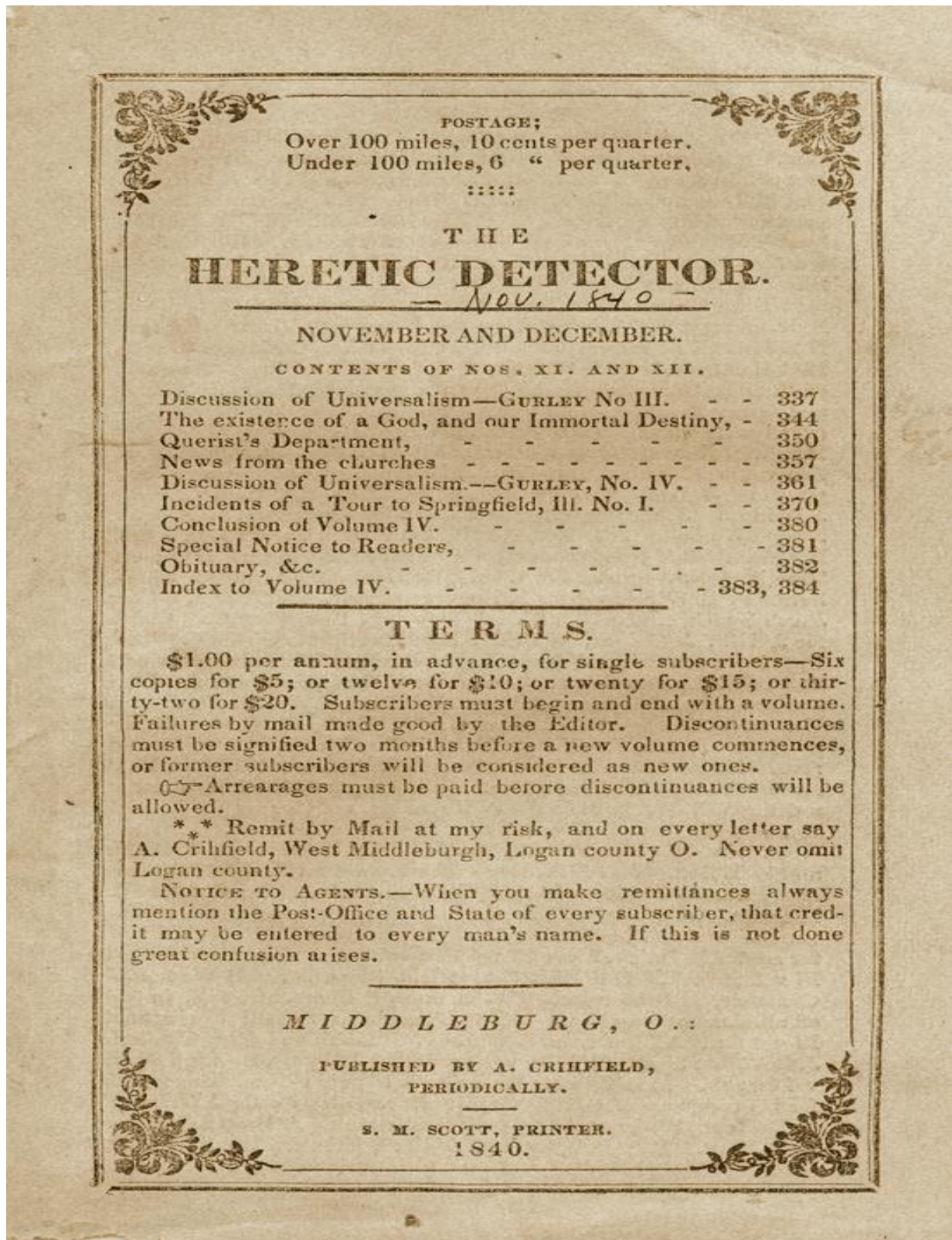
GARFIELD AND FAMILY—LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

FROM LBJ TO ZIMBABWE

SEVERAL PRESIDENTS have been members of the Stone-Campbell tradition. The first was James Garfield. Baptized at age 18, Garfield began preaching at age 21 and is the only U.S. president who was a minister (of a **Christian Church** in Cleveland, Ohio). He was also among the group that launched the magazine *Christian Standard*, still published today.

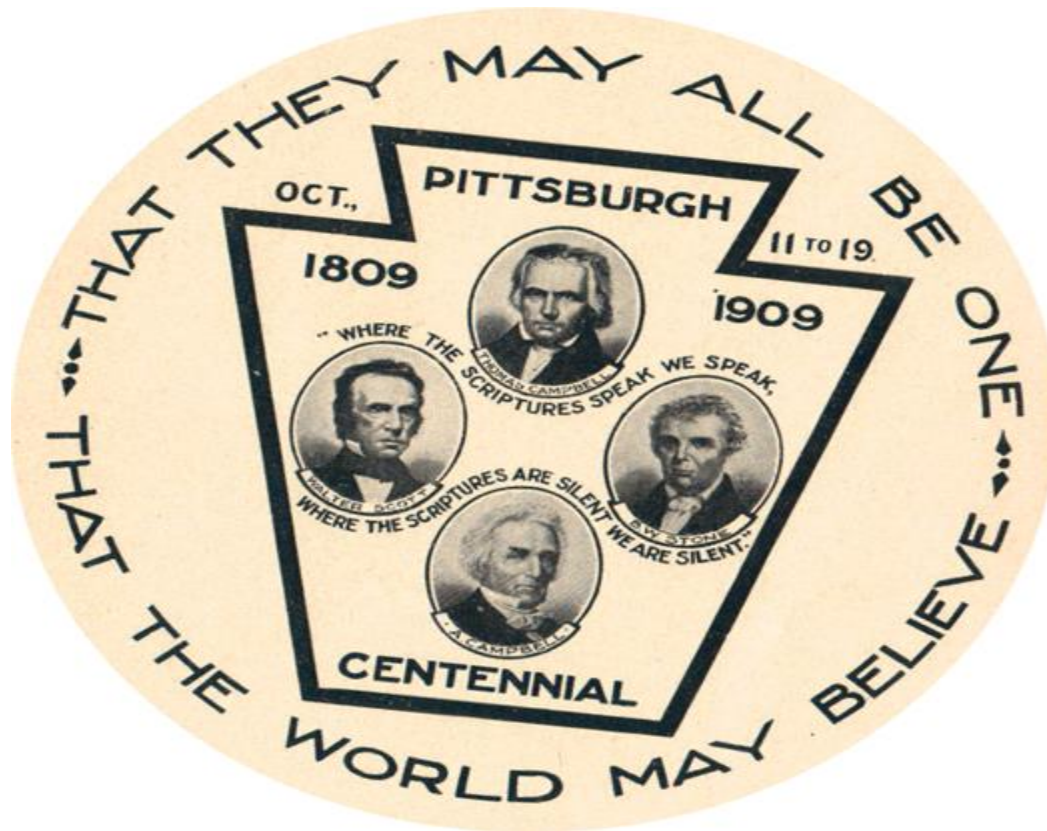
The second was Lyndon Baines Johnson. As a young man, he was baptized in a small Christian Church in Johnson City, Texas, where he also attended services in his retirement.

Church was also a focal point of Ronald Reagan's youth in Dixon, Illinois. He was a member of First Christian Church and graduated from **Disciples**-affiliated Eureka College in 1932. While there, one of his first stage roles was as a Christian Church minister.



PASTOR AND PRESIDENT Garfield poses with his family.

HERETIC DETECTOR—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



DOCTRINAL PURITY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY This newspaper and badge show that both were important to Stone-Campbell believers.

CARRY NATION CARTOON—THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK



I DID IT WITH MY HATCHET At six feet tall, Carry Nation was an imposing force both physically and spiritually.



TAKING HER STAND Carry Nation worked uncompromisingly for temperance and women's rights.

CARRY NATION, THE KANSAS SALOON SMASHER (SEPIA PHOTO)—AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER (20TH CENTURY) / PRIVATE COLLECTION / THE STAPLETON COLLECTION / THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

STARDUST AND COUNTRY MUSIC

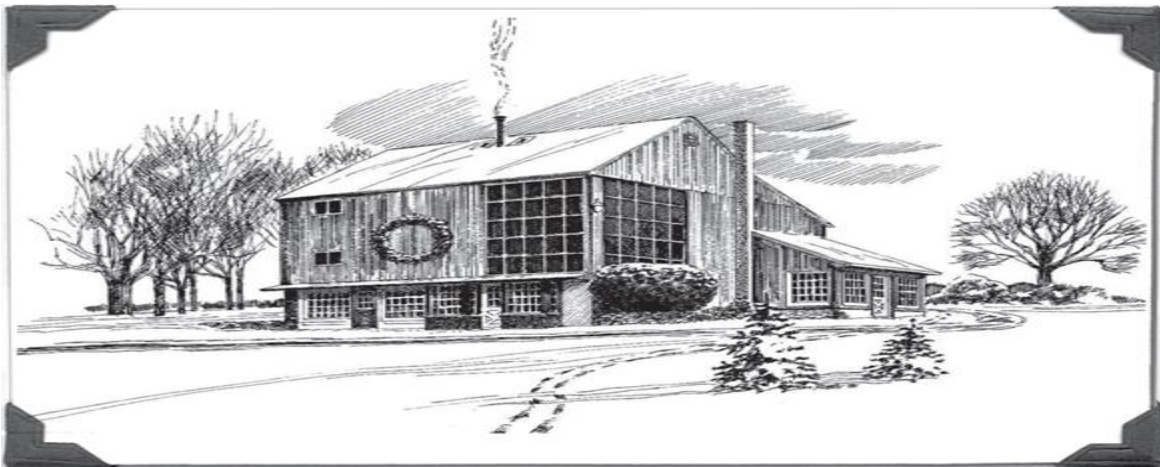
And, does singing unaccompanied in church spark a musical career? Pop and country singers Pat Boone, Glen Campbell, Roy Orbison, and Loretta Lynn were all raised in or converted to Churches of Christ.

WOMAN WITH THE HATCHET

Carry Nation was born in Kentucky and baptized in a stream in Missouri with ice floating in the water. She began her temperance crusade after the death of her first husband from alcoholism and earned the nickname “The Home Defender” as a result of taking her hatchet to whiskey bottles and saloon furnishings.

Her second husband, David Nation, divorced her in 1901, citing abandonment. In 1902, calling her a “stumbling block and a disturber of the peace,” her Disciples church disfellowshipped her. But frightened of their decision, they provided her a letter of commendation so she could transfer her membership elsewhere.

Editor’s note



EVER OPENED UP someone else’s old photo album?

Grandparents, aunts, second cousins, old Ford Model Ts, big hats. Or boat cars and poodle skirts. People smiling into long-vanished sunsets and sunrises. At first, it seems confusing. Maybe you can pick out an era, but these aren’t your grandparents and your second cousins, your stories, or your inside jokes.

But then you talk to the people who own the photo album. You listen to their stories and the photos come alive. You learn what it meant to be part of that family in all its struggles and heartaches and joys. What it meant to live at that moment in history.

What does this photo album teach the rest of us? Things we already knew, but things it is good to remember. The centrality of the Bible. The centrality of the body of Christ. How American culture and the Christian message influenced each other.

And how difficult it is to be “simply Christian.” Even when you go whole hog. Traditions and human constructions can turn out to be, in the end, inescapable. But also inescapable, in the end, is the grace of God. Thanks be to God, who redeems all constructions.

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Freedom's ferment

THE WORLD FROM WHICH THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT EMERGED

Richard Hughes



SONS OF LIBERTY The signing of the Declaration of Independence. The newly formed country was in the mood to explore democracy in religion, too.

TRUMBULL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE—*WIKIPEDIA*

IT HAD NO LONG and storied history, few highly educated clergy, no bishops except over local congregations, and no carefully organized evangelistic campaigns. Yet this upstart Christian phenomenon swept into its fold thousands upon thousands of Americans in the early nineteenth century, even as it rejected all traditional churches—Catholic and Protestant alike—and aspired to become the universal church that would unify all Christians and inaugurate the millennial dawn. Perhaps no Christian tradition more fully mirrored the democratic and optimistic world of the new American republic.

A DEMOCRATIC MOOD

Seeking to follow biblical directives, Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone—along with the thousands who looked to them for guidance—passionately devoted themselves to democracy and freedom in the context of the Christian religion. As it turned out, this emphasis held great appeal for Americans newly launched on their experiment of self-government.

Stone and Campbell rejected creeds, claiming to follow no text but the Bible. They extolled the ability of ordinary people to read the Bible and understand it for themselves. And they understood their work as reflecting the passion for freedom they saw all around them.

“The present conflict between the Bible and party creeds and confessions,” one member of their movement wrote, “is perfectly analogous to the revolutionary war between Britain and America; liberty was contended for on one side, and dominion and power on the other.”

Another author thought the Jeffersonian phrase from the Declaration of Independence regarding humanity’s “unalienable rights” applied equally to “free investigation” and “sober and diligent inquiry after [religious] truth.” Likewise, Stone and Campbell rejected any ecclesial authority—whether bishop or synod or priest—that supplanted the authority of the local church. That emphasis renders some parts of the tradition radically independent to this day, answering to no authority except the will of the people who compose a given congregation and the elders that congregation appoints.



“GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH” Patrick Henry exhorts the Virginia Assembly.

RESTORING PURE BEGINNINGS

But freedom was not all that motivated Stone and Campbell. They were deeply committed to recovering the primitive church of the New Testament—the golden age, they thought, of the Christian religion. The term they used to describe that endeavor was “restoration.” Campbell in fact often spoke of “the restoration of the ancient order of things” as one of the goals he was trying to reach as a Christian leader.



“HE HAS SMILED ON OUR BEGINNINGS” The Great Seal of the United States pictured the new nation as radically different from any other land.

GREAT SEAL OF U.S. FROM DOLLAR BILL

America’s founders, too, were seeking purity—in their case in nature. They thought that God had built timeless principles of freedom into nature at the time of creation, and they wanted to dig them back out from under the obscuring centuries of kingcraft, tyranny, and corruption. This is what Jefferson meant when, in the Declaration of Independence, he appealed to “self-evident truths” that “Nature’s God” had established.

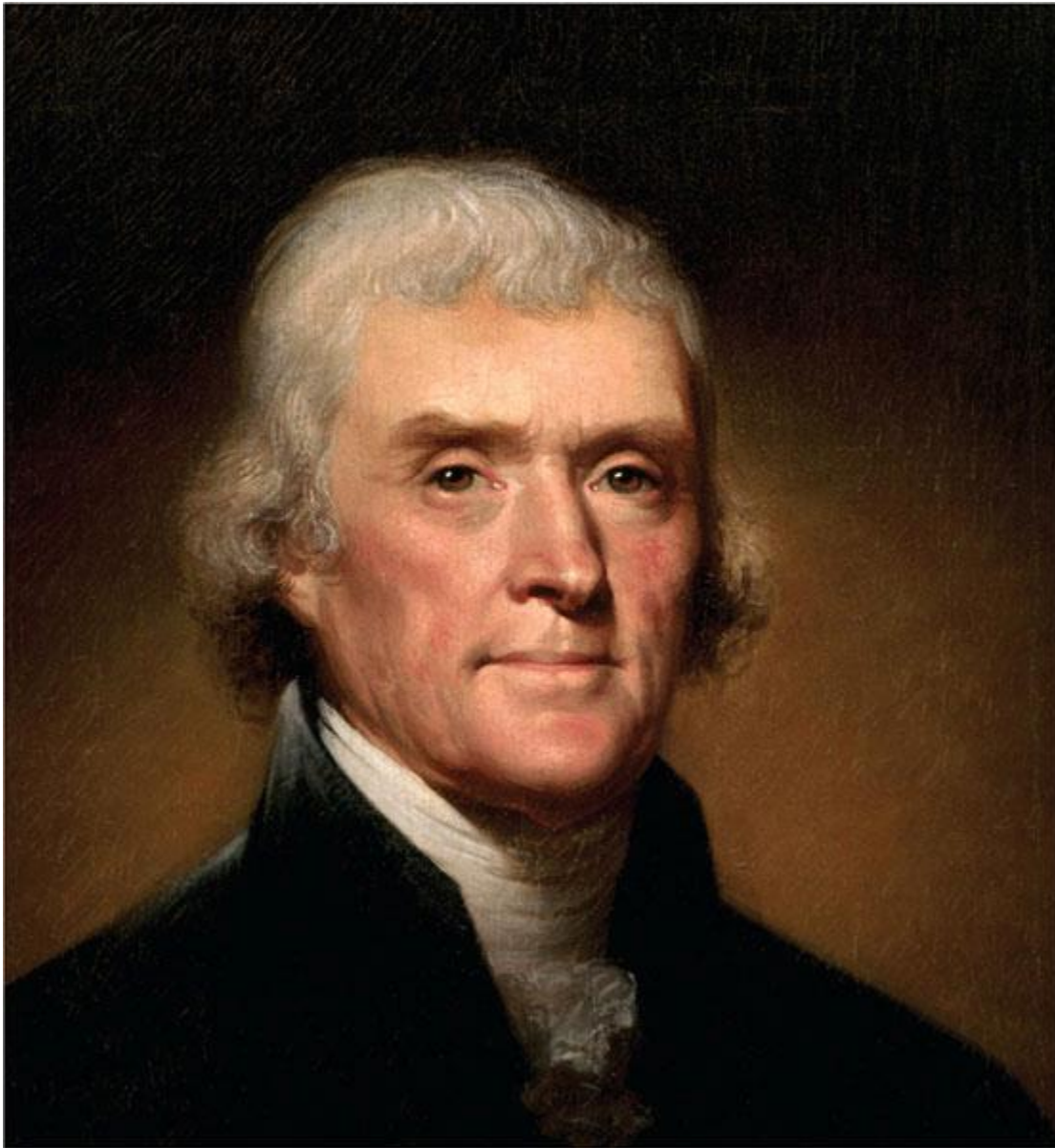
Jefferson’s friend, Thomas Paine, also proclaimed that the American government was like “the beginning of a world.” Viewing the American system, he wrote, “We are brought at once to the point of seeing government begin, as if we had lived in the beginning of time.”

Reading and hearing such arguments, many Christians asked themselves an obvious question: if the founders had restored the God-intended form of secular government, could Christians do any less with the church?

If America's founders could reject kings and tyrants and build the American nation on democratic principles inspired by God, so Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and thousands of other Christians would reject priests, bishops, and popes, and restore similar democratic principles that they believed had been central to the primitive church.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PEACE

Americans in the early nineteenth century sought to build their nation on principles—democracy and freedom—that they considered to be as old as the beginning of time. A nation built on those ancient ideals, they argued, would finally usher in the long-anticipated millennium.



"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT" Thomas Jefferson expressed democratic ideals.

THOMAS JEFFERSON—WIKIPEDIA



"THESE ARE THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN'S SOULS" Thomas Paine encouraged perseverance.

THOMAS PAINE—WIKIPEDIA

The millennium would be started on earth by human beings in obedience to God's will for creation, and it would be a golden age of peace and freedom for all humankind. No one made this point more clearly than popular American preacher Lyman Beecher.

He explained to Americans that the light their new country would send into the world "will throw its beams beyond the waves; it will shine into darkness there and be comprehended; it will awaken desire and hope and effort, and produce revolutions and overturnings, until the world is free."

And when people around the world were free, he proclaimed, "the trumpet of Jubilee [will] sound, and earth's debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' "

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

Christians in the **Stone-Campbell Movement** picked up on this same vision of the coming dawn. But if the larger public applied that vision to the nation, the Stone-Campbell Movement applied it to the church. Alexander Campbell wrote in 1825 that “just in so far as the ancient order of things, or the religion of the New Testament, is restored, just so far has the Millennium commenced.”

But whether applied to the nation or the church, the logic of this vision was clear: restoration of the purity of the first golden age would usher in the purity of the final golden age. In that way, all human history essentially became water under the bridge. American citizens, on the one hand, and Stone-Campbell Christians, on the other, were crossing that bridge from one golden age to the other.

Such a view was written into nothing less than the Great Seal of the United States. Americans commonly think of the seal’s front, if they think of it at all—an eagle with arrows and olive branches. But on the back side of the seal is an unfinished pyramid with the date of the American founding—1776—on its base.

The pyramid grows from an arid and barren landscape, suggesting that all human history, when compared to this new nation, is barren—and therefore fundamentally irrelevant. Below the pyramid appear the Latin words *novus ordo seclorum*, “a new order of the ages.” The United States was not simply a new nation when compared to other nations. It was radically new since it was also radically old, building on the ancient foundations of freedom laid in the Garden of Eden.

The pyramid is unfinished because the American example was yet to spread around the globe: though the dawn was rising, the final golden day was yet to come. Above the unfinished pyramid, the eye of God looks on with approval, and above that eye a Latin motto affirms: “He has smiled on our beginnings.”

The Stone-Campbell Movement embraced this very same rejection of history. The difference was that while the nation rejected secular history, the Stone-Campbell Movement rejected all Christian history since the days of the primitive church.

Two of Barton Stone’s associates in Kentucky, for example, wrote that “we are not personally acquainted with the writings of John Calvin, nor are we certain how nearly we agree with his views of divine truth; neither do we care.”

UNITY OUT OF DIVERSITY

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone also mirrored the nation in the plan they devised for the unity of all Christians. Theirs was a vision of unity in diversity with long roots that stretched all the way back to Paul’s metaphor of the church as the body of Christ and Jesus’ unity prayer (John 17). But they also borrowed that vision from key Enlightenment thinkers—the very same thinkers who inspired America’s founders.



A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW NATION Alexander Campbell (arrow) represented a western Virginia district when Virginia wrote its constitution in 1829—alongside U.S. founders like Monroe and Madison.

CONTINENTAL CONGRESS—USED BY PERMISSION OF THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM

One of those thinkers was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the father of the English Enlightenment. Distressed by the bloody religious wars that plagued Europe in the seventeenth century, he published a book that he called *De Veritate* (1624), or “The Truth.”

In that book, he proposed a way to end religious warfare. While Herbert valued the Bible highly as a “source of consolation and support,” he also knew that it is a complex book, full of hundreds of teachings that Christians could interpret in many ways and then bind those interpretations on others.

Herbert therefore proposed that reasonable people banish from the public square all points of doctrine peculiar to particular religions or holy texts. Instead, he argued that citizens should build the public square on two great truths that everyone could know through the light of nature—that God exists and that a moral order pervades the universe. These two truths, Herbert believed, are the essential truths that stand at the heart of every great religion. They could thus serve as the basis for religious unity.

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS ...

When the founders created the American nation, they, too, understood religion's potential to inspire civic strife and even religious warfare. Such religion could destroy the American nation before it had a chance to succeed. So they addressed that problem in the same way Herbert had, not seeking to build the nation on this or that interpretation of the Bible or on any peculiar doctrine.

Instead they appealed to “self-evident truths” accessible to all humans through the light of nature. Those “self-evident truths” were that “all men are created equal” and “endowed with certain unalienable rights”—rights that could not be taken away since God had woven them into the fabric of nature itself.

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone commended that same formula to Christians in the early nineteenth century. The difference between the founders and the Stone-Campbell Movement was that the founders uncovered essential truths in nature while Stone and Campbell found their essential truths in the biblical text.

They sought core essentials that formed the bedrock of the ancient church established by Jesus and the apostles. And making famous a phrase first used by Lutheran ecumenist Rupertus Meldenius (1582–1651), they appealed: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

DISSENTING AGAINST DISSENT

The American world of the early nineteenth century was committed to dissent against everything from corrupt and oppressive regimes to traditional social structures. Ironically, the Stone-Campbell Movement so faithfully mirrored the values of the new nation, including the value of dissent, that it ultimately dissented against America itself.

Alexander Campbell argued that the kingdom of God would finally triumph over all human governments, “the very best as well as the very worst,” including the government of the United States.

“The admirers of American liberty and American institutions have no cause to regret such an event, nor cause to fear it,” he wrote. “It will be but the removing of a tent to build a temple—the falling of a cottage after the family are [*sic*] removed into a castle.”

Barton Stone and his disciples expressed this dissent in especially provocative ways—arguing that Jesus might be the one bringing the millennial dawn. Stone wrote that “the lawful King, Jesus Christ, will shortly put them [human governments] all down, and reign with his Saints on earth a thousand years, without a rival.” Christians must therefore “cease to support any other government on earth by our counsels, cooperation, and choice.” Stone and his followers thus refused to vote, refused to hold political office, and refused to serve in the U.S. military.

Even while showing themselves children of their era in so many ways, Stone-Campbell Movement Christians pledged their ultimate allegiance not to the nation but to the kingdom of God.

Richard Hughes is distinguished professor of religion at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania.

No name but the name of Christ

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

D. Newell Williams and Douglas A. Foster



SIGNING OF "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT"—USED BY PERMISSION OF THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM



SERMONS IN GLASS These windows at Cane Ridge Church show the uniting of the Stone and Campbell movements and the signing of the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery."

1832 UNION—USED BY PERMISSION OF THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM

ONE FOUNDER WAS UPSET at fellow clergy who condemned Presbyterians and Methodists for—gasp!—dating after being introduced at revival meetings. Two others were sick of religious divisions in their homeland and of being marooned in a church so sectarian it was called the Associate Synod of Ulster of the Anti-Burgher Seceders. Little did they know they were founding a movement themselves. They just wanted peace and Christian unity.

MARRYING MEETINGS?

By 1800, the awakening known as the Great Western Revival had begun in Tennessee and Kentucky (both were the “West” in 1800). Presbyterians and Methodists began coming together in revivals lasting four to six days and culminating in “union meetings,” where they joined in celebrating the Lord’s Supper. The meetings drew thousands and included both blacks and whites—which convinced many whites to free their slaves.

The gatherings also became famous for the “falling exercise.” Powerfully affected by sermons and testimonies, people fell to the ground and appeared dead for hours. Then they arose praising Jesus and calling others to him for salvation.

Not all Presbyterians supported the revivals. Their biggest objections were not to the falling exercise or the freeing of slaves, but that young adults from Methodist and Presbyterian families were meeting at these heated gatherings and marrying. In many cases, the newlyweds were joining the Methodist Church!

Some Presbyterian ministers began urging their colleagues to “preach up” the differences between Methodist and Presbyterian doctrine, specifically the Presbyterian teaching derived from Calvin’s doctrine of predestination: the idea that God had chosen particular human beings to be damned and others to be saved before the foundation of the earth.



WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES Barton Stone preaches at Cane Ridge in 1801, one of the most famous revivals in American history.

CANE RIDGE REVIVAL—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

Barton Warren Stone (1772–1844) was a Presbyterian preacher born in Maryland, raised on the Virginia frontier, and educated in a church academy in North Carolina. He and other Presbyterian revival leaders refused to preach predestination. They knew it would offend the Methodists and bring the “union meetings” to an end.

They had also personally, though quietly, rejected it as inconsistent with God’s love revealed in Jesus. As a result, Presbyterian defenders of the doctrine tried to remove Stone and his friends from the ministry.

Stone and four other ministers withdrew from their jurisdiction and formed their own Springfield Presbytery. But they did not stop there. In June 1804, they published a tract titled “The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery” rejecting denominations and creedal statements as divisive.

They wrote: “We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling ... that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

Taking the generic name “**Christians**,” they sought to further the unity they had experienced in the revivals and convince Presbyterians and Methodists to unite. They failed but did gain supporters among Baptists in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana.

THE CAMPBELLS ARE COMING

Meanwhile, Thomas (1763–1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788–1866), father and son, were also seeking an end to division. They came from Ireland, where they had been Presbyterians (Church of Scotland). Their particular sect had splintered over Scottish political and religious matters irrelevant in Ireland. Still, the differences kept the factions from fellowship.

Also, the British rulers (Anglican) never fully trusted Presbyterian loyalty, and there was friction between Protestants and Catholics. In the midst of this religious strife, the Campbells longed for peace and Christian unity.

After several unsuccessful attempts to bring Presbyterians in Northern Ireland together, Thomas Campbell became seriously ill. On his doctor’s advice, he sailed to America in 1809. While conducting worship for Seceder Presbyterians near Pittsburgh, he served the Lord’s Supper to some worshipers outside the group who had shown up to hear the distinguished guest preacher.

For this, his presbytery attempted to defrock him. Though his conviction was overturned, he soon separated from the Presbyterians and formed a group called the Christian Association.

Campbell wrote the new group’s purpose statement—the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*. He claimed all Christians “should consider each other as the precious saints of God ... bought with the same price, and joint heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.”

Not many responded. Instead, the Christian Association became a local church, taking the name “disciples of Christ.” Like Stone’s “Christians” the name was intended to be simple and nondivisive. When Thomas’s family joined him, his son Alexander embraced the ideals of the *Declaration and Address*.

When, in 1812, Alexander's wife had a baby, the child's birth forced him to rethink infant baptism as taught by the Presbyterians. He concluded that the New Testament taught baptism of believers by immersion. That June, Alexander, Thomas, and five others from the Christian Association were immersed.

Some assumed Campbell denied that those baptized as infants were Christians. Yet Campbell never said so. He stated in 1837 that he "could not make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Campbells worked for reform as part of Baptist churches for over 15 years. In his first journal, *Christian Baptist* (1823–1830), Alexander published a series of articles titled "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" detailing what he saw as beliefs and practices of the apostolic churches in the early Christian centuries: believers' baptism by immersion, weekly Lord's Supper, congregational self-rule, and "simple" worship with unaccompanied congregational singing and no formal liturgy.

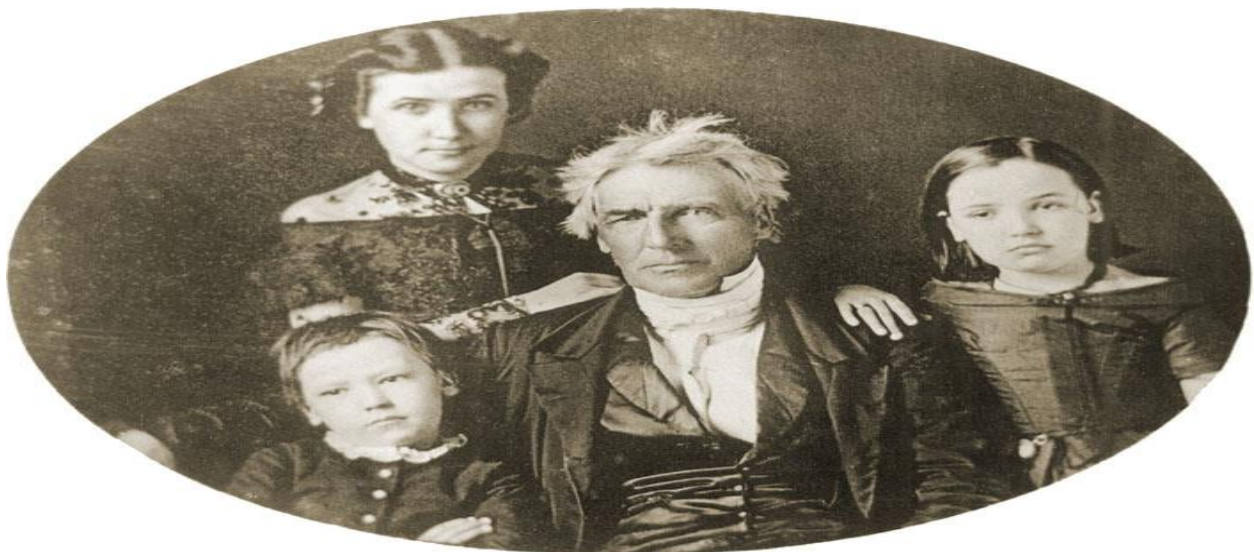
In 1827 the Mahoning Baptist Association, a group supporting Campbell's views, asked Walter Scott (1796–1861) to serve as a traveling evangelist. Scott taught that one could accept the gospel, turn from sin, and in faith be baptized without needing to pass through tearful struggles and an emotional conversion experience to show acceptance of the Holy Spirit.

This view would remain profoundly influential and the basis of the popular "five-finger exercise" for teaching the way of salvation (see "A story all their own," pp. 38–40).

Over the next three years, Scott baptized about 3,000 people. But soon Baptists and Campbell reformers began to separate over the purpose of baptism and the need for organization beyond the local congregation. Who else could Campbell cooperate with in the cause of Christian unity?

LET'S GET TOGETHER

Enter Barton Stone. Campbell and Stone shared a commitment to the visible unity of Christians based on the teachings of Scripture. But they had big differences, too.



THEY JUST WANTED CHRISTIANS TO LOVE EACH OTHER Alexander Campbell and his children.

CAMPBELL WITH CHILDREN—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



Barton Stone.

BARTON WARREN STONE—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

Stone saw Jesus as Savior, but not equal to God; Campbell held a traditional view of the Trinity. Stone's group practiced immersion but did not make it a requirement for joining; Campbell insisted on immersion for membership. Stone used the name "Christian," while Campbell preferred "disciples of Christ." Stone did not believe that Christ died to "pay for" our sins, but to demonstrate God's absolute love.

But both were committed to Christ's prayer in John 17 that all might be one so the world would believe. And both had glimpsed union when Christians came together to work and worship despite differences.

In late 1831, Stone and John Smith, a leader from the Campbell movement, called meetings of church leaders in Georgetown and Lexington, Kentucky. In both places, the congregations united. There was no central organization; in each town the churches simply decided to unite.

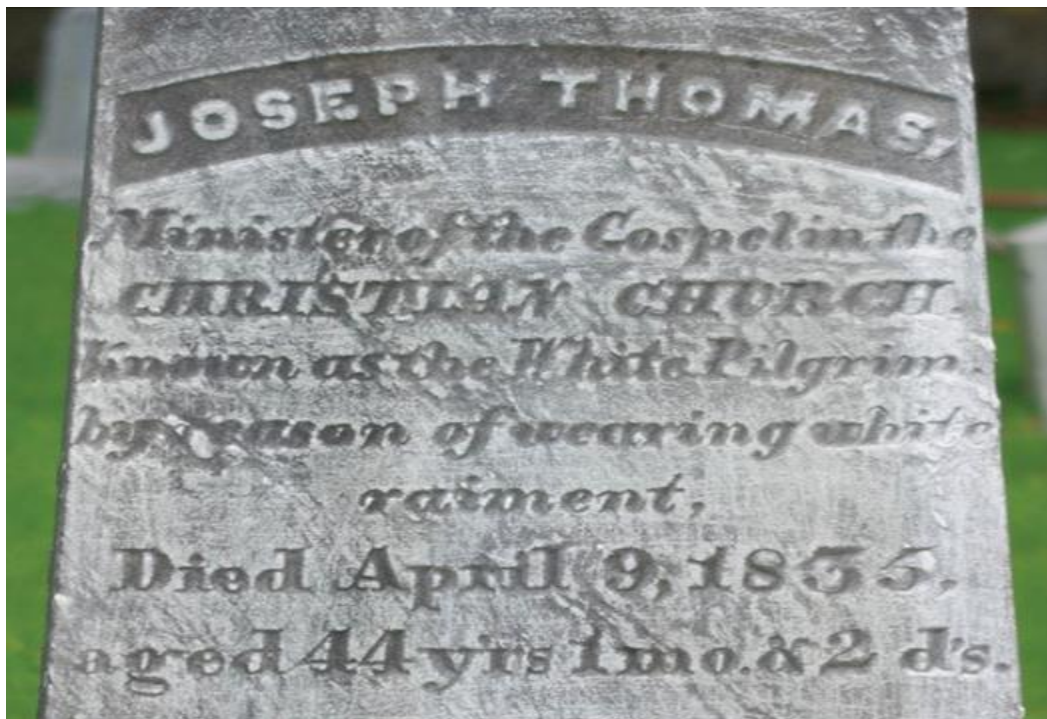
On the first Sunday of 1832, the two Lexington groups shared communion together as one fellowship. The Kentucky churches sent messengers to tell what had happened and urge other churches to do the same—which they did, over and over. By 1860 the Stone-Campbell Movement was one of the 10 largest Christian groups in the United States, numbering about 200,000—all while trying to be nothing but Christians working together in unity, bearing no name but the name of Christ.

Douglas A. Foster is professor of church history and directs the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University. D. Newell Williams is president and professor of church history at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University. Parts of this article are adapted from The Story of Churches of Christ by Douglas A. Foster (ACU Press, 2013) and are used by permission.

Who was that white-robed man?

JOSEPH THOMAS, "THE WHITE PILGRIM," TRIED TO BE AS APOSTOLIC
AS POSSIBLE

Richard Hughes



WEARING WHAT APOSTLES WORE Even Thomas's tombstone mentioned his white robe.

WHITE PILGRIM GRAVE—COURTESY OF C. WAYNE KILPATRICK, [THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM](http://therestorationmovement.com)

THERE IS NO MORE colorful character in the annals of the **Stone-Campbell Movement** than Joseph Thomas, the “White Pilgrim” (1791–1835). Converted to Christ at age 15 at a North Carolina camp meeting in 1806, Thomas determined, then and there, to devote his life to the proclamation of the Christian gospel.

But before he could preach, he felt he must join a church. This proved to be difficult. He rejected the Methodists since they depended too much on the “arbitrary power” of Francis Asbury, their bishop.

He rejected the Freewill Baptists since they had “too many articles and particulars contrary to my impressions.” And finally, he rejected the Presbyterians when they told him that to preach among them, he would “have to go to school and study divinity under Mr. ____.” Thomas thought it better to “study my divinity under Jesus Christ, and did not join them.”

NO RULES BUT THE SCRIPTURES

Then he learned of the growing “Christian movement” in North Carolina and Virginia. He “went some distance to see one of the preachers” and was elated when the preacher “told me they had no rules but the scriptures” and followed none but “the Lord Jesus for their head and ruler.”

Thomas later recalled that “at hearing of such people as these my heart rejoiced. I said to the preacher, ‘Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’ ”

On October 19, 1807, having now reached the ripe old age of 16, he set out to preach, committing himself to “a journey not of a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, but as long as life should last.”

Soon Thomas heard of “the Christians in the West”—followers of evangelist Barton Stone, chiefly in Kentucky—and traveled there in 1810. He reported that Stone’s followers numbered some 13,000 believers, that their worship included emotional practices like jerking under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and that they were so devoted to the lordship of Christ that they voluntarily freed their slaves, at a time when such an act was almost unheard of in the American South.

Soon after that trip, Thomas committed to preach in what he viewed as the primitive and apostolic style. He determined, as he put it, to “travel on foot ..., [to] take nothing for my journey, no purse, nor scrip ..., [to] deny the present fashion of dress, both as it relates to the cut and the colour, and particularly to refuse black; and a white robe was the covering I should appear in.”

Thomas decided he would “study my divinity under Jesus Christ,” rather than under the Presbyterian clergy.

For the rest of his life, Thomas traveled on foot throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains of Appalachia, preaching the gospel and clad in a long, white robe.

By doing so, he embodied in his own life one of the themes most central to the Stone-Campbell Movement—a commitment to the simplicity of the gospel message and to the primitive, apostolic church.

How to speak Stone-Campbell

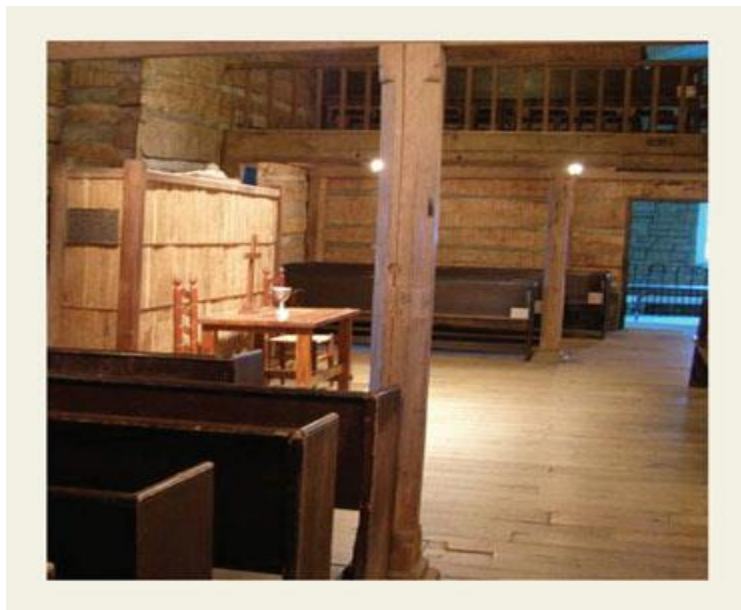
WHAT DO THEY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY ...?

Douglas A. Foster and McGarvey Ice



UNDERWATER Being baptized by immersion is the culmination of the experience of redemption for Stone-Campbell believers.

BAPTISM IN CONGO—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



WHERE IT ALL BEGAN Here in the Cane Ridge meeting house Stone and friends signed the "Last Will and Testament."

CANE RIDGE—CHRIS LIGHT/WIKIPEDIA

THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT today comprises three distinct bodies: [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#), [Churches of Christ](#), and [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#). Congregations of the movement in the nineteenth century were known by several versions of these names. But division became a settled reality in the twentieth century.

Congregations who did not worship with instrumental music or conduct missionary work through organized societies were known by the early 1900s as [Churches of Christ](#). Congregations using instruments and cooperating with missionary societies were called [Christian Churches](#) or [Disciples of Christ](#).

In 1968 the more progressive wing of the [Christian Churches](#), through a process called Restructure, formed a mainline Protestant denomination: The [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#). Those not wishing to be identified with that denomination are often called [Independents](#) and usually refer to themselves as [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#).

A CAPPELLA CHURCHES OF CHRIST: Or “[Churches of Christ](#).” This stream of the Stone-Campbell Movement rejects instrumental music in worship, arguing that Scripture does not authorize it.

“ANTIS:” This common term is used (1) by members of [Disciples](#) and [Christian Churches](#) to describe [Churches of Christ](#) who oppose missionary societies and instrumental music in worship; (2) within [Churches of Christ](#) for a number of twentieth-century groups who “stand out” by opposing parachurch organizations, Sunday schools, ministers drawing salaries and settled in one congregation, and multiple cups in the Lord’s Supper; and (3) by [Disciples](#) for those who opposed the Restructure in 1968 that made [Disciples](#) into a mainstream denomination.

THE BROTHERHOOD: Designation for a speaker’s group of churches, much like “**the Church.**” For example, “I read three brotherhood papers every month.”

CAMPBELLITE: Pejorative label applied by opponents to members and churches of the movement accusing them of being followers of Alexander Campbell; almost always rejected by insiders.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST): Name adopted in 1968 during the “Restructure” of the [Disciples](#). The shift from plural “Christian Churches” to singular “Christian Church” reflected this stream’s embrace of a corporate, denominational identity.

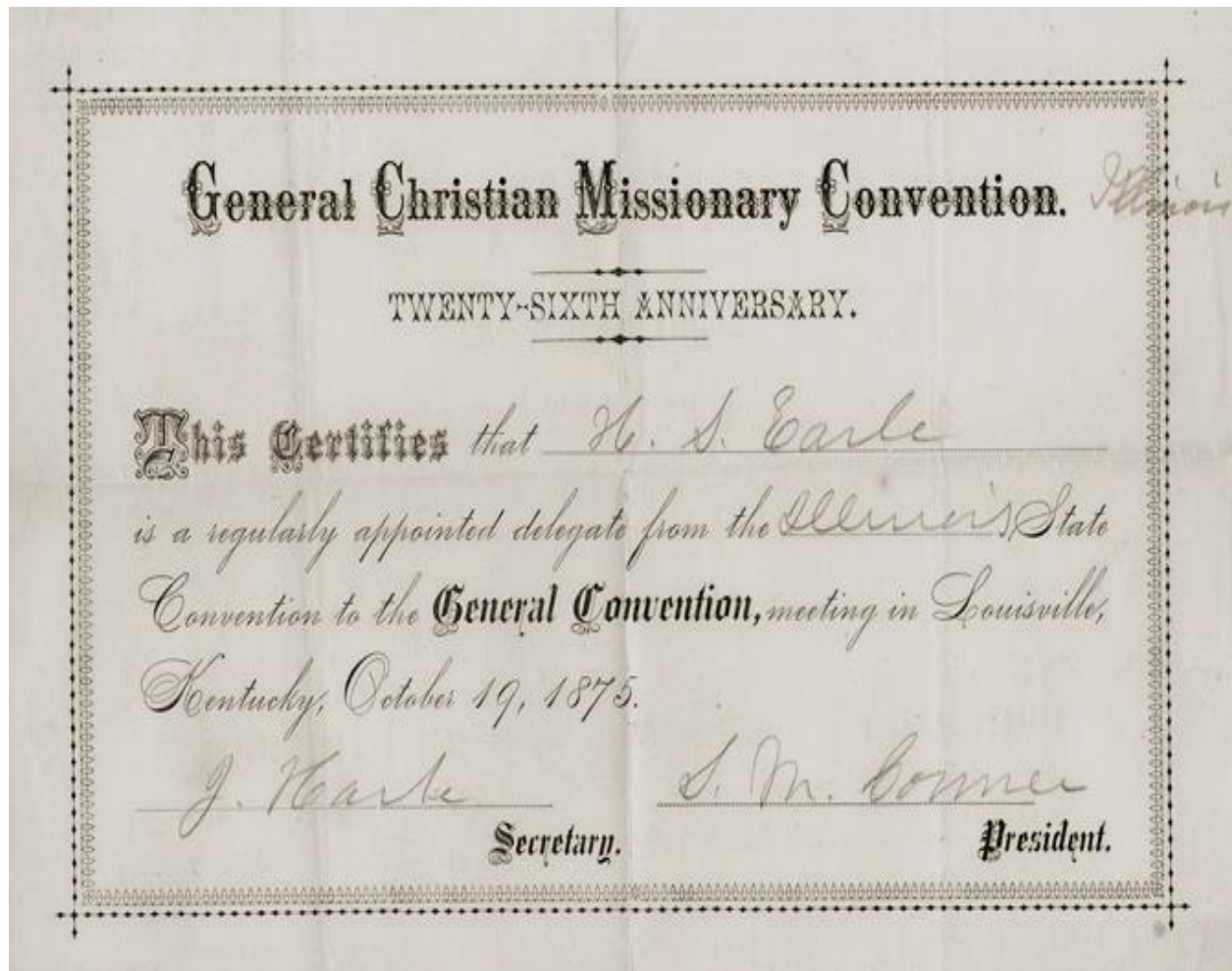
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST: Congregations that chose not to continue affiliation with [Disciples of Christ](#) after the 1968 Restructure. These were generally more theologically conservative congregations reflecting evangelical values.

CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT, CHRISTIAN CHURCH: Many movements in early America that sought to recover the simplicity of the early church used the generic name “Christian” instead of denominational names they believed to be unscriptural and divisive.



LET EVERY CHRISTIAN BEGIN THE WORK OF UNION IN HIMSELF Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone are two of four founders memorialized in stone at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville.

CENATAPH—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



DON'T ORGANIZE US Using missionary societies to support missionaries was controversial for some.

GENERAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

"THE CHURCH:" Used by insiders before the various divisions to refer to all the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement. After the divisions, used to designate the specific stream of the speaker.

church(es) of Christ: A little "c" is used by some congregations to indicate that they do not see themselves as part of a denomination or historical tradition, but simply as a church that belongs to Christ.

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, DISCIPLES MOVEMENT: Widely used designation for the whole movement in the early twentieth century.

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCHES: Same as [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#). The name reflects that these congregations undertake independent mission efforts because they object to the practice of **open membership** and to perceived liberal theology among [Disciples](#) leaders.

LECTURESHIPS/CONVENTIONS: Annual gatherings often sponsored by educational institutions. They provide worship, fellowship, classes, and workshops but have no legislative function or authority.

NACC: North American Christian Convention, the largest annual gathering of members of [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#). It began in 1927 as a fellowship meeting for those who had reservations about the leadership of the [Disciples](#).

OPEN MEMBERSHIP: Practice of allowing nonimmersed persons—usually those baptized as infants in another Christian body—to become members of a Stone-Campbell congregation. Stone’s movement generally practiced open membership; Campbell’s did not. This became a heated issue among [Disciples](#) in the twentieth century, contributing to division.

PLAN OF SALVATION: The five steps needed to receive God’s redemption: hear the gospel, believe in Christ, repent of one’s sins, confess one’s faith in Christ, be baptized by immersion.

THE REFORMATION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: Most common designation for the movement at its beginning, along with “the current reformation.”

RESTORATION MOVEMENT: Common designation for the movement, reflecting the ideal of restoring beliefs and practices of the New Testament church perceived to have been lost, neglected, or corrupted. This idea was also often used by Latter Day Saints traditions.

STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT: New name proposed by historian Leroy Garrett in *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (1981). Some resisted the name because they felt Campbell should be listed first; others thought it abandoned the “Restoration Ideal.” Still, it is currently the most widely used designation for a movement that embraces three distinct churches.

Reading the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible

CONNECTING THE LIFE OF THE MIND TO THE WORLD OF REVIVALISM

Richard Hughes



SEEKING GOD Francis Bacon argued that you could see God in the “books” of both Scripture and nature.

PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS BACON (1561–1626) VISCOUNT OF ST. ALBANS WRITING AT HIS DESK, 1640—(ENGRAVING), MARSHALL, WILLIAM (FL.1617–49) / PRIVATE COLLECTION / THE STAPLETON COLLECTION / THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

QUIETLY, ALMOST INVISIBLY, a veritable Bible-scholar factory has been humming away in the American **Churches of Christ** over the past half-century, producing scholars of both the Old and New Testaments in extraordinary numbers and enriching the study of the Bible in every American denomination. How did so many Bible-reading, Bible-studying, Bible-teaching scholars come from such a relatively small group of Christians?

THE BOOK OF GOD

In 1839 Alexander Campbell wrote to his followers on why someone might want to read the Bible in the first place: “The man of God reads the Book of God to commune with God, ‘to feel after him, and find him,’ to feel his power and his divinity stirring within him; to have his soul fired, quickened, animated by the spirit of grace and truth. He reads the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible.”

But this warm stirring was not merely a matter of warm feelings. Campbell read much by thinkers, Christian and otherwise, who emphasized the life of the mind and the search for truth (see “Freedom’s ferment,” pp. 5–8).

Campbell also taught his followers to read the Bible through the lens of the scientific method popularized by Francis Bacon (whose influence remained so central that when Stone-Campbell folks founded their first college, they named it Bacon College in his honor). Campbell, having read Bacon, argued that “the Bible is a book of facts.” If you could use the scientific method on the facts of nature, then you could use it on the facts of Scripture.

Campbell wrote, “When I at last took the naked text and read it with common sense, the Bible became a new book to me.” That heritage of Enlightenment rationalism has for almost 200 years formed the core of Stone-Campbell DNA and is one of the reasons behind the Bible scholar factory. But it’s not the whole story.

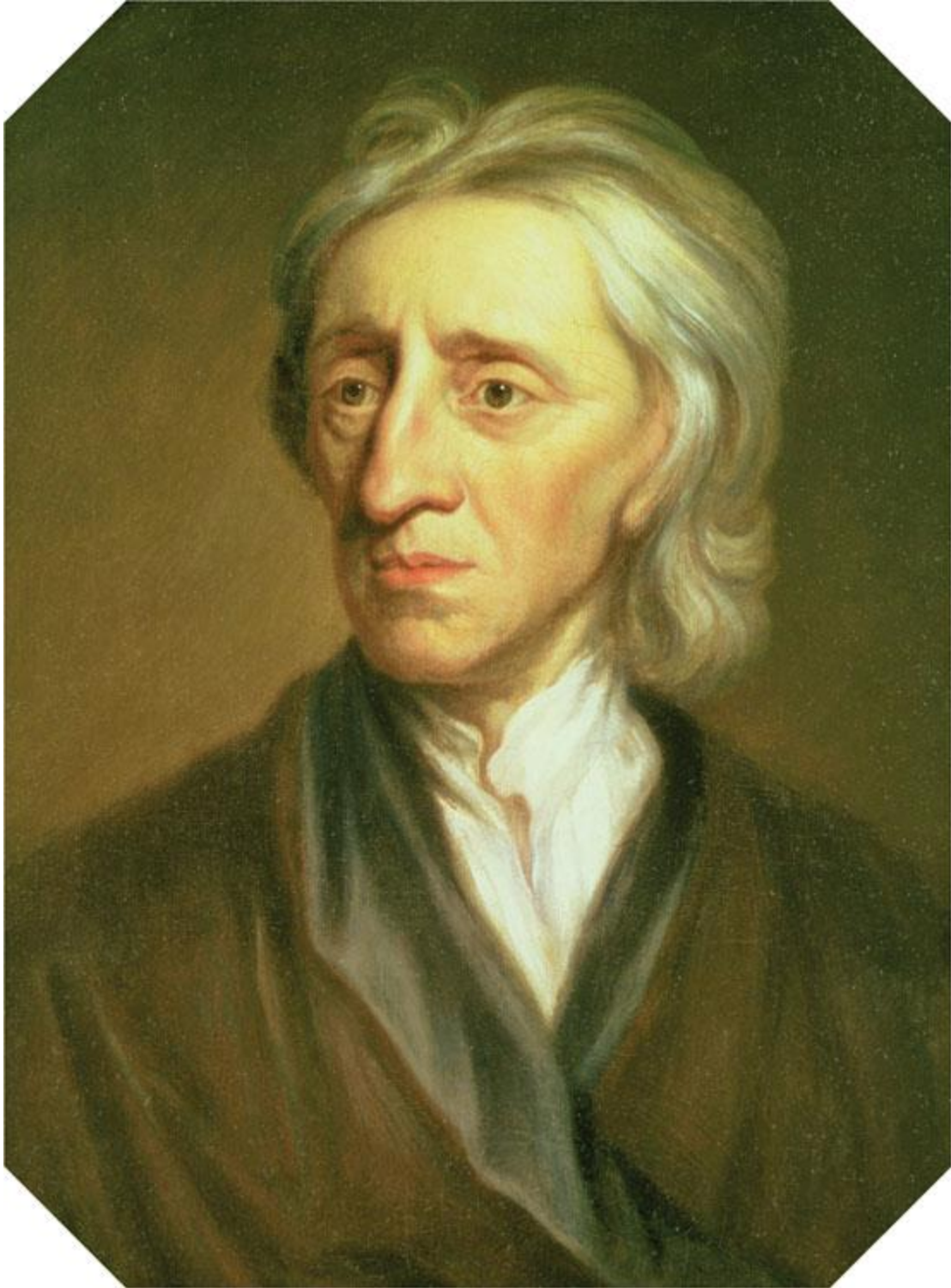
THE MIRACLES OF THE SPIRIT

The **Stone-Campbell Movement** had deep roots in revivalism, too, through Barton Stone. But those roots, unlike Campbell’s rational roots—in fact, *because* of Campbell’s rational roots—did not flower in the same way.

Stone was a child of America’s great evangelical revivals, especially the Second Great Awakening. He believed the power of the Holy Spirit would not only quicken the hearts of sinners and guide believers into truth but also enable believers to perform miraculous works. “By what authority,” he asked, “have we concluded that no ... [one] with miraculous powers may be expected in the present dispensation or age?”

Campbell, like Stone, affirmed the indwelling Holy Spirit. But unlike Stone, he rejected the possibility of miracles in his own time. Instead, he trusted the power of the biblical text itself to quicken the hearts of sinners, and in time, many of his followers flatly identified the Spirit with the Bible itself.

Campbell was also, like many of the Enlightenment thinkers he admired, profoundly optimistic about what people could do with the world if given a chance. He thought human beings would soon bring in a golden age, a “new millennium” of peace and prosperity.



THINKING HARD Enlightenment philosopher John Locke profoundly influenced Campbell.

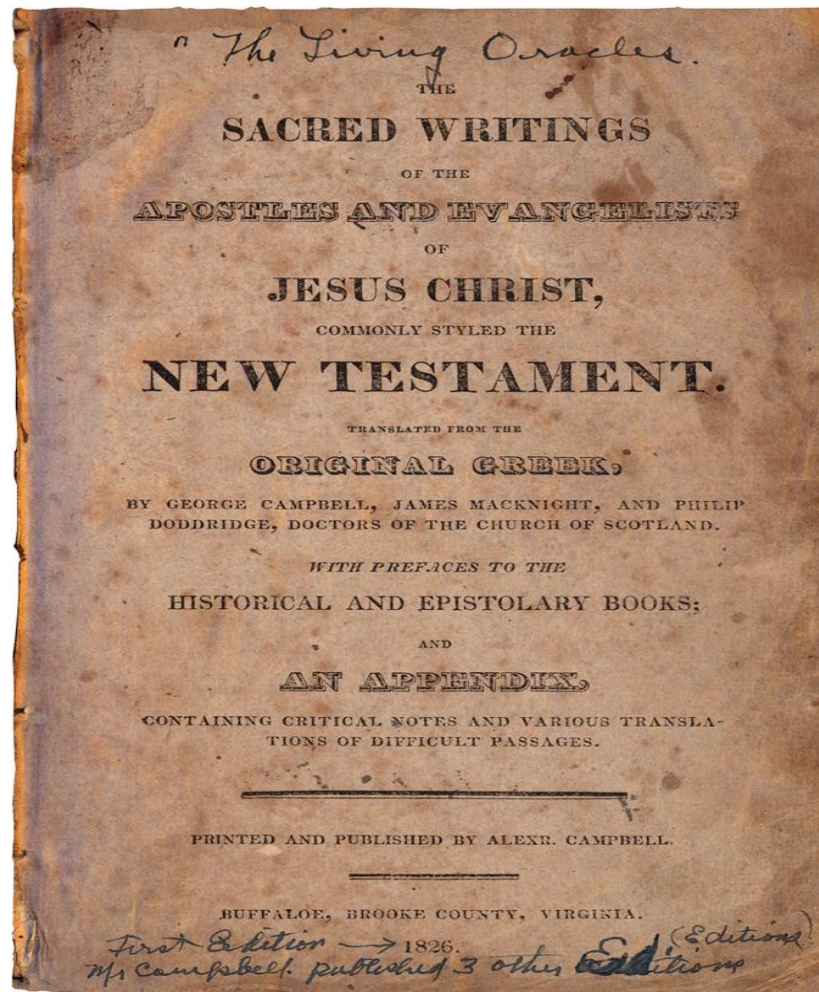
PORTRAIT OF JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704)—(SEE ALSO 1419), KNELLER, SIR GODFREY (1646–1723) (AFTER) / PRIVATE COLLECTION / PHOTO © PHILIP MOULD LTD, LONDON / THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Early in his career, Campbell argued that the restoration of the primitive church would achieve that objective. As he grew older, he claimed that morality, education, and science, coupled with true religion, would launch the millennial dawn.

Finally, he suggested that when the Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States had spread its power and influence around the globe, “then will ... [all people] ‘hang their trumpet in the hall, and study war no more.’ For over all the earth there will be but one Lord, one faith, one hope and one language.”

Barton Stone, however, despaired of human potential. He was convinced that only Jesus’ return could bring the golden age and that the millennial dawn was in God’s hands alone. But his understanding of Christianity—revivalism, hope for Jesus’ return, miracles, and all—would not triumph in the movement. He and his followers were so committed to religious freedom that they refused to embrace many doctrinal standards at all. This created a vacuum.

“The majesty, purity, excellency, and glory of [the Bible’s] Author may overshadow ... inspire ... transform ... and new-create [us] in the image of God.” (A. Campbell)



READING WELL Campbell published a translation of the New Testament for his followers.

1826 LIVING ORACLES—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

Campbell stepped into that vacuum in an 1823 debate with Presbyterian W. L. McCalla. By then, Campbell had developed a rational grid encompassing the essential beliefs and practices of the primitive church—"the ancient order of things," as he put it. He laid out that vision in his debate with McCalla.

Hungry for greater precision than Stone had provided, many of Stone's followers began to embrace Campbell's "ancient order of things" and his commitment to a rational approach to the "naked text" of the Bible. This same commitment drove many young people in the movement to find out all they could about the Bible and make its study their life's work.

Over time, Stone's popular evangelicalism receded further and further into the background. Alexander Campbell rejected the revivals of Charles Finney, claiming that Finney substituted "the anxious bench" for baptism and replaced the ancient gospel with his "new measures."

By the 1950s and 1960s, some were rejecting Billy Graham's revivals for essentially the same reasons, claiming that Graham substituted "faith only" for what Stone-Campbell believers saw as a biblical requirement to baptize adults (see "A story all their own" pp. 38–40).



... **AND FALLING UNDER THE SPIRIT** Sinners at an early camp meeting repent on the "mourners' bench."

CAMP MEETING—THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

But today the revivalist approach is reappearing from two directions. From one stream, a sizable number of the increasingly denominational Disciples of Christ (see “Climbing into the mainline boat,” pp. 20–21) resisted being led into mainline Protestantism.

Centered in America’s Midwest and deeply affected by the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century, this group (known today as the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or Independents) broke from the Disciples and aligned with fundamentalists and evangelicals.

“And what is the reward? What awaits those who seek Jesus? Nothing short of the heart of Jesus.” (Max Lucado)

Others came back to revivalism from a second direction. In response to the cultural revolution of the 1960s, many in the Churches of Christ asked if there was not more to religion than Campbell’s rational grid. Some rejected his restorationism altogether and looked for more fruitful ways to live the Christian life.

They found those more fruitful ways in the biblical text itself—that text to which they had always been committed—for there they discovered the New Testament doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In earlier years, preachers in Churches of Christ often laid out in their sermons a wealth of biblical evidence that resembled a legal brief far more than it did heartfelt revivalist preaching. Today, though, preachers in Churches of Christ, like their revivalist cousins, routinely proclaim the saving grace of a loving God.

ON THE SAME PAGE AFTER ALL?

They also found those fruitful ways in other Christian movements. As many had long said, they were “Christians only, but not the only Christians.” Since Churches of Christ shared with evangelicals a cultural, moral, and political conservatism, they increasingly viewed them not as foes but as congenial allies—revival meetings, warm feelings, and all.

Popular evangelical author Max Lucado has long been a minister in the Churches of Christ, and his San Antonio church proclaimed itself the Oak Hills Church of Christ for the first 15 years of his ministry. Now it is simply Oak Hills Church, and Lucado shares the pulpit with Randy Frazee, formerly of Willow Creek, perhaps the best-known evangelical church in America.

In the end, Stone-Campbell DNA, like all DNA, is complicated. Every year, almost 200 of those Bible scholars—mainly members of Churches of Christ—convene at a professional meeting.

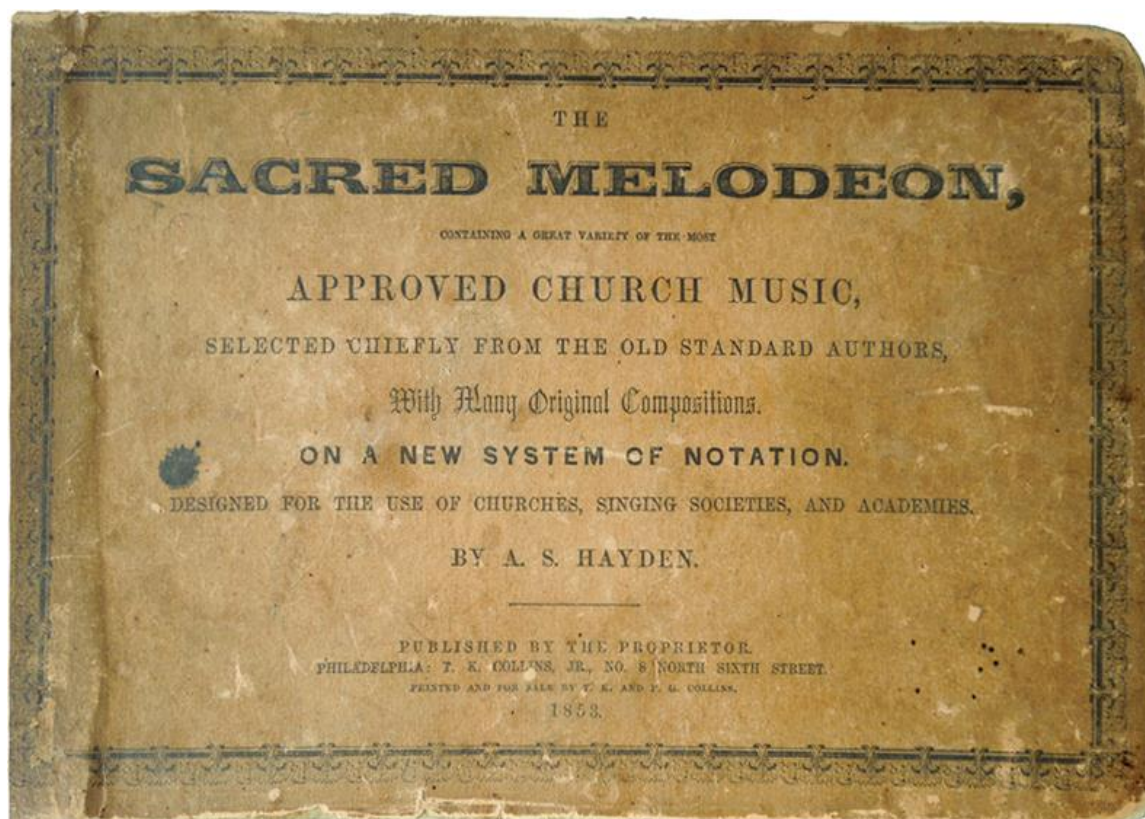
Surrounded throughout the week by thousands of other biblical scholars of all faiths and of none, they have chosen to meet together as members of the Stone-Campbell tradition, not for study only, but on Sunday morning to worship and share the Lord’s Supper.

Perhaps both Stone and Campbell can be heard ringing through the centuries in that act, and in Lucado’s words: “God rewards those who seek Him. Not those who seek doctrine of religion or systems or creeds. Many settle for these lesser passions, but the reward goes to those who settle for nothing less than Jesus himself.”

North and South

WAS THE DIVISION IN THE "UNITY MOVEMENT" AS MUCH ABOUT GEOGRAPHY AS THEOLOGY?

Richard Hughes



WORSHIP WARS Would instruments be used to accompany these songs by an early Disciples composer? The answer depended on where you were singing them.

MELODEON—JESSIE C. EURY LIBRARY, LINCOLN CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

THE FOUNDERS of the **Stone-Campbell Movement** pursued the vision of restoring Christianity to its primitive form and uniting the Christian world. But deep irony plagued the movement when that agenda broke apart. It went two ways—the **Disciples of Christ**, who nurtured the ecumenical vision of unity, and the **Churches of Christ**, for whom the restoration ideal stood front and center. Both groups explained the rupture differently.

On the one hand, the Disciples argued that they had remained faithful to the ecumenical objectives of Stone and Campbell and that the Churches of Christ had turned their backs on Christian unity and busied themselves with narrow-minded, sectarian concerns.

For years, historians of definitive books on the history of American religion parroted the Disciples's explanation. For instance, Winthrop Hudson wrote: "By 1906, the rigidly biblicistic wing of the Disciples—the 'Churches of Christ' of the middle South—had gone its separate way."

WHO LEFT WHOM?

On the other hand, the Churches of Christ thought the Disciples were the wandering ones. They agreed with David Lipscomb of the *Gospel Advocate* (see "New woman, same gospel," p. 33).

Pointing to the musical instruments and missionary societies that the Disciples now embraced, Lipscomb announced that the Disciples had turned their backs on a conservative reading of the biblical text: "The evidence is clear that it [the use of musical instruments in worship] was dropped out by Christ and his apostles, and was not introduced into the church for six hundred years—then among the Catholics, who claim the right to change the appointments of God."

But these dueling interpretations met their match in the 1960s, when a young historian from the Churches of Christ, David Edwin Harrell, offered an entirely new take on the controversy.

Theology mattered, Harrell argued, but so did the Mason-Dixon Line. The Civil War, and the economic gaps and hostilities between Northern and Southern ways of life that it created, brought about many divisions.

The facts and the map bear this out. Since the Civil War, Disciples of Christ have been mainly middle-class Christians in the Midwest. The population center of the Churches of Christ is in the mid-South where, for the century following the Civil War, they chiefly appealed to a far less prosperous following. Harrell described them as "the religious rednecks of the post-bellum South."

Geography complicated these theological disputes. Benjamin Franklin of Cincinnati launched the instrumental music fight in the 1860s, objecting to instruments in terms full of disdain for upward mobility.

Instruments might be appropriate, he wrote, "if a church only intends being a fashionable society [or] a mere place of amusement and secular entertainment." And of instruments' supporters, Franklin wrote, "These refined gentlemen have refined ears, [and] enjoy fine music manufactured for French theatres, interspersed with short prayers and very short sermons."

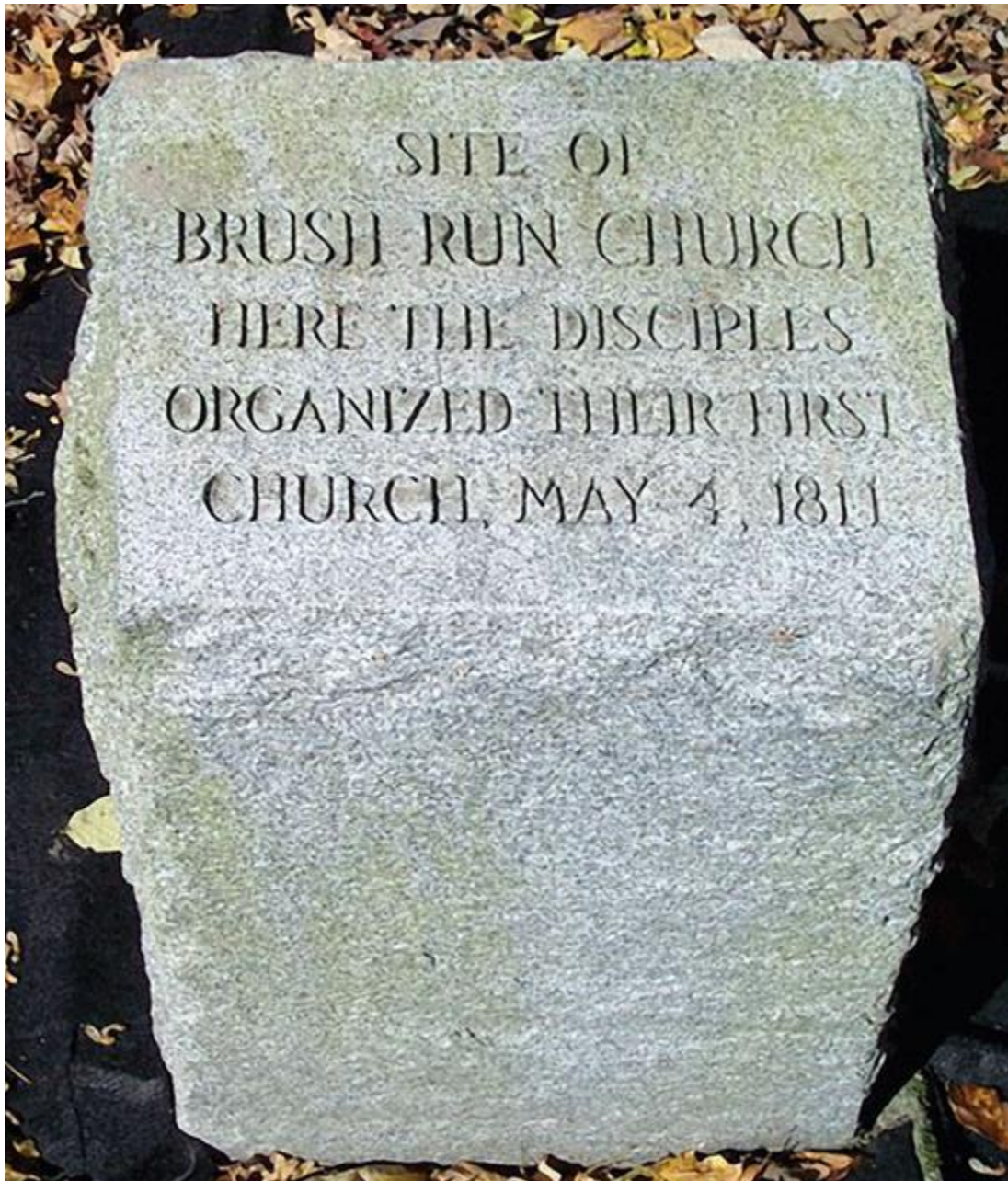
But a Northern supporter of instruments, Robert Richardson, noted their connection with upward mobility gladly: "The musical talent of the present generation is a hundred percent above that of the past; and as we receive into our churches new converts, they naturally expect to hear what will not offend their good taste.... The only remedy is to bring the popular taste of our congregations up to the required standard."

Refined heresy or necessary improvement in taste? So much depended on where you were sitting.

Climbing into the mainline boat

EARLY DISCIPLES RESISTED ALL "MAN-MADE" DENOMINATIONS. SO HOW
DID SOME OF THEM BECOME ONE?

Mark G. Toulouse



BRUSH RUN CHURCH Campbell's movement was organized here.

BRUSH RUN CHURCH—USED BY PERMISSION OF THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM



MAINLINE MAN Alexander Procter wrote that Christianity should include a "free spirit of inquiry" and affirmed "new methods of biblical study," that "love is central to Christian theology," and that "God's creative methodology was evolutionary."

ALEXANDER PROCTOR—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

IT WAS JUNE 1811. Alexander Campbell, preaching at Brush Run Church on Job 8:6–7, issued a clarion call against human structures, human rules, and “ignorance and superstition”: “We commence our career as a church under the banner of ‘the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible’ as the standard of our religious faith and practice.... Christians are the sons of liberty—the Lord’s freed men.”

ROW, ROW, DISCIPLES BOAT

Yet, ironically, over the course of the next two centuries, the stream of Campbell’s movement today known as the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** somehow emerged as the largest mainline Protestant denomination born in America. How did this stream become a mainline tributary?

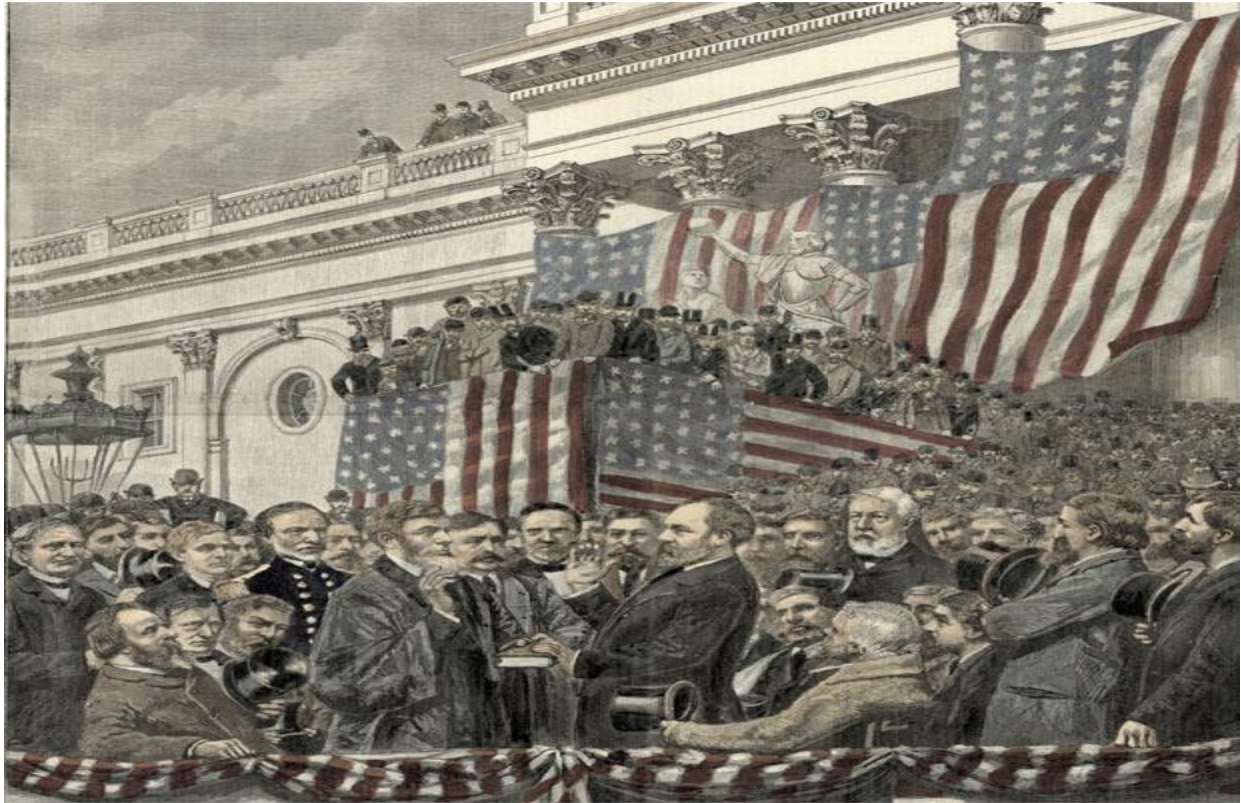
Near the end of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of Disciples ministers became familiar with the higher-critical approach to the Bible emerging in Germany. This approach challenged many of the early movement’s traditional assumptions related to the Bible. Did Paul write the letters attributed to him? How much do the Gospels really tell us about Jesus?

Herbert L. Willett, dean of the Disciples House at the University of Chicago after 1894 and a prolific popular writer, led the charge to spread a new liberal vision of American Protestantism among Disciples laity.

Willett emphasized Christ’s teachings over church declarations. He loved to tell the Bible’s stories. For him, the authority of the Bible rested in how God made a difference in people’s lives, not in literal allegiance to the words on the page.

But hearts as well as minds were involved in the shift. By 1900 Disciples embraced social gospel trends, emphasizing the church’s need to solve social problems rather than defend doctrinal statements.

By 1940 these trends were attracting the majority of some 350 Disciples ministers studying at mainline seminaries like the University of Chicago and Yale. At least 48 Disciples ministers had also received PhDs from these schools.



NOW WE HAVE ONE TOO James Garfield was the first U.S. president from the Stone-Campbell tradition.

GARFIELD INAUGURATION—IMAGE COURTESY OF THE OLD PRINT GALLERY, WASHINGTON, DC



FUNDING THE GOSPEL Alexander Campbell himself signed this receipt for a \$100 donation to Stone-Campbell missions.

RECEIPT—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

A story all their own

WAS—AND IS—THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT “EVANGELICAL”?

Paul M. Blowers



UNDERWATER Central to Stone-Campbell tradition is baptism by immersion. Common Stone-Campbell “five-finger exercise” shows the full order of salvation.

BAPTISM—COURTESY OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

IT ALL DEPENDS how broad the evangelical tent is. What could have been more evangelical than the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801, called by some “America’s Pentecost”? And by nineteenth-century standards, “evangelical” was a sufficiently broad label to include many Protestant movements and churches devoted to the power and authority of the New Testament gospel, the proactive conversion of unbelievers, personal discipleship, and mission work. Stone-Campbell folks fit right in.

ARE WE UNDER THIS TENT?

Yet, even then there were signs of uneasiness. Campbell and other leaders openly criticized what they saw as other churches undermining gospel simplicity—and Christian unity—by requiring confessions of theological creeds or principles for membership.

In particular, Campbell mounted significant assaults on the Reformed theology that would later form the mainstream of twentieth-century evangelicalism. He called the doctrine of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture—the idea that every word in the Bible is there because God had moved the biblical authors to produce it—an “ultraism.”

While the movement remained devoted to many cherished pieces of Reformed teaching, it rebuked the Calvinist “order of salvation,” in which God elected those whom he wanted to redeem. In their judgment, this reversed the apostolic pattern by claiming that the Holy Spirit had to regenerate sinners before they could be converted. The Campbells insisted that faith was primarily belief in gospel facts and trust in the person of Christ. They also said its true climax was baptism by immersion in water.

Campbell was not alone. Frontier revivals and the preaching of Charles Finney were toning down the predestination emphasis within Calvinist groups.

But it is important to note that Campbell saw his own positions not as “human opinions” but as simply the truth of the Scriptures. Therefore, he consistently claimed that his interest was not to side with any “sect” but to restore pure New Testament Christianity.

Fast forward a hundred years and many thousands of members. The movement experienced its first internal division as the **Churches of Christ** parted company with the **Disciples of Christ** to safeguard fidelity to the “restoration of the ancient order” (see “North and South,” p. 19).

By the 1920s, while more progressive and liberal Disciples sought to acquire status within the emerging mainline Protestant “establishment,” conservative Disciples, the forerunners of today’s **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ**, grew increasingly frustrated with that agenda (see “Climbing into the mainline boat,” pp. 20–21).

American Protestantism just then was growing increasingly polarized between left and right—through the 1925 Scopes trial and larger fundamentalist-modernist conflicts of the 1920s and 30s (see *CH* issue 55, *The Monkey Trial and the Rise of Fundamentalism*). Conservative Disciples hoped to resist involvement, but they quickly came under cultural pressure to forge alliances against liberalism. Their *Christian Standard’s* coverage of the Scopes trial favored William Jennings Bryan’s defense against evolution. Hardliners held to the King James Version of the Bible as the only appropriate translation and rebuked critical approaches that undermined biblical authority.

Some, like Rupert C. Foster (1888–1970) of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, even encouraged the establishment of Bible colleges, often in close proximity to large universities, to protect young people aspiring to ministry or mission work from the compromises and ill effects of a liberal university education.

By the 1930s and 40s, these Christian Churches (increasingly dropping the “Disciples” name) formed a fairly well-organized coalition with their own schools, their own “independent” missions (where missionaries were supported directly without the involvement, or interference, of missionary societies), their own journals, and even their own convention. As this coalition rode out the storms of twentieth-century culture, had it become “evangelical”?

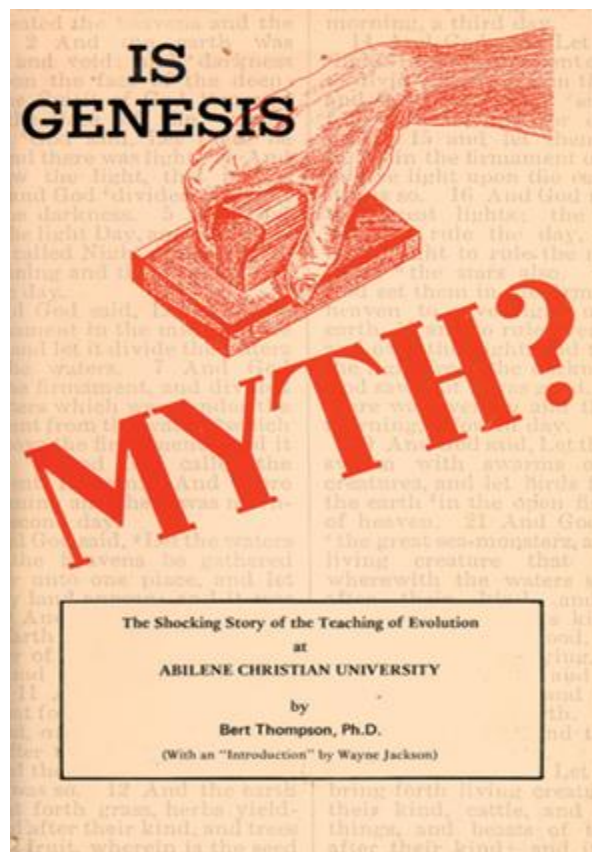
LET'S LOOK AT THE SCORECARD

Historian George Marsden identified a famous set of commitments as underlying fundamentalism, and by extension, modern evangelicalism. How did Stone-Campbell folks who had not followed the Disciples of Christ into the mainline measure up?

- **Commitment to biblical authority:** Many Stone-Campbell believers continued to maintain the “common sense” way of reading the Bible they had learned in the nineteenth century (see “Reading the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible,” pp. 16–18). They looked to the Bible as a book of facts, evidences, and commands—a platform for restoring New Testament Christianity. Here they maintained common cause with many twentieth-century fundamentalists and evangelicals.

- **Reformed “orthodoxy”:** Though recognizing the movement’s Presbyterian heritage, these believers thoroughly opposed hardline Calvinism. They thought it had no serious scriptural warrant and that it denied the apostolic model of conversion and regeneration. Here, too, they had companions among the twentieth century’s more revivalistic churches.

- **Dispensationalism:** The Christian Churches upheld Alexander Campbell’s threefold model of biblical dispensations—Patriarchal (before the 10 Commandments), Mosaic (from Moses to Christ), and Christian. But they adamantly resisted later developments of Dispensationalism like those of Cyrus Scofield, Arno Gaebelein, and Charles Ryrie—household names among some modern fundamentalists.



WHAT TO TEACH? Creationism and evolution were debated at Stone-Campbell schools.

IS GENESIS MYTH?—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

- **Premillennialism:** The Churches of Christ witnessed a “premillennial” movement within their ranks as early as 1915—the idea that Christ would return, gather the righteous, and begin a 1,000-year reign. But, by and large, many in the movement distanced themselves from debates about the Second Coming, considering them distractions from New Testament Christianity.
- **Holiness:** Many within the movement supported nineteenth-century moral crusades like temperance, but the “Holiness” theological tradition emerging from the Wesleyan heritage did not impact them as it did other evangelical churches.



HAND—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



“SIMPLE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY” Thomas Campbell reads the *Declaration and Address* to his people in 1809.

DECLARATION AND ADDRESS—USED BY PERMISSION OF THERESTORATIONMOVEMENT.COM

Murch’s career signaled a new urgency to find common cause with outsiders. In his judgment, the “restoration plea” was still compelling and would speak to a broader audience. Many congregations and officials followed his lead, getting involved in neo-evangelical groups like the Billy Graham Crusades, Campus Crusade for Christ, and InterVarsity.

That wasn’t all. They used Sunday school materials from evangelical publishing houses like Baker, sent their ministers to evangelical seminaries like Fuller, and engaged speakers from the broader tradition at meetings. They joined evangelicals in the pro-life movement and in opposing same-sex marriage.

The central appeal of Campbell’s Declaration and Address was not an end in itself but a means to a larger goal: world evangelization.

All the while, though, they kept some distance. They remained suspicious of approaches to conversion that focused on faith alone and not baptism. Some churches embraced inerrancy as a “restoration” principle, but others simply affirmed the Bible as “infallible” in revealing the way of salvation.

Evangelicalism also stood at a crossroads. Was it a clearly defined movement still bounded by the interests of the NAE, *Christianity Today*, and InterVarsity? Or had it become a much bigger tent, in which all variety of churches—from Reformed to Wesleyan to Anglican to emerging churches with no name at all—advanced the centrality of the cross under the authority of the Bible? Perhaps, once again, Stone-Campbell churches would fit right in.

Today, the convergence of the two movements is most visible practically in Stone-Campbell megachurches. Some have downplayed their identity for fear of putting off seekers or people from other traditions, and in doing so claim to be “restoring” the ideal of an “undenominational” Christianity. But they also embrace, like other megachurches, large staffs, multiple campuses, extensive programming and discipleship ministries, short-term missions, church-planting networks, and sophisticated technologies.

In the end, quite a few Stone-Campbell believers keep common cause with evangelicals in the twenty-first century, especially as “evangelicalism” has become more diversified and accommodating. But many insist that they have a unique history, a unique ethos, and a unique mission. The movement is still writing a story all its own.

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Seeking the body of Christ

STONE-CAMPBELL BELIEVERS STILL SEEK "A BIBLE FAITH, A HOLY LIFE,"
AND A UNIFIED CHURCH

W. Dennis Helsabeck Jr.



"We have felt most successful when we've had a clear understanding of God's unique calling for our church.... Our heritage in the Church of Christ is an uncluttered, simple approach to faith. We have little ritual. We emphasize open Bible study. We downplay hierarchy; people here feel that every member is a minister. Yet I can honestly say we don't feel as though every church has to offer that. We see the place of the high-church tradition, with the mystery of worship, and if somebody wants that, they won't be happy at our church."—Max Lucado, "The Applause of Heaven and Earth," *Leadership*, July 1992

GOSPEL ECHO—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER

FROM THE MOMENT the Springfield Presbytery expressed its desire to “sink into union with the body of Christ at large,” the plea of Stone-Campbell Christians has always been that there be only one Church with a capital C—one body of Christ.

Members shy away from descriptions of their tradition as a sect or denomination (“church” with a small “c”). Instead, they identify as a “movement,” a community of concern and understanding within the larger body of Christians throughout the world.

The **Stone-Campbell Movement** seeks to serve the one church by grounding unity in common faith—“consisting of all those in every place who profess their faith in Christ,” as well as in common scriptural practice—“obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures.”

Recognizing that the limitations of human reasoning prevent any Christian’s perfect understanding of all things in Scripture, the movement still puts its shoulder to the great, continuous, unifying task: restoring the church that was in the mind of Christ and the apostles, found in Scripture.

THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE

While unity and restoration are critical, they cannot be ends in themselves. The movement sees them as means to the end: that the world might know Christ. Thus Stone-Campbell Christians have historically emphasized cross-cultural missions.

Alexander Campbell once suggested that the best missionary approach would involve a church of 20 people going to a country “where they would support themselves like the natives, wear the same garb, adopt the country as their own,” and “sit down and hold forth in word and deed the saving truth, not deriding the gods nor the religion of the natives, but allowing their own works and example to speak for their religion.”

The movement also offers to the church worldwide a high view of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These precious, authentic symbols—death, burial, resurrection, participation in the body and blood of Christ, immersion, weekly observance of the Supper—are vital to all Christians.

This high view coexists with a belief in the “royal priesthood” of all believers. Any Christian may be called on at any time to preside at the Lord’s table or to baptize the penitent believer. Thus each congregation can prayerfully and freely order its own corporate life.

Finally, aware of both its strengths and weaknesses, the movement frequently engages in lively self-examination of its story and principles by scholars and laity alike. This sometimes involves a recognition of how imperfectly the movement has carried out its own principles. But it also involves a continued commitment to them.

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⁵ Blowers, P. M. (2013). [A Story All Their Own: Was—And Is—The Stone-Campbell Movement “Evangelical”?](#) *Christian History Magazine: The Church to End All Churches? The Unifying Vision of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, (no. 106), 3–41.