Lecture 5: The Second Generation and Beyond

Stone Campbell Movement Class | Westwood Christian Church

# Walter Scott and New Evangelism

Walter Scott (1796-1861) was born in Scotland and raised in the Church of Scotland. He came to America and met Alexander Campbell in 1821. He became one of the most effective preachers of his time. The Mahoning Baptist association made him their evangelist. The year before his appointment (1826, the 17 churches had a total of 34 baptisms). In Scott’s first year, there were 1,000, doubling the size of most of the congregations in a year.

5 Finger Evangelism

1. Faith
2. Repentance
3. Baptism
4. Forgiveness
5. Gift of Holy Spirit

Because much of the Frontier America was under the influence of strict Calvinism, Scott’s preaching that they could do something to be saved themselves, instead of hoping that you were one of God’s elect was well received. Walter Scott would baptize an average of 1,000 people a year for the rest of his life. He is considered among many as the 4th founder of the movement because of how influential his preaching was to growing our movement.

# Mission Society

Early in the movement, Campbell had written against the idea of missionary societies, claiming the local church worked locally. But by 1840 he had changed his mind. Perhaps because of how the movement had grown, he realized that he was now leading a movement that was large and influencing culture in big ways. Without cooperation, they would never reach their full potential.

In November 1849 Campbell called a meeting of church leaders (that he couldn’t attend b/c he was sick). It was only attended by 151 representatives from around 100 churches instead of a rep from each church, and so was less of a convention and more of a meeting. This meeting decided to form the American Christian Missionary Society.

Since Jerusalem was the home of Peter, and because the Disciples were post-millennialists, the first missionary sent from the ACMS was James T. Barclay sent to Israel. All around, his mission work was a failure, making only a few converts and leaving no lasting church (because they went in largely unprepared)

This missionary society and its successors would become a key point of departure among our churches.

# The Civil War and its Aftermath

Despite what many histories of our movement say, the Civil War was the cause of the divide between the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ. In fact, in 1866, Moses Lard (1818-1880) wrote that the war “had cooled many an ardent feeling and caused old friends to regard one another shyly” but insisted the war had not caused division in the movement.

While there are a number of things that eventually get cited as the cause of the split, the influence and aftermath of the civil war is unmistakable.

## Causes of Division

### Congregation location

In 1860, our movement numbered about 2000 congregations. 1200 were in the north and 800 in the south, but many if not most of those were in the border states of Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri where the tensions of the war were incredibly strong. Most notably was the fact that the ACMS held a meeting in 1861 where a resolution was passed to ubiquitously support the union. From this point forward, the battle lines were drawn. Leaders in the south would point to this moment as a “Great wrong” that needed repentance. It would never come. In the post-war America, it would become increasingly hard to get the southern congregations to travel to Ohio in the north for a convention or meeting, just as it would be difficult to have northerners read a journal published in Nashville.

### Slavery

While both Campbell and Stone had slaves at one point in their lives or another, and they both freed them, people at the extreme ends of the abolition vs. slavery argument were not happy that Campbell would never come down on a side.

On the one hand, he would say that slavery was not prohibited in the Bible, and in fact would defend the institution morally, so long as the appropriate relationship between master and slave was upheld. In this way, he could preach against the oppressive and coercive application of chattel slavery seen in the southern US. At the same time, he would claim that while it wasn’t against the bible, it was against a civilized world and against the spirit of the age. And yet, he was against the kind of emancipatory approach argued for by the abolitionists because he knew (rightly) that such a move would disrupt everyone. Nevertheless, for the slave-holders, this felt like a change from the freedom found in Scripture to hold slaves. Through it all, Campbell’s position was to not allow Slavery to be a point of congregational discipline or membership.

### Interpretation of the Bible (where the Bible is silent, we are silent)

A key issue of theology came in response to how we interpret the Bible (interestingly the same thing would happen again later). Of main importance was how to handle the phrase “where the Bible is silent we are silent.” For some, silence meant approval. For others, it meant prohibition. We’ll see this come to bear in 2 important ways

### Music

Calvin and Zwingli had already rejected the practice of instrumental worship in the Reformation, so this is neither new nor unique. But the issue was not on the frontier movement in the early 1800s. Some have posited that the churches simply couldn’t afford them. So what happens is that a contextual facet becomes a theological necessity for some.

Because the Bible mentions singing but does not mention instruments, some decided we should not sing

with instruments. Others commented that it took attention away from God towards the beauty of the music

But, and this is very important, the central issue for most churches in this time period is not about biblical interpretation around instruments. It’s about the economic vision of the congregations. For the south—decimated by the war as it was—the question arose “why are our so-called brothers and sisters in the north spending money on organs, new buildings, and fancy stained glass windows when we are starving and cannot afford to pay our preacher?”

### American Christian Missionary Society

Resistance to the ACMS was not common early on, but it did have its detractors and as the ACMS had been involved in the War, its relationship with congregations in the south was never able to recover. Nevertheless, the early detractors were typically consistent in their critique

“It had become too involved in sectional politics. It was an inefficient way to do mission work. It dictated to the churches. But again, because societies past the local congregation are not in the Bible, which for some was a reason not to have it.

All of this ballooned into tension that was apparently irreconcilable. So, after 40 years of slow deterioration, in 1907, the Federal Census Bureau asked if the Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ should be separate and the leader of the 2Cs, David Lipscomb, reluctantly said yes.

# Further Division

By 1900, the Disciples had grown 5 fold to around 1,000,000 members. Nearly 20,000 people gathered in 1909 to celebrate the centennial of Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*. By 1950, the movement would number nearly 2,000,000. But the time from 1920 to 1960 were not without pain.

As before, a key point of division would become how to interpret the Bible. By the early 1900s, the “scientific” and “higher” forms of biblical criticism would become the norm in universities and books. Despite the fact they started in Germany almost 100 years earlier. Some in our movement embraced new and groundbreaking ways to study the bible, and they were known as either “**modernists**” or “**liberals**.” While not exactly the same as a 21st century definition of liberal, the idea was the willingness to interpret and study scripture with current (or modern) philosophical, historical, and theoretical tools. The reaction against this, however, was **fundamentalism**—the idea of reading the bible literally. It was in this conversation that the notion of an “**inerrant**” scripture arose.

Another contributing issue was the **Ecumenical movement**. For some, working with other churches working for unity was an obvious yes. But for others, it compromised what we were about. The EM did not ask for people to leave their denominations. It advocated cooperation only. But, this movement would bring up the issue of “**open membership.**”

Post WW2, the UCMS (a joining of 3 missionary societies) would recognize tensions of missionaries in China and the Philippines regarding membership and baptism. Thus, the international convention of the Disciples of Christ would pass resolutions in 1920, 22, and 25 that took a stand against open membership. However, in 1926’s convention, a special report was read saying the Society had taken care of problems on the field, a division of Disciples bubbled up. From this point on, there would be many conservative members who would not trust the UCMS and the International Conference to actually hear or deal with their concerns. Thus, those would continued to support the convention and the UCMS would be called “cooperatives” and those who did not, “independents.” In 1927, the very first North American Christian Convention would be held.

Paths of division would eventually be made congregationally based on where their support went.

Outreach, colleges, missionaries/organizations, camps, homes, conventions, etc. would all be ways that the 2 sides would cast their votes in which side they were on.

A Commission on Restructure resulted in the formal adoption in 1968 of a provisional design for a denomination to be known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The cooperatives faded into the Disciples, while the Independents morphed into the independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ

# Growth and Identity Crisis

evangelical and catholic

We are evangelical, but we are not Evangelical, which generally care less about the ordinances, the nature of the church, and even biblical interpretation. We are catholic, but we are not Catholic.

The nature of our time is that post-denominationalism is the norm, so where do we go from there?