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THE ROLE OF COOPERATION
IN THE DIVISION OF THE
STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

by

Robert Pomerenk

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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ABSTRACT

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The Stone-Campbell Movement was established as a unity movement in an attempt to unify all Christians. While the intentions of the movement were to end denominationalism, they instead created three new denominations. One of the biggest causes of conflict was the idea of cooperation in the form of missionary societies. Members of the movement did not interpret the Bible in the same manner, leading to disagreement over issues not directly mentioned within the New Testament. It would be the issue of the missionary society that would lead to the eventual split of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	Introduction	1
2	The Movement Forms	4
3	The Movement Organizes	18
4	The Movement Fractures	44
5	The Movement Goes to War	66
6	The Movement Divides	80
7	Conclusion	110
	Bibliography	112

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In 1906, the United States Census Bureau conducted a count of religious organizations in America. David Lipscomb, an influential Tennessee editor and minister, was asked by the Bureau to describe and enumerate the churches within the Stone-Campbell Movement. Lipscomb was tremendously pained by the request since, over the course of the last five decades, he had witnessed the problems and divisions that had arisen in this Christian unity movement.

Lipscomb and many others realized that, over twenty years, a large division had developed within the movement. However, few were ready to officially recognize that the body that was formerly united around a set of common ideals was now split into two large groups. The Stone-Campbell Movement had split into two separate denominations: the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ.

Lipscomb responded to the census report that the Church of Christ was now separate from the original Disciples movement. Lipscomb clearly believed that his side, the Church of Christ, was still carrying the original mantle of unity and that the Disciples of Christ had caused the split. Lipscomb wrote:

As they increased in number and wealth, many desired to become popular also, and sought to adopt the very human inventions that in the beginning of the movement had been opposed – a general organization of the churches under a missionary society with a moneyed membership, and the adoption of instrumental music in the worship. This is a subversion of the fundamental principles on which the churches were based.¹

¹ David Lipscomb, “The Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ,” *Gospel Advocate* 49 (April 1907): 457.

Therefore, based upon these premises, Lipscomb concluded:

There is a distinct people taking the word of God as their only and sufficient rule of faith, calling their churches “churches of Christ” or “churches of God,” distinct in name, work, and rule of faith from all other bodies of people.²

Because of this division, Lipscomb replied that the two groups should be listed separately in the census report. Since 1906, the two groups have been listed independently and today see themselves as disconnected entities.

In his assessment of the situations, Lipscomb clearly cited two reasons for the division: missionary societies and instrumental music. The instrumental music controversy has been discussed in many journal articles, books, and debates since the split occurred. One of the primary reasons why it is so often discussed is that it is still a controversial issue among Stone-Campbell offspring churches today. Many of the same arguments that were used a century ago are still heard within present-day churches. In many regions of the country, the Church of Christ denomination continues to be divided over the use of instrumental music during worship.

It is clear that the missionary society controversy has been overshadowed by the instrumental music debate. Little has been written about the history of this issue, and few discussions have occurred about the organizations or societies among the Stone-Campbell churches. The subject appears to be settled by the fact that the two original and major factions of the movement both now have cooperative societies and efforts.

Since the concept of church organization is not under debate today, scant attention is paid to the first major area of contention within the Stone-Campbell Movement. While it was not the first issue that arose among the Disciples, it was the first significant test of

² Lipscomb, “The Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ,” 458.

the entire brotherhood. The issue of cooperation was the first topic to divide the Disciples and eventually led to their separation.

The underlying problem with the issue of cooperation was the difference in Biblical interpretation. The group that would later be known as the Church of Christ believed in the inerrancy of Scripture and argued that if a doctrine was not mentioned within the pages of the New Testament, it was forbidden. The group that would continue to be known as the Disciples of Christ took a different hermeneutical stance. It believed that if a practice was not strictly forbidden, then it was permissible as long as it did not violate any other tenets of Scripture.

While not all of the Disciples agreed on every scriptural issue, the issue of cooperation was the matter that initiated the divisions that occurred during the Stone-Campbell Movement. The fight over missionary societies and other cooperative efforts created a rift between differing factions that could not be repaired. While issues such as instrumental music, economic concerns, and social differences led to the end of the unified movement, it was the subject of cooperation, based on differing scriptural interpretations, which ultimately caused the Stone-Campbell Movement to break into two new denominations.

Chapter 2 – The Movement Forms

The 19th Century marked a time in American history when many of the ideas and beliefs of the previous century were drastically altered. Events such as the American Revolution changed the American mind-set forever. Individuals felt a new sense of freedom and acted on this new independence in many aspects of their lives. The realm of religion was no different; many long-held ideas and beliefs began to change, reflecting the new direction of the country. Americans began to question many of the beliefs that had been accepted as fact for centuries. The idea that individuals could control their religious lives without the assistance of bishops, ordained ministers, or other clergy began to sweep across many parts of the developing nation. American religious historian Nathan Hatch refers to these ideas as the “democratization of American Christianity.”³

The American Restoration Movement, or Stone-Campbell Movement,⁴ was a religious revivalist movement that strove to unite all Christians under one common banner. The intent of the founders was to remove all denominational labels that they believed were dividing Christians. The leaders argued that the Bible alone could serve as the sole authority in all matters pertaining to religion and taught that Christians should avoid all other creeds and teachings not found within the Bible. Those who strove for this restoration ideal believed that the words of the Bible should be taken literally and they

³ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴ In much of historical literature, the term “Restoration Movement” is used when discussing this movement. In recent years, historians have moved away from this name. This is because the use of the term “restoration” is a theological concept and not a historical term. It has also changed to lessen confusion, as the Mormon Church also often refers to their movement as “The Restoration Movement.” Historian Leroy Garrett began using the term Stone-Campbell Movement in several articles he authored. This terminology reflects the two founding leaders of the movement. Most current historians are beginning to use this terminology in their writings. It is how I will refer to the movement throughout this work.

were to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.”⁵ However, although the leaders strove to unify all Christians, they instead helped to create three new denominations.⁶

The Stone-Campbell Movement had its roots in the Protestant Reformation, in which the idea of “sola scriptura” led to formal departures from the established Roman Catholic Church. The leaders of the Stone-Campbell movement took these principles and attempted to return to what they believed was “primitive Christianity” by professing the belief that the Bible was the inherent, literal word of God and was to be followed to the letter of the law.

In the late 18th century and into the 19th Century, many independent streams arose and converged to form what would later be known as the Stone-Campbell Movement. The first of these streams began in Virginia under James O’Kelly, who was an ordained Methodist minister upset by the appointment of Francis Asbury as bishop. In protest, O’Kelly quit the established Methodist Church and formed his own group in 1793. Referring to themselves as “Republican Methodists,” O’Kelly and his followers vowed to “use only the Holy Scriptures for our guide.”⁷ Many of the members of the sect believed that they were still a splinter group from the main “body of Christ.” The group

⁵ Thomas Campbell, “Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington.”

⁶ The Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, and The Independent Christian Church all have roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement. The Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ formally split in 1906. The Independent Christian Churches split from the Disciples of Christ in 1926.

⁷ Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1988), 27.

decided to drop denominational labels and refer to themselves as the “Christian Church.” This new group spread throughout the southern and western states and by 1809, had a membership of 20,000.⁸

A similar movement began to spread throughout the New England Baptists, led by former Baptist ministers Elias Smith and Abner Jones. Not satisfied with the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation through predestination, both men advocated a “back-to-the-basics” approach to Christianity. As O’Kelly’s followers had done, Smith and Jones adopted simply the name “Christian” to identify their movement.

In Kentucky, revivals were beginning to take place in the early 1800s. Ministers such as James McGready began conducting revival meetings throughout western and central Kentucky. At locations such as Gasper River, Red River, and Muddy River, McGready and a handful of other ministers helped spark interest in a region that, prior to these events, had shown little interest in organized religion.

The most influential minister to come from this region was Barton W. Stone. Born the son of a wealthy tobacco planter, Stone decided that the life of a farmer was not his calling. Instead, in 1793, he moved to North Carolina and invested his inheritance in higher education at David Caldwell’s Academy. While Stone was enrolled, McGready conducted a revival that resulted in the conversion of most of the student body. Stone struggled for some time after hearing the message of McGready. He felt unsure of his salvation and believed that there was no hope for him because he did not believe he had

⁸ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1981), 42.

gone through a “conversion experience. “ A year later, another minister named William Hodge visited the school. He helped Stone to gain confidence in his salvation. Stone was so overwhelmed that he decided to pursue the Presbyterian ministry.

Throughout his training, Stone struggled with issues such as the Trinity, predestination, and other aspects of Presbyterian theology. After studying the New Testament, Stone did not believe that many of the key Presbyterian doctrines could be found within the pages of the Bible. Out of frustration, Stone left school to become a teacher in Georgia.

A career in education did not satisfy Stone; he still wrestled with the idea that he had been called to preach. To complete his training, Stone returned to North Carolina in 1796. When he had completed his studies in 1798, Stone became the minister for the Cane Ridge and Concord congregations in western Kentucky. After working at both of these congregations for a year, Stone received a formal call to be ordained. At his ordination hearing, Stone explained that he still struggled with aspects of the Presbyterian doctrine. The Kentucky Synod held a meeting and decided that Stone could be ordained even though he held some reservations regarding doctrine. When presented with his confession of faith, Stone replied that he could adhere to the oath “as far as I see consistent with the word of God.”⁹

Into the early 19th Century, religious revivals continued to spread across Kentucky and Ohio and into Tennessee. The revivals were different from many that had taken place in the past in that these new meetings were characterized by emotional

⁹D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 41.

exercises and by the participation of ministers from several denominations. Although there were clergy members present from several sects, competition between the religious groups was evident.

The news of these revivals travelled to Stone at Cane Ridge. Still plagued with doubts about his beliefs, Stone travelled to Logan County to see if he could discover a means to stem the tide of apathy that was sweeping over his congregation. After witnessing the preaching and the outpouring of emotion that was occurring there, Stone returned to Cane Ridge. Shortly after his return, his preaching began to produce many of the same results he had seen in Logan County.

In 1801, the yearly communion service at Cane Ridge became the largest religious revival of the 19th Century. Estimates by soldiers on the ground were that 20,000 to 30,000 individuals were present during the six days of the meeting.¹⁰ During the event, many of the religious exercises that had taken place at earlier revivals were observed at Cane Ridge. All who attended the revivals witnessed uncontrolled dancing, speaking in tongues, barking, swooning, and jerking. Ministers from many different denominations were present, but unlike at other revivals, there was little animosity between the clergy. Communion services were held, and the message was preached that everyone throughout the world could obtain salvation.

The meeting at Cane Ridge did not go unnoticed by the hierarchy of the Presbyterian Church. The concept of free salvation for all contradicted the fundamental teachings of the denomination. The Synod of Kentucky brought charges of heresy against

¹⁰ Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 88.

Stone and four other ministers who had been present at the revival. Before the accusations could be investigated, all five men left the Synod.

Stone and the other ministers organized their own association, which they deemed the Springfield Presbytery. To explain their actions, the group wrote a defense of their actions and beliefs in a pamphlet entitled *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*. Each of the ministers wrote a section of the report, detailing their grievances with the Presbyterian Church. In the section written by Stone, he argued that many of the teachings in the Westminster Confession of Faith were contrary to Scripture, especially those elements pertaining to universal salvation.

After five months of existence, the group decided they were not a scriptural body. The decision was made to dissolve the organization. On June 28, 1804, Stone penned *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. Stone 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.”¹¹ Just as several other groups had done before them, the remaining members decided to simply use the term “Christian Church” to describe themselves. By the end of 1804, Stone had helped start fifteen “Christian Churches” in Ohio and Kentucky.¹²

Over the next few years, Stone’s congregations continued to grow. By 1807, there were twenty-four Christian Churches in Kentucky and Ohio. The churches all shared several things in common. The beliefs of the church were that the Bible was the only guide a person needed. No other creeds, statements of faith, or opinions of man

¹¹ Barton W. Stone, “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.”

¹² Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 97.

were necessary. Each congregation was independent and did not report to anyone other than the elders of their individual congregation.

Stone continued to spread his message and opened schools at Lexington and Georgetown. In 1826, he began a newsletter called the *Christian Messenger* that was designed to spread his message of primitive Christianity as well as keep the current congregations abreast of what the other churches were doing. It is estimated that by 1832, when the two branches would merge, the Stone congregations numbered 10,000 members.¹³

The second major stream of the movement was started by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Thomas Campbell was born in Scotland in 1763, but was raised in Ireland. In his late teens, Campbell rejected his Church of England upbringing and became an ordained minister in the less formal Seceder Presbyterian Church.

While in Ireland, Thomas Campbell was exposed to influences that would later shape his beliefs. Campbell's interest in the works of John Locke is evident in many of his writings. Throughout his life, Locke had written against the divisions that had fragmented Christianity and advocated a simple, nonsectarian form of the faith. Campbell had also studied the writings of men such as John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and Robert and James Haldane. These ministers had all formed Christian churches independent of any formal denomination.

After becoming weary of much of the infighting in the Irish Presbyterian Church, Thomas Campbell decided in 1807 to move to America. Arriving in Pennsylvania, Campbell was given an assignment by the Chartier's Presbytery to serve in Washington,

¹³ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 119.

Pennsylvania. For the first six months, Thomas Campbell was a popular minister and attracted many newcomers to his congregation. However, his popularity was short lived. Campbell made a visit to a Seceder congregation located on the frontier. During the course of his visit, Campbell invited non-Seceder Presbyterians to the communion service. The Presbytery, arguing that he believed there was no divine authority for confessions of faith, brought charges against Campbell. Other charges related to the nature of faith, the right of layman to exhort when no ordained clergy was present, and the right of Seceder Presbyterians to hear ministers of other denominations.

The charges resulted in the suspension of Thomas Campbell from his pulpit. In May 1808, Campbell took his case to the Pennsylvania Synod, but after reviewing the charges, the Synod's verdict was that Campbell had departed from some of the doctrines and practices of his denomination. He received a formal censure and was allowed to minister to his congregation. Campbell stayed in Philadelphia for two months and preached for a congregation whose minister was absent due to a prolonged illness.

When the minister returned to health, Campbell went back to his congregation in Washington. When he arrived, the Chartier's Presbytery made it clear that they did not wish for him to continue to lead the congregation. In response, on September 13, 1808, Campbell "declined the authority of the Presbytery" and withdrew himself from the Presbyterian Church.¹⁴

Campbell continued to preach to friends and sympathizers, stressing themes of unity and teaching about the sinfulness of sectarian division. In August 1809, Campbell decided to form an organization "to give more definiteness" to their movement and to

¹⁴ Henry E. Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2003), 142.

promote greater fellowship.¹⁵ The result was the Christian Association of Washington. Campbell stressed that the organization was not a new church or sect. Rather, the purpose of the group was to hold semiannual meetings to discuss matters of church reform.

Campbell was asked to prepare a formal statement explaining the purpose of the association. He responded with a lengthy pamphlet entitled “The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington.” Campbell stated that the purpose of the association was to promote “simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.”¹⁶ When presenting the document to a group of interested churchgoers, Campbell summarized the group’s Biblical position with a statement that would serve as a theme for Stone-Campbell Movement churches to the present day. Campbell stated, “We speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent.”¹⁷

While Thomas was preaching in Pennsylvania, the rest of his family was still in Ireland, attempting to join him in America. The family began their voyage in 1808, but their vessel was shipwrecked off the coast of Scotland. While waiting to be rescued, twenty-year-old Alexander Campbell decided to devote his life to the ministry. The family remained in Glasgow for ten months, where Alexander attended the University of Glasgow. During this time, Alexander studied many of the movements that had influenced his father. He was particularly drawn to the teachings of the Haldanes. The Haldanes were members of the Church of Scotland who had split off to form their own church in the 1790s. They taught the concepts of weekly communion and local

¹⁵ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 137.

¹⁶ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 139.

¹⁷ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 140.

congregational independence. Alexander slowly pulled away from the Seceder church of his upbringing and began to worship with a group of like-minded people.

In September 1809, Alexander arrived in America not knowing what his father would think of his decision to leave the Presbyterian Church. After the two met, they were relieved that they had come to similar conclusions. Alexander began to preach alongside his father for anyone who would listen. After investigating all of the local sects and denominations, both Thomas and Alexander decided that, as there was no group with which they could fellowship, it was necessary to form their own church. As a result, in May 1811, the Campbells and thirty other members formed the Brush Run Church. The congregation was based upon the concepts of independent congregations, weekly communion, and baptism by immersion.

The concept of baptism by immersion became a subject of contention for the congregation. The issue first arose when Alexander Campbell and his wife were expecting their first child. The question arose as to whether the Campbells would sprinkle their infant child. After many weeks of study, Alexander concluded that the concept of infant baptism was not written in the New Testament, and therefore, their child would not be baptized.

The congregational discussion of baptism led Alexander to meet with several local Baptist congregations. In 1812, Alexander attended the annual gathering of the Redstone Baptist Association. After several meetings, the Campbells decided to unite the Brush Run Church with the Redstone Baptist Association. From the start, the Campbells made it clear that they were not typical Baptists. Although they believed many of the

same ideas, they would not blindly accept the Baptist doctrine. They stated that their beliefs would be based on “whatever they learned from the Holy Scriptures regardless of any human creed.”¹⁸

Although the Campbells would spend the next seventeen years among the Baptists, it was always an uneasy union. Alexander and his father struggled with their association with the group; however, they did not leave because they had better name recognition with the association than they would have as an independent congregation.

In 1823, the Campbells believed that there were too many differences between themselves and the Redstone Baptists to remain united. After much consideration, they left the group and joined the Mahoning Association, which was led by Evangelist Walter Scott. The Mahoning Baptists were more receptive to the Campbells’ ideas on local autonomy and the belief that the Bible was the only tool necessary to obtain salvation. However, the union was short lived. The Campbells had determined that they should not belong to any association. They should simply see themselves as Christians and not adhere to any denominational hierarchy or structure. Campbell and his followers, who were estimated at 10,000 members, left the Mahoning Association in 1830. Campbell decided to refer to their group as “Disciples,” because this was the term used in the New Testament for the first followers of Christ.

When the Campbells left the Mahoning Baptists, they were familiar with the Stone movement that was taking place in Kentucky. In 1830, the majority of the Campbell congregations were located in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky. The two groups had some common traits. Each group had an estimated 10,000 members. Both

¹⁸ Eva Jean Wrather, *Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 2005), 181.

groups had their largest numbers in Kentucky and Ohio. It was in these areas that many members of the two groups met and interacted. As both groups had the common objective to unite all Christians as one church with no denominational labels, the similarities drew the two groups together.

The joining of the two groups was simplified by the fact that neither the Disciples (Campbell) nor the Christians (Stone) had any hierarchal structure that would have to approve the merger. The union was merely a matter of an informal agreement among the various congregations. John T. Johnson, a Disciple preacher in Kentucky whose congregation was located a few miles from Barton Stone's church, made the first move. During a series of meetings at Johnson's congregation in November 1831, Stone and Johnson met along with other members of both groups. From this meeting sprang the idea of uniting the two neighboring churches. Once united, the church spread the concept of unity to other congregations. Word spread quickly, with churches in close proximity merging under the banner of Disciples.¹⁹ Stone and Campbell both spoke in favor of unity in their journals. A mass meeting occurred in Lexington on January 1, 1832 to formally join the two groups together. Union came—but not without growing pains.

Although both groups strove for unity, congregational autonomy meant there was no guiding list of beliefs. Issues such as ordination of ministers, works of the Holy Spirit, and open membership caused some of the churches that initially unified to split once

¹⁹When reading about the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, there is often a great deal of confusion about how the churches referred to themselves. The initial group founded by Barton W. Stone referred to themselves as "Christians." The group that was founded by Alexander and Thomas Campbell referred to themselves as "Disciples." When the two groups merged, there was some disagreement over which name to use. Most of the members accepted the term "Disciples," although a small minority continued to refer to themselves simply as "Christians." These differing terms can cause confusion when researching the movement. For the sake of clarity, I will use the term "Disciples" in this work.

again. Even though there were numerous issues, the movement grew quickly. By 1840, there were an estimated 125,000 members of the Disciples.²⁰

Both independent movements had much in common; however, there was one issue that would eventually cause the movement to split. The issue was the method of scriptural interpretation. Although it was not a matter of one of the original groups coming to the union with one method of interpretation and the other professing another, two separate schools of thought began to prevail throughout the slowly coalescing movement.

The first method of hermeneutics was centered on the statements of Thomas Campbell in his “Declaration and Address.” Campbell discussed the fact that Christians should “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.” Many members of the movement believed that the words of the New Testament were to be taken literally and that if an act of worship, practice, or belief was not specifically ordained, it was forbidden. Today, you will hear many members of Stone-Campbell churches state that their view of scriptural adherence is “When it doubt, leave it out.”

The second group approached their study of Scripture in a different light. Many of the Disciples believed that if a practice was not specifically forbidden in the pages of the New Testament, it was permissible. This method of interpretation would be used to justify missionary societies, instrumental music, denominational headquarters, and other practices that many within the movement would later label as “liberal.”

The adoption of the missionary society would become the first real test of these differing theories. Although it was not the first time that issues were heavily debated among the Disciples, the missionary society controversy would be the first test to affect

²⁰ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 159.

the entire brotherhood. The establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society would highlight many of the problems within the movement and would make obvious the fact that even though they were designed as a unity movement, the two groups were far from unified. The controversy exposed many of the underlying problems with the movement. Issues such as sectional and economic differences and views on the nature of the Scripture would contribute heavily to its split. These factors, combined with the missionary society problem as well as the instrumental music controversy, would lead to the formal split of the movement in 1906.

Chapter 3 – The Movement Organizes

As the Stone-Campbell Movement continued to grow, Alexander Campbell clearly arose as its spokesperson. Through his monthly journal entitled *Christian Baptist*, Campbell kept the Disciples informed about issues affecting the movement and theological ideas to consider.

Campbell was one of the first and most vocal opponents of any form of organization not limited to the local congregation. He considered organizations, such as missionary societies, Bible societies, associations, synods, and conferences, to be unscriptural. The basis of Campbell's opposition was that there was no example of such organizations within the pages of the New Testament. Campbell stated, "Our objections to the missionary plan originated from the conviction that it is unauthorized in the New Testament."²¹ This type of reasoning resonated with many individuals within the Stone-Campbell Movement. The belief was that if something was not specifically mentioned within the New Testament churches, then it was not allowed for future generations. Another often cited reason was that it lessened the importance of the local congregation, "robbing the church of its glory."²²

Campbell summarized both of these issues in an article entitled "The Christian Religion" in his first issue of *Christian Baptist*. Campbell stated:

The first churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible Societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manger of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president of some female education society; his eldest son, the recording secretary of some domestic Bible society; his elder daughter, the vice president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday School. They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their

²¹ Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. Robert Cautious," *Christian Baptist* 1 (March 1824): 157.

²² Campbell, "To Mr. Robert Cautious," ` 159.

church capacity alone they moved. They neither transformed themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into diverse societies. They view the church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of Heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men. They dare not transfer to a missionary society, or Bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in doing they should rob the church of its glory, and exalt the inventions of men about the wisdom of God. In their church capacity alone they moved.²³

Many Disciples stated that Campbell was anti-missionary, although he repeatedly denied this charge. Campbell argued that he was opposed to “missionary schemes” but supported any plan based on New Testament teaching that would save the lost.²⁴

Campbell argued, “I was never opposed, in principle or practice, to any scriptural means of converting the heathen.”²⁵ He continued his response by stating that he did not want “to discriminate between his opposing the abuses of a good cause and the cause itself.”²⁶

In order to prove that he was anti-society but not against the concept of missionaries, Campbell offered a set of proposals for conducting foreign missionary work. He argued that the “missionaries” of the Bible were powerful enough to work miracles. He gave the examples of Moses, Joshua, and the Apostles. Campbell contended that when a single missionary was sent to a foreign culture, he could not succeed due to his inability to produce miracles.²⁷ He suggested that because Christianity was designed to be a social religion, missionaries should transplant entire churches to

²³ Alexander Campbell, “The Christian Religion,” *Christian Baptist* 1 (August 1823): 14-15.

²⁴ *Christian Baptist* 1 (May 1824): 195.

²⁵ Alexander Campbell, “Signs of the Times,” *Christian Baptist*, 5 (January 1828): 150.

²⁶ *Christian Baptist* 1 (June 1824): 220.

²⁷ Alexander Campbell “Remarks on Missionaries,” *Christian Baptist* 1 (September 1823): 41.

foreign lands, rather than attempting to be a one-man missionary effort. He added that the churches should be prepared to stay there, adapt the customs, and become a presence in the country.

In the first volume of *Christian Baptist*, Campbell targeted missionary societies. Within the twelve issues of Volume One, he penned seven articles that were critical of the society concept. When the next volume, which was published in 1828, contained fewer articles that were critical of the societies, Campbell was asked if he had weakened his stance on the issue. He replied that he “thought a great deal upon the subject” and held no “sanguine expectations from all these devices.”²⁸

Many of his readers took Campbell’s articles to heart. A reader from Kentucky wrote to Campbell that his articles had “well nigh stopped missionary operations in Kentucky.”²⁹ Similar reports came in from North Carolina and Ohio, as individuals stated that Campbell’s influence had caused their congregations to rethink how they conducted missionary operations.³⁰ However, not everyone agreed with Campbell. Robert Semple wrote in from Virginia that, whereas *Christian Baptist* did contain a great deal of useful material, for the most part, it was “more mischievous than any publication I have ever known.”³¹

Although Campbell and Stone were against the society concept, many of the Disciples continued to push for stronger cooperation between congregations. Many

²⁸ *Christian Baptist* 5 (January 1828): 150.

²⁹ *Christian Baptist* 2 (April 1825): 182.

³⁰ *Christian Baptist* 4 (June 1826): 148.

³¹ *Christian Baptist* 5 (April 1828): 207.

individuals within the new group missed many of the cooperative elements of the Baptist associations of which they had been a part. As a result, they began to ask about the possibility of cooperative efforts and whether Scripture allowed them.

Because Campbell was no longer a Baptist, he changed the name of his magazine to the *Millennial Harbinger*. In May of 1831, Campbell started writing a series of articles regarding church cooperation. He argued that just as a church could do what a single Christian could not do alone, “so can a district of churches do what a single congregation cannot.”³³ Campbell stated that this was evident in the fact that New Testament churches were arranged in districts, such as “the churches of Galatia.” He believed that these districts were arranged in order to allow for “their co-operation for certain specified purposes.” Campbell also contended “we have good authority when occasion requires, to go and do likewise.”³⁴

Campbell was determined to lead the churches into a system of congregational cooperation. However, he needed to develop a scriptural approach that would not violate the sanctity of local congregational autonomy. Campbell laid out his ideas in 1831 in his article entitled “The Co-Operation of the Churches.” He pushed for cooperation first at the county level before proceeding to other congregations within the state and larger districts, respectively, “until the whole Earth was covered.”³⁵ Campbell argued that this type of cooperation would increase the evangelistic efforts threefold in a county and that the churches could “scripturally, rationally, and honorably co-operate in such an effort.”³⁶

³³ Alexander Campbell, “The Co-operation of Churches – No. I,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (May 1831): 236.

³⁴ Campbell, “The Co-operation of Churches – No. I,”: 237.

³⁵ Alexander Campbell, “Co-operation,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (March 1835): 121.

³⁶ *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (October 1831): 437-438.

In order to begin implementation of his plan, Campbell called for a meeting of the churches located in the Western Reserve. In October of 1831, twenty-six congregations gathered in New Lisbon, Ohio, for a day of worship and to give a report on the progress of evangelism in their respective areas. At the conference, they decided to meet yearly “to devise ways and means” for spreading the gospel through inter-congregation communication.”³⁷ Many of the churches within the Western Reserve followed the suggestion of Campbell and met annually in addition to conducting regional meetings. In 1843 in Youngstown, Ohio, Campbell reported that an estimated 10,000 individuals were in attendance.³⁸ In 1845, 15,000 attended a regional conference in Trumbell County, Ohio.³⁹

Although the number of cooperation meetings was increasing, the Disciples made it clear that they were still opposed to missionary societies. As Campbell argued for cooperation among the congregations, he continued to publish articles in the *Millennial Harbinger* attacking missionary societies. He continued his series on the cooperation of the churches while simultaneously writing articles criticizing the society concept. During the 1830s, while Campbell was leading the charge in the organization of cooperation meetings, he continued to speak out against the missionary society. He saw the two concepts as quite different, arguing that there was New Testament precedent for congregational cooperation but none for missionary societies that he deemed as “rival churches.”

³⁷ Alexander Campbell, “General Meeting in New Lisbon,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (October 1831): 446.

³⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Annual Meetings in Ohio,” *Millennial Harbinger* 7 (September 1843): 427.

³⁹ *Millennial Harbinger* 3 (October 1846): 600.

Not everyone was in favor of cooperation. Some conservative Disciples saw no difference between cooperation meetings and the missionary society and opposed them both. A reader of the *Millennial Harbinger* wrote a letter to the editor stating that “there never was, and there never can be, any occasion for such a combination of the churches to build up the Redeemer’s kingdom.”⁴⁰

Those against the efforts gave three reasons for why they were wary of cooperation meetings. First, they believed that these types of meetings threatened the independence of the churches. In the past, the meetings had “given birth to the tyranny and intolerance which issued in the Roman hierarchy.”⁴¹ Second, they contended that the cooperation meetings violated the basic principles that the Stone-Campbell Movement was trying to achieve. The meetings were not part of the original plan for the church when the movement began. Finally, they believed that there was “neither precept nor precedent in the New Testament” for this type of meeting.⁴²

Several influential preachers questioned whether the cooperation meetings were one step closer to the missionary society concept. Dr. John Thomas, a part-time preacher who also served as a physician, warned of what he called “dangerous trends in cooperative work.”⁴³ Thomas argued that these cooperation meetings consisted of delegates from several churches with officers presiding that could transact business on behalf of the committee. Thomas believed that this was not cooperation between

⁴⁰ A.B.G. and F.W.E., “Co-operation of Churches – No. V,” *Millennial Harbinger* 3 (May 1832): 201.

⁴¹ Alexander Campbell, “Notes,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VI (April 1835): 163.

⁴² Campbell, “Notes,” 165.

⁴³ John Thomas, “A College School of Preachers – Cooperation Meeting,” *Apostolic Advocate* 3 (June 1836): 46.

churches, although it was becoming too close to a separate entity. Thomas warned that apostasy during the early church “grew up imperceptibly like a blade of grass” and that the church should be vigilant.⁴⁴

Arthur Crihfield, another outspoken Disciples minister, voiced his concerns about the dangers of cooperation. Crihfield, who was editor of the journal, *Heretic Detector*, warned that cooperation meetings could lead to additional organized efforts that he believed were unscriptural. He argued that Baptist associations and Presbyterian synods got their start this way. Crihfield attended a cooperation meeting in Indianapolis in 1839 and was not pleased with the results. He warned that if the state cooperation meetings began to spread further, then “this whole thing might start to grow horns that will destroy the unity of the church.”⁴⁵

In response to those who were opposed to the current cooperation ideas, an alternative plan was proposed that many people believed was more aligned with the teaching of the New Testament. The plan to cooperate through a local church was presented in 1836 by Thomas M. Henly, a Disciples minister from Virginia. Henley, a former Baptist preacher, argued that the current system of cooperation with officers and districts might become “as much of a scourge and a curse” as the Baptist associations had been.⁴⁶ He then proposed an alternative plan:

I am for co-operation too; but co-operation, if I understand the term, implies weakness. When any one church wishes to send out an Evangelist, and is unable to sustain him in the field, she may invite her sister churches to co-operate with her. If the invitation is accepted, when the members visit those inviting them on a

⁴⁴ Thomas, “A College School of Preachers,” 148.

⁴⁵ Arthur Crihfield, “Incidents of a Tour to Indianapolis,” *Heretic Detector* 3 (October 1839): 269-270.

⁴⁶ Thomas M. Henly, “Thomas Henly, Letter to Alexander Campbell,” *Millennial Harbinger* 4 (January 1833): 13.

set day, they out to act as in the house of another family. The Elders of this congregation preside and state the object for which they were invited and their inability to perform the work themselves, and ask their assistance and the sum of money wanting. This being agreed on, then all concerned can unite in selecting their Evangelist, either leaving the arrangement to the Evangelist or pointing out the most suitable ground to be occupied by him – for one year or the time agreed on. The congregation proposing to co-operate, appoints one of her members or elders to receive all monies and pay over quarterly to their Evangelist what they may judge necessary to sustain him in the field. This brother's account to be presented to the churches cooperating annually.⁴⁷

One of the reasons this plan came about was because the attempt at cooperation meetings in Virginia did not go as smoothly as it did in the Western Reserve areas. Although several attempts were made, significant opposition forced meetings to be cancelled. Many individuals stated that cooperation could take place at the local level on smaller issues, but ministers, such as R.L. Coleman from Virginia, argued there would be “no cooperation society separate and distinct from the churches” on larger issues. Whereas the majority of individuals within the Stone-Campbell Movement were in favor of cooperation efforts, the movement that prided its on unity was clearly not unified.⁴⁸

Throughout the 1830s, acceptance of cooperation meetings progressed. Campbell and other preachers continued to write articles and travel around preaching about the need for cooperation. Slowly, the mood of the churches changed. In the 1840s, acceptance of inter-congregational cooperation spread. Announcements of such meetings could be seen frequently in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Meetings were organized at three different levels: county, district, and state. The largest increases were seen in Kentucky in the areas where the early Stone churches were established.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Virginia

⁴⁷ Thomas M. Henley, “Cooperation of Churches,” *Millennial Harbinger* 7 (July 1836): 333.

⁴⁸ R.L. Coleman, “Notice,” *Christian Publisher* 2 (April 1838): 138.

⁴⁹ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 259.

still continued to resist cooperative efforts. Although many people believed that the Disciples' attempts at organization were going well, the cooperation meetings of the 1830s did not produce the results for which Alexander Campbell and many others had hoped. In 1841, Campbell began another series in the *Millennial Harbinger* entitled "The Nature of the Christian Organization." Comprised of sixteen articles, the series lasted for two years.

The series reflected Campbell's changing mood and position on the subjects of church organization and cooperation. He argued that the experiences of cooperation in the 1830s made him believe that a formal, hierarchal organization was needed in order for cooperation to take place. Campbell stated that five actions were necessary that could not be accomplished without cooperation: distribution of Bibles, missionary work, improvement of ministry, getting rid of fraudulent evangelists, and large endeavors that one congregation could not handle alone.⁵⁰ He concluded his article by saying, "We can have no thorough co-operation without a more ample, extensive and thorough church organization."⁵¹

In his first article in the series entitled "The Nature of Christian Organization," Campbell reported that he was convinced, both by the teachings of Scripture and his own observations while trying to cooperate, that the organization of churches was "greatly defective, and essentially inadequate to their needs."⁵² He believed that "a more intimate

⁵⁰ Alexander Campbell, "Five Arguments for Church Organization," *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (November 1842): 523.

⁵¹ Campbell, "Five Arguments for Church Organization," 525.

⁵² Alexander Campbell, "The Nature of the Christian Organization - No. XII," *Millennial Harbinger* 7 (March 1843): 134.

organization, union, and cooperation” of the churches was necessary for them to grow.⁵³ He asked the Disciples to study the question more thoroughly and to reflect on his articles.

In his next article, Campbell contended that there were two classes of ministers in the New Testament church: the ordinary and the extraordinary. The apostles and prophets were in this extraordinary class. Campbell stated, “Their place in the institution of the Christian church needs no succession.” Other ministers included elders, deacons, and local congregational ministers. The church would always need these officers. The elders supervised the work of the local congregation. However, Campbell believed that the elders had supervisory power over the district. Having argued for years that the cooperation was a necessity, Campbell now contended that when the elders of a district came together, they were supervising “all matters of common interest”⁵⁴ in their district. He called this “a general superintendency of districts and cities.”⁵⁵ This was Campbell’s first step toward convincing the disciples of the need for a “more intimate organization.”⁵⁶

He saw formal organization as a way to combat what he viewed as one of the biggest problems in the church: fraudulent evangelists. Campbell argued that organization would help to remedy this issue. He did not believe that the minister was an officer at a local church. He stated that there was a “community beyond the particular

⁵³ Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization – No. XII,” 135.

⁵⁴ Alexander Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - No. IV,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (April 1842): 183.

⁵⁵ Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization – No. IV,” 185.

⁵⁶ Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization – No. IV,” 187.

congregation” that was responsible for selecting the evangelist.⁵⁷ Given that many of these evangelists travelled among different churches, Campbell argued that the minister should be subject “to reproof, admonition, and general supervision” from the churches with which he is affiliated.⁵⁸ He believed that if the New Testament had allowed evangelists to “operate when, where, and as they pleased,” then order was impossible.⁵⁹ The only solution was to form an organization that could oversee the appointment and management of evangelists.

Campbell unveiled his plan in the February 1843 issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* through another series of articles. He used a fictional premise to set up his plan. Campbell described a group of churches located on the isle of Guernsey. He used these churches to represent “the whole church on Earth.”⁶⁰ The story was that the island of Guernsey was visited by two missionaries who established six churches in five years. These six churches were “the whole church of the island of Guernsey,” although they failed to work together as one church.⁶¹ Their failure to unite caused problems because no organization or plan for cooperation existed among them. Because of their lack of unity, problems began to arise. The churches began to see false evangelists come to the area, the failure of missionary works, and the inability to distribute Bibles to those who had never heard the preaching of Jesus.

⁵⁷ Alexander Campbell, “Church Order,” *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (February 1844): 68-70.

⁵⁸ Alexander Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization,” *Millennial Harbinger* 5 (November 1841): 535.

⁵⁹ Alexander Campbell, “Introductory Notes,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (February 1842): 63.

⁶⁰ Alexander Campbell, “Organization,” *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (January 1844): 44.

⁶¹ Campbell, “Organization,” 46.

One of the elders of the church proposed a plan for cooperation by arguing that all of the churches in the world “constituted but one church of Christ.”⁶² This made the organization scriptural, given that everyone belonged to the same overall body. Although there might be separate congregations, they could still work together because they were “all part of the same body.”⁶³

The Guernsey churches decided to organize in order to further the gospel. The plan called for the six churches to work together on certain issues, such as mission work, Bible distribution, and the evaluation of ministers. Whereas the congregations would still make decisions for themselves on local issues, they would pool their resources on issues impacting all of the churches. In providing the details in this fictional story, Campbell believed that this plan would bring the churches to “a complete and perfect organization.” In addition, he invited anyone to inform him of “any substantial objections.”⁶⁴

One of Campbell’s closest friends was the first to speak out against this plan. Walter Scott, who was the former evangelist for the Mahoning Baptist Association, was one of the most influential voices in the Disciples movement. Scott stated that Campbell was organizing the separate churches on the island “to form one ‘whole church’ – the church of Guernsey.”⁶⁵ Scott did not agree with this premise. Instead, he argued that each church was separate and was to be looked over individually by elders and deacons. Scott was distressed that, after working for two decades to restore New Testament

⁶² Campbell, “Organization,” 51.

⁶³ Campbell, “Organization,” 53.

⁶⁴ *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (February 1843): 85-86.

⁶⁵ Walter Scott, “Organization,” *The Evangelist* 2 (December 1843): 52.

Christianity, its fortunes were now being associated “with the wisdom of human organization.” He replied to Campbell by asking, “Who made Brother Campbell an organizer over us?”⁶⁶

Many Disciples agreed with Campbell and set up cooperation meetings to begin to discuss implementing his plan. One of the largest efforts was in Virginia. The churches created an organization called “the General Co-operation of Disciples in Virginia.” The purpose of the organization was to support evangelists. Any Disciple could become a member by paying a \$5 annual fee. Any cooperating church could send one delegate to the annual convention. The organization was under the oversight of an eleven-member board that was elected annually. Their purpose was to hire evangelists, supervise their work, and disperse funds.⁶⁷ Although other areas implemented plans, none were as large and as successful as the Virginia plan. Eventually, all areas of the Disciples movement had a cooperation plan. Further, most modeled themselves after the one in Virginia.

One of the biggest developments in the realm of cooperation occurred when Campbell started discussing the acceptance of organized societies. The concept of a society was one step further than that of a cooperative effort. A cooperative effort involved the sharing of resources and ideas between congregations. The society concept was the creation of a separate entity. Whereas Disciples were the individuals who made up the society, no sponsoring congregations would be involved.

⁶⁶ Walter Scott, “Organization,” 42.

⁶⁷ Alexander Campbell, “General Meeting,” *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (November 1844): 527.

When asked about the missionary society and other societies, such as temperance in which Christians could participate, Campbell insisted that the church was a missionary society and a temperance society. However, he believed that Christians “in their individual capacity were free to work in any benevolent association” that did not impair their duties to the church.⁶⁸ In 1845, an anonymous article appeared in the *Millennial Harbinger* that praised a Baptist missionary society. By allowing this article, it was obvious that Campbell was changing his stance. The article praised foreign missions as a clear example of Christian benevolence and a “holy crusade” against pagan societies.

The author then asked the Disciples to support the Baptist society:

We think no real friend to the extension of the reign of Christ and the universal diffusion of the blessings of Christianity can hesitate to throw in his mite into the treasury of the Baptist Missionary Society, and thus speed the cause so nobly and successfully begun. When the work is good, and well and scripturally done, we will not stop to dispute about instrumentalities, unless indeed we forget the glory of God, and aim only to build up and perpetuate the land-marks of sectarianism. A good enterprise requires great power, and when there is no real difference in agencies to be employed in its accomplishment – there really can be no propriety either upon principle or policy, for division.⁶⁹

The author encouraged all Disciples to “form an auxiliary society” and raise money to support missions and the distribution of Bibles.⁷⁰

The Disciples’ first step toward a brotherhood-wide organization occurred on January 27, 1845, when the American Christian Bible Society (ACBS) was founded. David S. Burnet, along with four Cincinnati churches, founded the first national organization among the Disciples. Burnet was the minister at Christian Chapel in

⁶⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Temperance Societies,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (February 1842): 94.

⁶⁹ Anonymous, “Foreign Missions,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (April 1845): 187.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, “Foreign Missions,” 189.

Cincinnati. He agreed with Campbell that a brotherhood-wide organization was needed and felt that a Bible society could be a good start. Burnet later stated, “I consider the inauguration of our Society system, which I vowed to urge upon the brethren, if God raised me from my protracted illness of 1845, as one of the most important acts of my career.”⁷¹

The January 1845 *Christian Family Magazine*, a new magazine edited by Burnet, contained the announcement of the ACBS. The announcement provided a copy of the constitution of the society. The constitution stated that the purpose of the Bible Society was “to aid in the distribution of the Sacred Scriptures, without note or comment, among all nations.”⁷² Membership was tiered based on the desired position and monetary contribution. A board comprised of thirty-seven members managed the society. The top board members were required to be residents of Cincinnati. Seven members of the board met monthly for a short business meeting. An annual meeting of the entire ACBS was held in Cincinnati in order to review the year’s work and to elect officers for the following year.⁷³ Burnet was elected as the first president. Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, John T. Johnson, and Tolbert Fanning were all elected as officers in order to attempt to enlist the support of key members of the Stone-Campbell Movement. This was clearly done to make this a national organization.

Burnet continued to push the brotherhood to support the organization. In order to answer critics, he argued that, whereas a society was not specifically mentioned in the

⁷¹ Noel L. Keith, *The Story of D.S. Burnet: Undeserved Obscurity* (St Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954), 191.

⁷² D.S. Burnet, “Constitution,” *Christian Family Magazine* 1 (January 1845): 23.

⁷³ Burnet, “Constitution,” 24.

Bible, God commanded that the word of God be spread. It was then up to man to devise how to do so. Burnet stated that God “indicated that a thing should be done, but has not specified how.”⁷⁴

The response of the Disciples was mixed. In 1845, Burnet said that many authors had written editorials praising the society. Among those listed were the *Christian Review*, *Bible Advocate*, *Christian Record*, and *Reformer*. In two journals, the *Christian Intelligencer* and *Christian Journal*, authors questioned the organization over the issue of adherence to the scriptures.⁷⁵

Whereas he was elected as an officer and had pushed for organization, Campbell spoke out against the ACBS. In response, he republished two articles that appeared in the *Christian Journal* written by Aylett Raines and Samuel Ayers. In their articles, Raines and Ayers argued that there were already Bible societies in existence that were doing a good job. They believed that the Disciples had nothing to add. Raines stated, “We cannot make better Bibles than are made by our Baptist brethren.”⁷⁶ Campbell added his comments to the articles, agreeing with the two ministers as well as discussing his own reasons. He concluded that a cooperative organization that labeled itself as the American Christian Bible Society should have the support of all American Christians. Campbell wrote, “I doubt the propriety of any institution being got up under the patronage of any

⁷⁴ Burnet, “Constitution,” 25.

⁷⁵ James B. North, *Union in Truth: An Interpretive History of the Restoration Movement*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1994), 237.

⁷⁶ Aylett Raines, “American Christian Bible Society,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (August 1845): 366.

society, and with its name upon it, without a general understanding some way obtained of the concurrence and support of the whole brotherhood in the scheme.”⁷⁷

In response to these charges, Burnet wrote an article in his journal. Campbell was the founder and president of Bethany College in Bethany, Virginia. Burnet asked, “Was there a convention of churches to establish Bethany College, the claims of which must now be heard, and until they are heard the Society must die in despair?”⁷⁸ Burnet also accused Campbell of having financial motivations that prevented his acceptance of the ACBS. He argued that Campbell was against the ACBS in part because it would divert money from his college. Burnet told Campbell that the ACBS would not hurt Bethany because “liberality is progressive and contagious.”⁷⁹ Campbell continued to deny his support of the organization.

In 1849, Campbell began another series of articles designed to influence the minds of the Disciples. The articles, which were published in the *Millennial Harbinger*, were entitled “Church Organization.” These six articles were an intensified step toward bringing about a general organization among the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Campbell used many of the same arguments from his past articles on cooperation. The primary difference this time was that he stressed the concept of expediency. Campbell argued that the church was left “unshackled by any apostolic authority” and that any issues pertaining to societies or other organizations were matters of expediency.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Alexander Campbell, “Remarks,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (August 1845): 372.

⁷⁸ D.S. Burnet, “Recent Notes,” *Christian Family Magazine* 1 (September 1845): 194.

⁷⁹ Burnet, “Recent Notes,” 197.

⁸⁰ Alexander Campbell, “Church Organization – No. 1,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (February 1849): 90.

The discussions of the 1840s were successful in convincing a great number of the Disciples that a general organization was within the bounds of Scripture and necessary for the growth of the movement. Campbell stated, “There is now heard from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, one general if not universal call for a more efficient organization of our churches.”⁸¹ He and several other editors and ministers pushed for a convention to discuss the matter.

Jesse Ferguson, an influential Disciples preacher in Nashville, was one of the first individuals to call for a convention. After attending the ACBS convention in October 1848, Ferguson wrote that he had never been “so fully impressed with the great deficiency in the organization of our Brotherhood.”⁸² Alexander Hall wrote in the *Gospel Proclamation* in March 1849 that a convention should be held soon and that Campbell should set the date and the location.⁸³

It was decided by a majority decision of the Disciple editors to have the conference in Cincinnati in October of 1849. Cincinnati was chosen, given that it was the home of the ACBS. Further, the meeting could occur at the same time as the ACBS convention. Campbell was not in support of the October date and suggested a meeting in May because the month was “a popular season of American church anniversaries.”⁸⁴ Many people believe that the reason that he did not want the October date was that the

⁸¹ Campbell, “Church Organization – No. 1,” 90.

⁸² Jesse Ferguson, “Organization,” *Christian Magazine* 1 (November 1848): 349.

⁸³ Alexander Hall, “The Need for a Convention,” *Gospel Proclamation* 1 (March 1849): 21.

⁸⁴ Alexander Campbell, “Convention,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (August 1849): 476.

meeting would coincide with the ACBS meeting. Campbell still opposed the idea of the ACBS and did not want to bring attention to its meeting.⁸⁵

Tolbert Fanning, who was one of the most influential ministers in Tennessee, also supported the idea of a convention. In August 1849, he stated, “We believe in the necessity and propriety of such a meeting.”⁸⁶ A state meeting was held in Tennessee just ten days prior to the start of the Cincinnati meeting. Because none of the Tennessee delegates were able to attend the general convention, Fanning drafted a letter expressing the endorsement of the disciples of Tennessee.

The meeting to organize “The General Convention of the Christian Churches of the United States of America” convened on Tuesday, October 23, 1849. It took place at the Christian Chapel, which was one of the largest Disciples churches in the nation. Campbell was elected by unanimous vote as the president of the convention, even though he was not present. Burnet presided over the convention in his place. John O’Kane, John T. Johnson, and Walter Scott were elected as vice presidents.

There has been some speculation as to why Campbell did not attend the convention. Most people believe that it was due to illness. The official minutes of the convention stated, “A. Campbell of VA was absent, owing to indisposition.”⁸⁷ When Campbell reported the results of the convention, he stated that he was unable to attend

⁸⁵ Wrather, *Alexander Campbell*, 301.

⁸⁶ Tolbert Fanning, “Meeting for a General Consultation,” *Christian Magazine* 2 (August 1849): 311.

⁸⁷ *Report of the Proceedings of the General Convention of the Christian Churches of the United States of America Together with the Annual Report of the American Christian Bible Society and the Annual Report of the Cincinnati Tract Society with Appendices* (Cincinnati: Christian Depository, 1849): 17.

due to “an unusually severe indisposition.”⁸⁸ However, once the convention ended, Burnet wrote a letter to Campbell on behalf of the convention expressing grief that Campbell was unable to attend. The letter stated, “When Brother Pendleton appeared in the Convention, and informed us that your absence occurred in consequence of illness, from which you had recovered *before his departure*,⁸⁹ we felt gratified for your recovery, though compelled to sympathize with you in an affliction which was a disaster to us, as it deprived the Convention of your society and counsel.”⁹⁰ However, some people believed that his absence was due to other issues. One theory is that he was still opposed to the date and the inclusion of the ACBS.⁹¹ Earl West, a prominent Stone-Campbell historian, stated that there was at the convention “a mild rumble of opposition to Campbell.” In response, Campbell missed the convention so that the meeting could “be the work of the brethren and not of himself.”⁹²

The convention opened with a discussion that centered on the question of who could become a delegate. Many people believed that anyone who attended the convention could claim to be a delegate, whereas others believed it should be limited to those who were specifically sent by a congregation to the convention. Campbell wrote prior to the convention that the conference should not be a group of “a few self-appointed messengers.” Instead, he suggested that it should be made up of those who had been

⁸⁸ Alexander Campbell, “The Convention of Christian Churches,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (December 1849): 694.

⁸⁹ Emphasis is mine.

⁹⁰ D.S. Burnet, “Letter from Brother Burnet,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (December 1849): 707.

⁹¹ Jacob Creath, “Expediency,” *Message of Good Will* 18 (August 1864): 119-120.

⁹² Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1949), 172.

“selected and constituted by a church.”⁹³ William Morton of Kentucky disagreed with this perspective. He urged, “All the brethren who attend, desirous of being considered as delegates, should be admitted.”⁹⁴ This viewpoint would ultimately prevail. This set the precedent for all future meetings of the Disciples.

When the roll was finally taken, there were 156 delegates from ten states present. The majority came from Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. The remaining southern states only sent seven delegates to the convention.⁹⁵ Throughout the morning sessions, many resolutions were discussed, but none were voted upon. Three themes began to emerge during these discussions: the ACBS, the creation of a missionary society, and the process of ordination for ministers.

Johnson, the minister from Kentucky who helped to unite the first Stone and Campbell churches, introduced a resolution that determined the course of the remainder of the convention. He submitted two resolutions:

Resolved that a missionary society, as a means to concentrate and dispense the wealth and benevolence of the brethren of this reformation in an effort to convert the world, is both scriptural and expedient.

Resolved that a committee of seven be appointed to prepare a constitution for said society.⁹⁶

Although the purpose of the meeting was never specified as the creation of a missionary society, most of the delegates came to Cincinnati with the desire to do so. The

⁹³ Alexander Campbell, “Convention Notes,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VI (August, 1849): 475-76.

⁹⁴ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 7-8.

⁹⁵ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 10.

⁹⁶ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 12.

resolutions were voted upon and adopted. Burnet appointed a committee of seven delegates to draft a constitution for the missionary society.

The following morning, the seven delegates presented the constitution to the convention. There was little debate over the articles within the document. The item that drew the most contention was the location of future conferences. Many delegates opposed the idea of meeting in the same city for two years in a row. After some debate, it was decided that, in the spirit of compromise, the next meeting would be held in Cincinnati “or at such time and place as shall have been designated by a previous annual meeting.”⁹⁷ Whereas this compromise was put into place, the society did not hold its annual convention in any city other than Cincinnati until 1869.

Under the articles of the constitution, the American Christian Missionary Society was not an association of churches, but instead an association of interested individuals whose purpose was to spread the gospel of Christianity. The finances of the organization came from contributions from congregations and the sales of memberships. The society was governed by an executive board, which was made up of officers and life directors, with seven members constituting a quorum. The board was given the authority to “establish such agencies as the interests of the Society may require, appoint agents and missionaries, fix their compensation, direct and instruct them concerning their particular fields and labors, make all appropriations to be paid out of the Treasury, and present to the Society at each annual meeting, a full report of their proceedings during the past year.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 25.

⁹⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 3.

After the constitution was adopted, the delegates were each given an opportunity to become life members of the society. Fifty-two members of the delegation purchased a lifetime membership for \$20. Three of the delegates paid a sum of \$100 to become a life director. Several members of the convention pooled their funds and made Campbell and Burnet life directors as well. After all of the members paid their annual fee, a total of \$2,140 was raised to begin the society. Campbell was then named the president of the American Christian Missionary Society, and Burnet was named as the first vice president.⁹⁹

The next item of business was to discuss the ordination of evangelists. A special committee was appointed to study this issue. This was one of the primary reasons that Campbell had argued in the past that a general organization was needed. The special committee reported the following:

Whereas it appears that the cause of Christianity has suffered from the imposition of false brethren up on the churches, Therefore,

Resolved that we respectfully recommend to the churches the propriety and practical importance of calling in the aid of the presbyteries of their neighboring sister churches, in ordaining such persons as they may desire to send out as evangelists.¹⁰⁰

The problem with this resolution was that it seemed to limit the freedom of individual congregations to conduct their own local business, an idea that was an antithesis to many of the principles upon which the Stone-Campbell Movement was founded. The floor of the meeting was filled with boisterous discussion. J.G. Thompkins, a minister from Kentucky, stated that every congregation had the right to send out ministers. He added,

⁹⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 26-28.

¹⁰⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 32.

“If he were appointed an evangelist by any church, he would go out in defiance of all the churches in the world.”¹⁰¹ Carrol Kendrick, a delegate from Indiana, believed that each church had the right to select its own minister. Consequently, he argued, “the resolution was unscriptural.”¹⁰² Although the resolution was only introduced as a “recommendation,” it was controversial enough to guarantee its defeat. The delegates voted on an alternate resolution: “That we recommend to the churches in the importance of great care and rigid examination, before they ordain men to the office of evangelist.”¹⁰³ The conference ended that afternoon after a series of closing remarks and discussion of the next year’s conference.

In the December issue of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell offered his thoughts on the convention. The issue contained the letter that Burnet had written to Campbell, a lengthy report of the convention’s proceedings written by W.K. Pendleton, and an editorial article written by Campbell that endorsed the work completed at the meeting. Campbell wrote, “Our expectations for the convention have more than been realized. We are much pleased with the result, and regard it as a very happy pledge of good things to come.”¹⁰⁴ He also approved of the acceptance of the ACBS. During the convention, a vote was taken on whether or not the ACBS should continue. It received a vote of overwhelming support. Given that the society had been “approved by all the churches present, and commended by them to all the brethren,” Campbell no longer had any reason

¹⁰¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 33

¹⁰² *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 34.

¹⁰³ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Campbell, “Thoughts on the Convention,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (December 1849), 707.

to oppose its existence.¹⁰⁵ Campbell also referred to the newly created missionary society as “a grand auxiliary to the churches” both at home and abroad.¹⁰⁶

One of the first tasks of the missionary society was to attempt to send a missionary out into the field. Dr. James T. Barclay of Virginia had attended the convention in Cincinnati. A few days after the conference ended, Barclay addressed a letter to the American Christian Missionary Society requesting to be allowed to become a missionary to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷ Discussion of this matter took place during the convention, but there was not a formal request until after the convention had ended. Walter Scott stated during the meeting, “There is magic in the name of Jerusalem. It is full of all holy, grand and startling recollections.”¹⁰⁸ He further urged the board to accept Barclay’s offer and “let the gospel be proclaimed once more in the streets of Jerusalem, as at the beginning, by Peter and his followers.”¹⁰⁹ The elders of Barclay’s church gave their endorsement by stating, “We regard him as unexceptionable and admirably fitted for this important office.”¹¹⁰ Campbell stated that he was in favor of sending the first Disciples missionary overseas to Jerusalem.¹¹¹

As Barclay prepared to leave, the disciples discovered there was one issue that would later become a major controversy: Barclay owned twenty slaves. As he prepared

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, “Thoughts on the Convention,” 709.

¹⁰⁶ Campbell, “Thoughts on the Convention,” 710.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 91.

¹⁰⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 93.

¹⁰⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 94.

¹¹⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1849, 92.

¹¹¹ Alexander Campbell, “Notes,” *Millennial Harbinger* 6 (December 1849), 707.

to leave, he attempted to emancipate his slaves. However, because Virginia law required that they leave the state, it was decided that they were to be sold to one of the elders of the Scottsville church.¹¹² The issue of slavery had not been discussed much within the Stone-Campbell Movement, although that would change in the near future.

Barclay and his family left for Jerusalem in October 1850 and arrived in the holy city in January 1851. At the 1851 American Christian Missionary Society Convention, a report from Barclay was read to the delegates. Barclay stated:

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of introducing into the fold of the Redeemer four of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These first fruits of the Mission, consisting of a mother and three grown children, were buried with their Savior in baptism near the Damascus gate, in one of the pools so abundant both without and within the city.¹¹³

Barclay and his family remained in Jerusalem until the summer of 1854. His missionary efforts garnered little success in the area of conversions. However, his medical skills were utilized to assist with an outbreak of malaria in the region. Barclay assisted with 2,000 cases in his first year in Jerusalem. Whereas he was not successful in adding Disciples, Barclay opened the door for many other missionaries both foreign and domestic.

¹¹² Anonymous, "American Christian Missionary Society and Slavery," *Northwestern Christian Magazine* 1 (February 1855): 254.

¹¹³ *Report of Proceedings*, 1851,42.

Chapter 4 – The Movement Fractures

Controversy came swiftly following the creation of the American Christian Missionary Society. Throughout 1850, Campbell continued to encourage discussion on the ACMS, with an editorial policy allowing both supporters and critics of the society to have a voice within the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger*. Anti-society editorials, articles, and letters appeared in other journals, with their number displaying the fact that opposition to the American Christian Missionary Society was widespread. The seriousness of this hostility was apparent when the Corresponding Secretary told the ACMS at its first annual meeting, “We have had many difficulties to encounter, some opposition to meet, some prejudices to allay, and much apathy and lukewarmness to encounter.”¹¹⁴

There were several leaders who adopted a moderate stance on the Society. While they were not in total support of the organization, they also did not openly oppose the society. James Mathes, the editor of the *Christian Record*, was one such proponent of this view. Mathes reprinted the entire “Minutes of the Proceedings” of the 1849 convention in his newsletter. He justified the thirty-three pages that the notes occupied in the journal as being necessary because those who opposed the group would want to know what had occurred at the conference and would therefore not be opposing “a man of straw.”¹¹⁵ Mathes stated that his own view was that he believed in mission work and that

¹¹⁴ *Report of Proceedings*, 1850, 36.

¹¹⁵ *Christian Record*, 7 (December 1849): 145.

his “own plan was to do all this through the church.”¹¹⁶ In regards to his thoughts about the Society, Mathes stated that the ACMS was a “voluntary individual association that each Christian was free to join or not join as he judged best.”¹¹⁷

Other editors were not as tolerant, choosing to speak out against the organization. David Oliphant, editor of the Canadian journal *Witness of Truth*, was against the missionary society. Oliphant wrote, “Any organization out of the church, or which has features, elements, and officers not included in the church, is an organization not scripturally orthodox.”¹¹⁸ Oliphant argued that when the New Testament churches cooperated to assist the Jewish poor, “It was to be done in the church, by the church, in honor of the church. Neither extra officers nor extra organization did Paul appoint to minister to the poor. All obligations were to be not out of or separate from but in and by the church.”¹¹⁹

Oliphant went on to write in greater detail regarding his opposition to the missionary society. He argued that each congregation had several duties that it was designed to fulfill. Among these were the tasks of preaching, teaching, discipline, and alms giving to the poor. Oliphant contended that the local church was to “fulfill all these obligations by its own organization, and not helps, alliance, or auxiliary organizations.”¹²⁰ He argued that if a society could be organized to do the work of the local congregation, that soon local congregations would lose all of their autonomy.

¹¹⁶ James Mathes, “The Great Convention,” *Christian Record*, 7 (December 1849): 178.

¹¹⁷ Mathes, “The Great Convention,” 182.

¹¹⁸ David Oliphant, “Organization,” *Witness of Truth*, 5 (May 1850): 115.

¹¹⁹ Oliphant, “Organization,” 116.

¹²⁰ David Oliphant, “The Christian Church and Its Organization,” *Witness of Truth*, 5 (July 1850): 185.

Oliphant believed that only “sickly, worldly, rickety” congregations required the aid of such societies.¹²¹

The first article attacking the ACMS appeared a few months after the convention, in the *Millennial Harbinger*. James Ingles, a Baptist preacher who often sided with Alexander Campbell on issues of Scripture, wrote the article. Ingles was opposed to the sale of memberships and directorships, warning that such a practice “makes the rich man’s dollar more than the poor widow’s mite, and that is not according to the Lord’s standard. Let us have one missionary society in which poverty and principle are not proscribed and where money is not reckoned as the equivalent of faith and love.”¹²²

The disagreement over paid memberships was one of the leading reasons that many Disciples began speaking out against the Society. When Campbell published the Ingles article, he warned the Disciples of a “spiritual aristocracy of wealth” and asserted that a “widows mite might be more liberal and evangelical than a nobleman’s hundred talents of gold.”¹²³ Campbell argued that the sale of memberships was a “most questionable policy that is wholly destitute of any New Testament authority.”¹²⁴ He explained that such “aberrations from evangelical propriety and principle” had probably appeared to be necessary to bring the Society into existence, and, while this was still not a good explanation of the action, he was “unable to offer a more satisfactory defense.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Oliphant, “The Christian Church and Its Organization,” 187.

¹²² James Ingles and Alexander Campbell, “A Baptist Preacher’s View of Us,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 7 (April 1850): 203.

¹²³ Ingles and Campbell, “A Baptist Preacher’s View,” 205.

¹²⁴ Ingles and Campbell, “A Baptist Preacher’s View,” 210.

¹²⁵ Ingles and Campbell, “A Baptist Preacher’s View,” 212.

Another outspoken critic of the Society was Jeremiah Smith, a Disciples minister from Ohio. Smith wrote an article in the *Proclamation and Reformer*, a journal edited by D.S. Burnet and Benjamin Franklin, who were both instrumental in founding the ACMS. Smith argued that since the Society was made up of those who had purchased their memberships, “its soul, or life’s blood is found to be dollars.”¹²⁶ Benjamin Franklin added an editorial comment to the article, stating that he was “not wedded” to the idea of the sale of memberships in the Society and that the fees were “a question of mere expediency.”¹²⁷

Additionally, Campbell posted a set of resolutions written by the Disciples in Detroit, Michigan denouncing the creation of the ACMS. The church did not comment on the tiered, paid membership, instead focusing on whether the Society was authorized by the teachings of the New Testament. The resolutions stated the Society was a “new organization distinct from, and in some respects, independent of, the church, which we believe to be contrary to the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”¹²⁸

The Disciples of Connellsville, Pennsylvania also passed a series of resolutions condemning the newly created missionary society. The resolutions explained in explicit detail each of the congregation’s objections to the society. In the ten resolutions, the church declared that they believed that “the church of Jesus Christ in virtue of the commission given her by our blessed Lord, the only scriptural organization on Earth for the conversion of sinners and sanctification of believers.”¹²⁹ They went on to state “That

¹²⁶ Jeremiah Smith, “Missionary Society,” *Proclamation and Reformer*, I (July 1850): 444.

¹²⁷ Smith, “Missionary Society,” 446.

¹²⁸ Alexander Linn, “Our Bible and Missionary Societies,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (April 1850): 240.

¹²⁹ A Shallenberger, “The Christian Missionary Society,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (May 1850): 282.

we consider the introduction of all such societies a dangerous precedent – a departure from the principles for which we have always contended.”¹³⁰ The church concluded its statement by claiming that missionary societies “are not only unscriptural, but they are also unnecessary and uncalled for.”¹³¹

Although Campbell published the Detroit resolutions without editorial comment, he decided to address those of the Connellsville church. He responded by saying that “the basis of all their objections is the assertion that the church is the only scriptural organization for doing missionary work.”¹³² Campbell used an analogy, comparing the interrelationship of local churches to the American governmental structure, contending, “There are thirty sovereign and independent States in this American nation, each one independent of every other, yet all dependent upon every one for all that is due from her to the safety, prosperity and happiness of the nation.” Clearly, Campbell believed that the Church of Christ was one body, divided over many locations.

D. S. Burnet also commented on the Connellsville resolutions in his periodical, the *Proclamation and Reformer*. Burnet summarized the congregation’s objections by stating that the “core” of their disagreements was the “fascinating and oft-repeated dogma” that the church must be the only source for everything.¹³³ He believed that the error in such thinking centered on their forgetting that Christians had other

¹³⁰ Shallenberger, “The Christian Missionary Society,” 283.

¹³¹ Shallenberger, “The Christian Missionary Society,” 285.

¹³² Alexander Campbell, “Remarks on the Preceding,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (May 1850): 286.

¹³³ D.S. Burnet, “The Society Question,” *Proclamation and Reformer*, I (April 1850): 250.

responsibilities that were “never performed by them associated as a church.”¹³⁴ Burnet wrote, “Though hospitals, colleges, asylums, female elevation, and a thousand other good things, are the legitimate fruits of the Christian religion, you may say of the Christian church, yet the churches do not build hospitals, colleges, orphan asylums or railroads.”¹³⁵ He closed the article by reminding the Disciples that despite the fact that these works were undertaken by groups of Christians and not by local churches, they were within the bounds of Scripture and in no way served to rob the local congregation of its glory.

The third set of resolutions against the ACMS appearing in the *Millennial Harbinger* was adopted not just by a single church, but also by a larger group of churches. A meeting was held by a group of Virginia churches on May 4, 1850, in Emmaus, Virginia, during which a set of resolutions was passed. The Virginia group’s resolutions only addressed the question of membership in the Society. The group objected to the sale of memberships within the organization, proposing that membership should be based on those who were appointed by local congregations. In the resolution, they stated that the sale of memberships caused, “an invidious and unchristian distinction between the rich and the poor in the kingdom.”¹³⁶ The group also protested that nowhere in the by-laws of the Society was there a statement asserting that one had to be a Christian to become a member. The group worried that this loophole might allow “Jews and Infidels” to become members.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Burnet, “The Society Question,” 251.

¹³⁵ Burnet, “The Society Question,” 252.

¹³⁶ P. Woolfolk, “Missionary and Bible Societies,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (July 1850): 415-416.

¹³⁷ Woolfolk, “Missionary and Bible Societies,” 417.

The most outspoken critic of the ACMS during the 1850s was Jacob Creath, Jr. who served as a frontier minister in Missouri and Kentucky. Creath, a former Baptist, was weary of the Society gaining control over many parts of the Disciples, just as he believed had happened in the Baptist Church. Creath believed that too much control had been placed in the hands of various organizations within the Baptist faith, and he feared that too much power would fall into the hands of a few within the Disciple movement.

In 1850, Alexander Campbell published an exchange of articles between Creath (who was a close friend of Campbell) and himself. Each man wrote five articles on the subject of the Society question. Creath focused on the idea that the Society was inherently unscriptural and that it concentrated too much power into one organization. Campbell answered by providing his reasons for believing that the organization was within the bounds of Scripture and that its power could be limited if it was managed correctly.

Creath increased his attacks on the Society by accusing Campbell of changing his stance on the ideas of cooperation. Creath copied long sections taken from Campbell's early anti-society articles in the *Christian Baptist*. He wrote, "If you were right in the *Christian Baptist*, you are wrong now and if we are wrong, Brother Campbell taught us wrong."¹³⁸ Creath challenged Campbell to reconcile his earlier position with his current stance. He concluded by stating, "The *Christian Baptist* stands good against all the puny and feeble arguments that have been offered for church organization and convention since that time."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Jacob Creath Jr. "Conventions –No. V," *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (November 1850): 639.

¹³⁹ Creath, "Conventions – No V," 641.

Campbell replied that in the first essay in the *Christian Baptist*, he had taken the position that the church was the only missionary society in the New Testament. He argued now that the missionary society was still the church, since the church was the entire body of Christ, not just one congregation. Campbell stated that, although he had changed his mind on some of the finer points, his overall position had not changed, only the manner in which he defined the church. Campbell did not elaborate on what the “finer points” were that had changed.¹⁴⁰

The biggest objection of the anti-Society forces pertained to the idea of paid membership. In response to this objection, the American Christian Missionary Society, at its convention in 1850, eliminated the option to purchase memberships. The new article in the constitution stated, “Every Christian church in North America, co-operating with this Society, and all associations of churches, shall be entitled to representation equally at the annual meetings.”¹⁴¹ The Society announced this change in an “Address to the Churches of Christ in North America” and stated that they had now adopted “the truly Christian” way to raise funds. The new method was that each person should “give as he had purposed,” meaning that one could choose to not give and still remain a member.¹⁴²

While this change eliminated the biggest complaint against the Society, it also removed its largest source of revenue. When the Society met in 1851, there was some discussion on the impossibility of keeping Dr. Barclay in Jerusalem, due to a lack of

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Campbell, “Conventions –No. V,” *Millennial Harbinger*, VII (November 1850): 651.

¹⁴¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1850, 43.

¹⁴² *Report of Proceedings*, 1850, 4.

funds. As a result of the financial problems the ACMS was struggling with, the group reversed its policy and restored life memberships at twenty-five dollars and the life directorship at one hundred dollars.¹⁴³

While the Barclay expedition was ultimately unsuccessful, the Society was not deterred from sending another worker out into the mission field. In 1851, the Society sought a former slave to send to Liberia, Africa, to preach to the lost in that country. In 1853, Alexander Cross was presented at the convention and given “the hand of fellowship and love.”¹⁴⁴ Cross was a former slave who had been purchased by the Disciples in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. A few days after the 1853 convention, Cross and his family boarded a ship to Liberia.

When the Society met in 1854, it was announced that Cross had died. While working to set up his church, Cross was struck with “immigrant’s fever.” He and his eight-year old son both succumbed to the illness. In the 1854 convention report, the Disciples stated, “Our mission is suspended and our prospects clouded in gloom.”¹⁴⁵ After five years of operation, both of the ACMS overseas mission efforts had ended in failure. The lack of individuals willing to travel abroad or dedicate their lives to being local missionaries, along with poor finances, resulted in the Society being widely perceived as on a path of failure. W.K. Pendleton commented that only fifty-five percent of the total income of the Society was being spent on mission work. Pendleton

¹⁴³ *Report of Proceedings*, 1852, 9.

¹⁴⁴ *Report of Proceedings*, 1853, 39.

commented that the Society was trying to raise more funds but that the “brethren require so much begging for so small a return of liberality.”¹⁴⁶

By 1856, the picture was even bleaker. The total receipts for the year totaled only \$405.75.¹⁴⁷ In response, the group decided to reinstate the annual membership fee of \$1, so as to raise revenue. The mission prospects were not any better. D.S. Burnet reported, “During the past year, your Board has done but little in the evangelical field. Besides a donation to a few weak churches, to aid them in the proclamation of the truth, nothing has been accomplished.”¹⁴⁸

In order to assist with remedying the failings of the Society, it was decided that the group needed a full time corresponding secretary. Isaac Errett was elected to the position, and the popular minister and editor soon helped breathe new life into the Society. By the beginning of the 1858 convention, three new foreign mission efforts had been initiated. Dr. James T. Barclay returned to Jerusalem, abolitionist J.O. Beardslee went to Jamaica, and W.W. Eaton was sent to Nova Scotia. At the convention, Errett stated that he had received cooperation from the preachers of the brotherhood and remarked, “I know of but one who had raised a voice of opposition.”¹⁴⁹ During the previous year, yearly revenue had increased to \$8,616. Errett declared, “In regard to the missionary cause, I have much more confidence in its success than I had a year ago.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ “The Anniversary of Our Societies,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 5 (January 1855): 47.

¹⁴⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1856, 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1856, 19.

¹⁴⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1858, 44.

¹⁵⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1858, 45.

Although the ACMS continued to grow, it was still not without its detractors. One of the biggest opponents of the Society in the late 1850s was Tolbert Fanning. A minister from Tennessee, Fanning worked in many capacities alongside his preaching work. As an advocate of the scientific study of agriculture, Fanning helped to create the Tennessee Agricultural Society in 1839, and served as the editor for its journal, *The Agriculturalist*. Fanning also established several schools, the most important of which was Franklin College, founded in 1845. However, the role that garnered him the most attention was that of religious editor. As publisher first of the *Christian Review* and then of the *Gospel Advocate*, Fanning quickly rose to the position of one of the leading conservative voices within the Disciples movement. One historian has called Fanning, “unquestionably the most influential preacher in the South before the Civil War.”¹⁵¹

While Fanning eventually became an outspoken critic of the Society, it took some time for these views to coalesce in his mind. Fanning had attended the first cooperation meeting in Tennessee and had written a letter on behalf of the conference to the members of the convention of the ACMS. He also proposed that the Tennessee Disciples should meet twice a year “for the purpose of devising means to bring the machinery the Lord has given us to bear upon the enemy.”¹⁵²

In April of 1847, Fanning called a state meeting to be held at Franklin College to discuss the issue of cooperation. A plan was proposed at the meeting, to the effect that the church in Nashville would serve as an agent for other churches in Tennessee. The

¹⁵¹ John T. Brown, *Churches of Christ* (Louisville: John P. Morton and Company, 1904), 452.

¹⁵² “Prospects of the Cause in America,” *Christian Review*, 3 (December 1846): 281.

Nashville church would send out evangelists and collect and disperse funds for their support. Jesse Ferguson, a popular, but controversial minister and editor in Nashville stated:

The plan of operating is very simple and is self-sustaining. They visit a church and hold a meeting. Sometime during the meeting they lay the duty of spreading the gospel before the Brotherhood and solicit contributions. Whatever is given is forwarded to the Treasurer of the committee, and receipted to the persons or church contributing. The Treasurer keeps a book in which all credits and disbursements are accounted, and from which reports are made annually or at whatever time the committee may demand. This Book is open to the inspection of all.¹⁵³

In 1849, the Tennessee Disciples adopted a resolution to the effect that the church in Nashville would continue to function as the primary distribution center for funds and missionaries, but that four men from other churches would join the Nashville Disciples in order to supervise the work. Tolbert Fanning was selected as one of the four.¹⁵⁴

In 1852, Fanning still supported the idea of cooperation and helped found a more structured organization in Tennessee. The new group was called the “Christian Evangelizing Association of Tennessee,” and was patterned after the American Christian Missionary Society. The purpose of the group was to focus on Tennessee as a mission field, helping to convert the lost in the state. Fanning participated in the meeting to organize the group in Paris, Tennessee. He was elected to the office of Corresponding Secretary and to the Board of Directors.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Jesse Ferguson, “Our System of Evangelizing, and the General Meeting,” *Christian Magazine* 2 (June 1849): 228.

¹⁵⁴ J.J. Trott, “State Meeting of the Disciples of Christ,” *Christian Magazine* 2 (November 1849): 426.

¹⁵⁵ B.F. Hall, “Minutes of the Tennessee Co-operation for 1852,” *Christian Magazine*, 5 (December 1852), 361.

It was not until 1853 that Tolbert Fanning began to speak out against the concept of the missionary society. The shift started with the controversy provoked by Jesse Ferguson in Nashville. In 1852, Ferguson began preaching that Jesus often preached to the dead. His beliefs stemmed from his exegesis of a section of the New Testament.¹⁵⁶ According to Ferguson, when a person died, Jesus came to them and offered them a chance for salvation.¹⁵⁷

Ferguson's teachings drew the ire of many in the movement, including Alexander Campbell. Campbell retorted that Ferguson's teachings constituted "a posthumous mission to Hades, and a post-mortem gospel for the benefit of infants, idiots, pagans, and other condemned unfortunates."¹⁵⁸ He and Ferguson traded many articles back and forth over the issue in both the *Christian Magazine* and the *Millennial Harbinger*.

One of the main problems with Ferguson's teaching was that the *Christian Magazine* was published under the auspices of the Tennessee State Meeting, contributing to the appearance that the Disciples in Tennessee approved the articles. Fanning commented on this problem, stating that since the doctrine had been published in "the organ of a whole state, it will be regarded as the approved views of the churches of that State, so long as unrebuked and disowned by the churches."¹⁵⁹ When the Tennessee Disciples held their next meeting, in November 1852, Ferguson resigned as editor of the journal and the Disciples discontinued the periodical. The following October, the Tennessee Disciples passed a resolution officially condemning Ferguson's message.

¹⁵⁶ I Peter 3:18-20.

¹⁵⁷ Jesse Ferguson, "Exposition of Scripture," *Christian Magazine*, 5 (April 1852): 114.

¹⁵⁸ Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Magazine," *Millennial Harbinger*, 2 (November 1852): 628.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Campbell, "The New Doctrine and the Christian Magazine," *Millennial Harbinger*, 2 (October 1852): 568.

The problems created by Ferguson nearly destroyed the Nashville church. Its membership, which once stood at more than 500, dwindled to 57. To complicate matters, the Nashville Disciples' new building was destroyed in a fire. Tolbert Fanning, who had assigned Ferguson the position of editor, felt personally responsible for the decline of the Nashville church. It was this issue that encouraged Fanning to begin to question the wisdom of church cooperation, due largely in part to Campbell's call to the Tennessee State Meeting to repudiate Ferguson's teachings. This warning awoke Fanning to the awareness that when a single individual represented the entire Disciples of Tennessee, a dangerous problem existed. Fanning's biographer states that, although the specifics of Fanning's transition into this belief are not clear, they were hinted at in various documents.¹⁶⁰

Early in 1855, Fanning decided to start a new journal. Along with the help of William Lipscomb, a prominent Nashville minister, Fanning founded the *Gospel Advocate*. Fanning believed that a new journal might help the Disciples to overcome some of the trouble Ferguson had caused. The first issue of *Gospel Advocate* appeared in July 1855, and was dedicated to opposing the teachings of Jesse Ferguson.

In the October issue, Fanning described how his stance on the missionary society and the principle of cooperation had changed. Fanning stated, "It is well understood that for many years I have doubted the practical results of the cooperations in Tennessee, and indeed other states, but I have yielded to my brethren of age and experience, and I should be willing to yield longer, could I conclude it would be to the honor of God."¹⁶¹ Fanning

¹⁶⁰ James R. Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement* (Dallas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1969), 236.

¹⁶¹ Tolbert Fanning, "Co-operation," *Gospel Advocate*, 1 (October 1855): 110.

admitted that one of the main reasons for establishing the *Gospel Advocate* was to give the topic of cooperation “a thorough examination.”¹⁶² Fanning argued that although the Tennessee Christians had accomplished some good things while cooperating, the endeavor still had not been a scriptural one. Fanning wrote, “We are satisfied and have been from the beginning of our efforts, that they have been wrong. We in the future shall endeavor to ‘show a better way.’”¹⁶³ For the next few years, Fanning would publish numerous articles attempting to demonstrate and describe the “better way.”

He began by arguing the premise that organizations outside of the local congregation, such as the missionary society, were inherently wrong. Fanning wrote:

The Church of God is the only divinely authorized Missionary, Bible, Sunday School and Temperance Society; the only institution in which the Heavenly Father will be honored in the salvation of the world, and in and through no other agency can man glorify his Maker. We see not, and never have seen, how it is possible for any people professing the Christian religion to attempt to do the work of the church through merely human agencies, such as Missionary Societies, Sunday schools, etc.¹⁶⁴

Fanning was using the same arguments that Alexander Campbell had used during his days writing the *Christian Baptist*.

Fanning then directed his attention directly at the American Christian Missionary Society. In his article, Fanning quoted Charles Loos as stating that the American Christian Missionary Society “faced the task of converting the entire world.”¹⁶⁵ Fanning argued that if this were true, “the church has been proved worthless, she has waxed old and is ready to vanish away.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Fanning, “Co-operation,” 112.

¹⁶³ Tolbert Fanning, “The Church of Christ. No. 1,” *Gospel Advocate*, 1(November 1855): 134-135.

¹⁶⁴ Tolbert Fanning, “The Lord’s Treasury,” *Gospel Advocate*, 3 (March 1857): 69.

¹⁶⁵ Fanning, “The Lord’s Treasury,” 70.

¹⁶⁶ Tolbert Fanning, “The American Christian Missionary Society at Cincinnati, Ohio,” *Gospel Advocate*, 3 (February 1857): 44.

Fanning suggested that the Tennessee churches hold “consultation meetings.” This term caused some confusion due to the fact that “consultation” and “cooperation” had been used interchangeably. Fanning now saw “consultation meetings” as being opportunities for Christians to meet for fellowship, worship, and study, rather than for adopting resolutions and creating missionary societies. Soon after one such meeting, Fanning wrote, “the Church of Christ is fully adequate for all of our moral and spiritual wants” and could do everything that missionary and temperance societies could do.”¹⁶⁷

The opposition to missionary societies began to spread throughout Tennessee as a result of the influence of the *Gospel Advocate*. Fanning continued to encourage churches to work together in supporting missionaries, while still remaining independent. Under his plan, churches could get together to raise funds for a particular evangelist, but could not form a separate body to do so. One church would be the “sponsoring church” in charge of overseeing the effort, while other churches could contribute funds and offer suggestions as to the best way the mission work could be carried out.

William Lipscomb suggested the same thing in an article in the *Gospel Advocate*. He argued that if a plan similar to the one that Fanning suggested had been implemented for sending Dr. James T. Barclay to Jerusalem, the mission work would have had a greater chance for success. The work could have been sponsored by the Scottsville, Virginia church, who, in turn, could have requested assistance from other churches.¹⁶⁸

In 1856, the Fourth and Walnut congregation in Louisville, Kentucky decided to send a group of missionaries to England. In order to raise the necessary funds, the church

¹⁶⁷ Tolbert Fanning, “The Consultation Meeting at Franklin,” *Gospel Advocate*, 2 (May 1856): 154.

¹⁶⁸ William Lipscomb, “Missions and Missionaries,” *Gospel Advocate*, 3 (May 1855): 131.

sent William Thompson to collect money from the churches willing to participate. The Louisville church published a statement:

Taking the primitive churches as our model, we feel satisfied that each congregation is a missionary society in itself; and if unable by itself to raise means enough for any projected mission, to make an appeal to the brotherhood for aid. This we now do, by sending brother Thompson to you. The funds will be placed in the treasury of the church, and sacredly set apart and used for this mission by the congregation we represent.¹⁶⁹

Fanning and Lipscomb saw this plan as a positive alternative to the American Christian Missionary Society. Fanning exclaimed, “Thank the Lord that at least the members of one congregation regard the church as a missionary society.”¹⁷⁰ While he was happy with what they were attempting, Fanning believed that they were still not completely adhering to the New Testament model. Fanning believed that the funds should not be allocated solely at the discretion of the Louisville church, feeling that although the Louisville congregation was the overseeing church, the other contributing congregations should have some input into the work in England.

In November 1859, seven Tennessee congregations held a meeting in Murfreesboro for the support of two missionaries. Thomas Stalker was sent out by the Hartsville church and E.G. Sowell by the Franklin College church, with each man being accountable to the church that sent him. However, the needs of the two men were made known to other congregations, and these churches helped to financially support their efforts. When Fanning heard about the plan he wrote, “since the dawning of this

¹⁶⁹ Statement published in *Gospel Advocate*, 2 (October 1856): 305.

¹⁷⁰ Tolbert Fanning, “Reply to Robert Milligan,” *Gospel Advocate*, 2 (October 1856): 302.

reformation, an effort was being made to cooperate by authority in evangelizing Middle Tennessee.”¹⁷¹

The attacks on the American Christian Missionary Society were not limited to those pertaining to whether or not the organization had a scriptural basis for its existence. During the late 1850s, the group came under attack by those opposed to slavery. Within the Disciples, there were not a large number of abolitionists. Alexander Campbell and many of the other Stone-Campbell leaders had chosen to adopt moderate positions on the institution of slavery, and most of the Disciples followed their lead. Although Campbell was opposed to slavery, his opposition was for economic and social reasons, rather than for moral reasons. He did not consider the institution as morally wrong, although he did free his own slaves. Campbell argued that there were many New Testament passages that recognized the master-slave relationship.¹⁷² Campbell believed that no congregation could “rightfully make the simple relation of master and slave a term of Christian fellowship or a subject of discipline.”¹⁷³ Barton Stone was anti-slavery, but did not see the issue as a test of fellowship. The Disciples movement had seen many other denominations split over the subject of slavery; to prevent this from happening, the issue was only quietly spoken about, in small circles, and garnered little attention from the journals of the day.

The abolitionists were a minority within the Disciples. Men such as John G. Fee, J.O. Beardslee, Pardee Butler, and John Boggs were a small but vocal group of Disciples

¹⁷¹ “Co-operation Meeting at Murfreesboro, Tenn.” *Gospel Advocate*, 4 (December 1859): 358.

¹⁷² Alexander Campbell, “Our Position to American Slavery,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 2 (June 1845): 259.

¹⁷³ Campbell, “Our Position,” 261.

morally opposed to slavery. During the 1850s, this small group became hostile toward the majority of the Stone-Campbell Movement. At Northwest Christian University (later Butler University) there was a strong presence of Disciple abolitionists. Campbell denounced the new school as being an example of “sectional Christianity.”¹⁷⁴ In 1855, problems arose at Bethany College, the school that Alexander Campbell had founded. Philip Burns, a student from Canada, caused an uproar when he attacked slavery in a sermon he gave at the campus chapel. Protests resulted, with each side hurling insults at the other. When the situation subsided, Campbell expelled five students, with five others leaving of their own accord. Northwestern Christian University allowed several of these students to enroll. Campbell was furious and stated that the students were “dismissed for immoral and unchristian conduct.”¹⁷⁵

The abolitionists continued to press the Stone-Campbell Movement to denounce slavery. In July 1854, John Boggs began publishing a new journal, *North-western Christian Magazine*. In the first issue, Boggs declared that while the other Disciple journals had ignored slavery, it would be the major theme of his journal. Boggs declared that the Disciples had accepted slavery and that “preachers of the gospel, with hands reeking in the sweat and blood of the poor, down-trodden slave, are admitted into our pulpits.”¹⁷⁶

Boggs attacked every Christian who still supported the institution of slavery, viewing those who favored it as having “depraved and prejudiced minds.” He posed the

¹⁷⁴ Alexander Campbell, “The Northwestern Christian University,” *Millennial Harbinger* 7 (June 1850): 330.

¹⁷⁵ “Reported Troubles in Bethany College,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 6 (February 1856): 113.

¹⁷⁶ John Boggs, “Salutatory,” *North-western Christian Magazine*, 1 (July 1854): 3.

question, “Who then is willing to go to Kentucky, and Virginia, and Tennessee and like the apostles and primitive disciples, is willing to suffer stripes and imprisonment, and even death if need be, in order to save the slave from oppression, and the master from the judgments of heaven.”¹⁷⁷

Boggs and the abolitionists finally turned their anger against the Barclay family. In his journal, Boggs listed all of the problems he believed slavery had caused within the church and stated that the Disciples were supporting a family “whose oppressive hand has been, and even now is, binding the iron yoke of slavery on their fellow men.”¹⁷⁸ The abolitionists continued their attacks on the Barclay family for the next several years. When several congregations asked whether or not Barclay had been a slaveholder, John Tyler, one of the elders of Barclay’s home congregation responded, informing those who were inquiring that Dr. Barclay had inherited a family of four slaves a decade prior. Before leaving for Jerusalem, Dr. Barclay had offered to free his slaves, but the slaves had declined his offer because the state of Virginia required slaves to leave the state once they were emancipated. The slaves were then sold to John Tyler. When asked about the former master, Tyler had remarked that Dr. Barclay was “one of the most humane and kind masters.”¹⁷⁹

In 1853, John Kirk, a Youngstown, Ohio abolitionist, wrote to John Tyler informing him that several Disciples wanted to purchase the Barclay slaves in order to “wipe out the disgrace” that the family had brought upon the church. He inquired as to

¹⁷⁷ John Boggs, “How Can Slavery Be Abolished?” *North-western Christian Magazine*, 1 (May 1855): 323

¹⁷⁸ *North-western Christian Magazine*, 1 (July 1854): 3.

¹⁷⁹ “American Christian Missionary Society and Slavery,” *North-western Christian Magazine*, 1 (February 1855): 254-255.

how much the slaves would cost, asking that Tyler refrain from attempting to profit at the expense of the church.¹⁸⁰ Kirk was clearly overlooking the fact that the slaves had already been offered their freedom and had declined. Tyler replied that slaves had originally been purchased from the Barclay family for \$1,775. The value of the slaves in the current market was estimated at \$2,800, but in order to refrain from making a profit, Tyler would sell them to Kirk for \$2,700. The abolitionists were outraged at his offer. The correspondence between the two men was published in the *North-western Christian Magazine* in order to demonstrate that even “a pious man like Tyler” was capable of participating in the “traffic in men and women just as they do cattle and mules.”¹⁸¹

In 1857, Isaac Errett became the Corresponding Secretary of the American Christian Missionary Society. Boggs and the other abolitionists were pleased with his appointment, because he was known as being against the institution of slavery. Errett realized, however, that if the Society allied itself with the abolitionist cause, it would alienate the majority of the Disciples. Errett wrote to Boggs and explained that while he was “anti-slavery” the “society knows neither pro-slavery nor anti-slavery.”¹⁸² Boggs replied, “we can stand anything from avowed enemies, but we confess it grieves us to be stabbed in the house of a friend.”¹⁸³

As a response, the abolitionists began work on the formation of their own missionary society. Pardee Butler, an abolitionist minister who served as a missionary in

¹⁸⁰ John Boggs, “The Barclay Slaves,” *North-western Christian Magazine*, 2 (December 1855): 169.

¹⁸¹ Boggs, “The Barclay Slaves,” 170.

¹⁸² John Boggs, “The General Missionary Society,” *North-western Christian Magazine*, 4 (April 1858): 310.

¹⁸³ Boggs, “The General Missionary Society,” 312.

the Kansas Territory, was the driving force behind the new society. Butler preached a message of anti-slavery anywhere he was able to find an open pulpit. In 1858, Butler petitioned the ACMS for financial support. Errett replied to Butler, “It must, therefore be distinctly understood, that if we embark in a missionary enterprise in Kansas, this question of slavery and anti-slavery must be ignored.”¹⁸⁴

Butler could not accept these terms, and began work on the new anti-slavery missionary society. In May 1859, John Boggs sent a letter to supporters of his abolitionist efforts, proposing that a convention be held. Pardee Butler replied, “We need a missionary fund, which shall be placed in such hands that it shall not be prostituted to the vile use of bribing men into silence on the subject of slavery.”¹⁸⁵

The convention was held on November 1, 1859 in Indianapolis, Indiana, with delegates present from seven states. The majority came from Indiana and Ohio, but delegates were also present from Virginia, Michigan, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and the Kansas Territory. The convention resulted in the creation of “The Christian Missionary Society,” with Ovid Butler being elected President of the Society. The only qualification for membership was that aspiring members have “no complicity in the crime of American slavery.”¹⁸⁶ The society, however, did not long endure, due to the start of the American Civil War.

¹⁸⁴ James S. Lamar, *Memoirs of Isaac Errett* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co, 1893), 220.

¹⁸⁵ John Boggs, “Convention,” *Christian Luminary* (July 1859): 28.

¹⁸⁶ “Convention Minutes,” *Christian Luminary* (November 1859): 87.

Chapter 5 – The Movement Goes to War

Testing whether the United States could exist as one nation, the Civil War was a defining moment in our country's history. Like many of the other American denominations, the Disciples faced a trying time. Cracks had already formed in the movement, particularly over issues of cooperation, scriptural interpretation, and slavery. On the eve of war, there were 1,241 congregations located in the North and 829 congregations in the South.¹⁸⁷ The total membership has been estimated at approximately 300,000.¹⁸⁸

From its start, the members of the Stone-Campbell movement embraced the ideas of pacifism. These ideas would resonate with many of the movement's members until the start of World War II. All of the early leaders, except for Walter Scott, espoused the virtues of leading a pacifist life. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the majority of editors within the Disciples preached against taking up arms in the conflict. Some believed it was morally wrong to fight against a fellow "brother in Christ"; others asserted that a war dividing the Disciples would eventually cause the split of the unity movement.¹⁸⁹

The movement once again looked to Alexander Campbell for a statement. Campbell responded by delivering a sermon in Wheeling, Virginia on May 11, 1848. His "Sermon on War" was published in the *Millennial Harbinger* and later distributed by pacifist groups. In the sermon, Campbell argued that Christians should not participate in any form of war. Campbell stated, "I abominate war as unchristian. I hold it the greatest

¹⁸⁷ James B. North, *Union in Truth: An Interpretive History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company), 196.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander Campbell, "A Loud Call to Our Brethren," *Millennial Harbinger*, 27 (December 1857): 646.

¹⁸⁹ David Edwin Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America, 1800-1865* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 253.

of human curses. I deem it to include all others—violence, blood, rapine, fraud, every thing that can deform the character, alter the nature, and debase the name of man.”¹⁹⁰

When the American Civil War began, the great majority of Disciple ministers spoke from the pulpit against taking up arms. David Oliphant, a Canadian minister, reminded his American brothers that they were peacemakers and should not “rush into carnal warfare.”¹⁹¹ J.W. McGarvey stated, “I would rather, ten thousand times, be killed for refusing to fight, than to fall in battle, or come home victorious with the blood of my brethren on my hands.”¹⁹²

Once the fighting began, J.W. McGarvey and thirteen Missouri Disciples ministers signed a plea asking the Disciples to refrain from the conflict. The document argued that the New Testament would not allow Christians to fight against each other and that those who chose to do so would “incur the displeasure of God.”¹⁹³

In November 1862, a group of pacifist ministers met in Beech Grove, Tennessee in order to draft a letter to Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America. The purpose of the letter was to request that President Davis allow exemption of the Disciples from compulsory military service. There was precedent in their request. The Confederate Congress had passed a resolution granting exemption status to other denominations and authorized President Davis to extend this exemption to other groups as he saw fit. The letter from the Tennessee Churches stated the following:

¹⁹⁰ Alexander Campbell, “An Address on War,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 5 (July 1848): 384.

¹⁹¹ David Oliphant, “War,” *Witness of Truth*, 8 (May 1861): 115.

¹⁹² “War in the United States,” *Banner of the Faith* 15 (May 1861): 105.

¹⁹³ J.W. McGarvey, “Circular from Preachers in Missouri,” *Evangelist*, 12 (September 1861): 472-473.

A large number of the members of the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout this and the adjoining counties of the State of Tennessee are firm in the conviction of the truth, that no man, who regards the authority of God can in any manner engage in, aid, foment, or countenance the strifes, animosities, and bloody conflicts in which civil governments are frequently engaged, and in which they often involve their subjects. With these considerations of what our duty to God requires at our hands, the enforcement of the “Conscript Act” for the purpose of raising and maintaining an army, for the carrying on of this unhappy war, in which our country is involved, cannot fail to work indescribable distress to those members of our churches holding these convictions.¹⁹⁴

The letter was also forwarded to Andrew Johnson, who was serving as the governor of Tennessee. Recognized as conscientious objectors, the Tennessee Disciples were granted exemption.

Not all Disciples avoided military service during the Civil War. Alexander Campbell’s oldest son fought for the Confederacy. Barton W. Stone had two sons who fought for the South. James A. Garfield, who would later become President, became a Colonel in the Union Army. Thomas W. Caskey of Mississippi came to be known as “the fighting parson” for his readiness to take to the front lines of battle.¹⁹⁵ The abolitionist John Boggs encouraged men to enlist for the Union in his *Christian Luminary*.¹⁹⁶ The *Christian Record* also spoke in favor of the Union.¹⁹⁷

The two key figures of the Stone-Campbell Movement during this time period were Benjamin Franklin in the North and Tolbert Fanning in the South. Each man believed that his side was right while maintaining that Disciples should not participate in war. Both men had held pacifist positions for years speaking out against the Mexican

¹⁹⁴ David Lipscomb, “Church of Christ and World-Powers, No. 11.,” *Gospel Advocate* (July 1866): 417-418.

¹⁹⁵ Herman Norton, *Rebel Religion* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1941), 89.

¹⁹⁶ John Boggs, “Our Pledge to the Union,” *Christian Luminary* (November 1861): 54.

¹⁹⁷ “An Appeal to the Brethren,” *Christian Record*, (August 1861): 29.

War. In 1847, Franklin wrote, “The great question is whether all war is not at variance with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Can Christians in any case engage in what is called ‘civil war’ righteously?”¹⁹⁸ Franklin declared that the answer was that they could not. Fanning held an even stronger stance. According to Fanning, Christians were required to pay taxes, obey government officials, and pray for those in authority. Anything beyond those obligations was to be avoided.¹⁹⁹ Other governmental matters, such as war and capital punishment, should be avoided because they were “too unholy for Christian hands.”²⁰⁰

When the Civil War began, both men spoke openly about their loyalty to their side. Franklin wrote about the Union and remarked that he loved it “next to the government of God.” He stated that he had “never had one sympathy for the rebellion, but from the beginning have regarded it as the work of ruin, and have so expressed our mind to all to whom we have spoken, both North and South.”²⁰¹ Fanning believed just as strongly in the Southern cause. Fanning stated, “Death is preferable to subjugation and rule by the sword. Hence, if people were ever justified in resisting encroachments, we conscientiously believe the citizens of the Confederate States are.”²⁰²

While both men had strong loyalties, they remained adamant that the Disciples should refuse military service. Franklin wrote, “We will not take up arms against, fight

¹⁹⁸ Benjamin Franklin “Christianity and War,” *Western Reformer*, 5 (February 1847): 223.

¹⁹⁹ Tolbert Fanning, “The Kingdom of Heaven – A Spiritual Empire,” *Christian Review*, 3 (May 1846): 103.

²⁰⁰ Tolbert Fanning, “Capital Punishment,” *Christian Review*, 4 (May 1847): 154.

²⁰¹ Benjamin Franklin, “Course of the Christian Record,” *American Christian Review*, (September 1863): 150.

²⁰² Tolbert Fanning, “Religious Aspects of the American Revolution of 1861,” *Gospel Advocate*, 7 (July 1861): 210-211.

or kill the brethren we have labored for twenty years to bring into the Kingdom of God.”²⁰³ Fanning stated, “Both parties claim the sanction of Heaven, and very earnestly call upon God for help. Both cannot be right.”²⁰⁴

The 1860 American Christian Missionary Society Convention met amidst an uncertain future. Despite the perilous state of the Union, the 1860 ACMS Convention had the largest attendance to date. Fifteen states, all of which were part of the North, were present when the convention assembled in Cincinnati that October. For the duration of the Civil War, there would be no Southern representation at the ACMS Conventions. Even though the environment was politically charged throughout the country, the convention refrained from politics during its formal meeting, focusing instead on local and foreign missions. The work in Jamaica was going well, but the work in Jerusalem was failing due to “the intolerance of Turkish rule.”²⁰⁵ The Society was also doing well. The Corresponding Secretary reported that, during the previous year, \$15,000 had been raised and that 1,344 additional people had joined the Disciples movement.

Despite the raging conflict, the American Christian Missionary Society held its in annual convention in 1861. Again, there were no Southern delegates at the convention. The Board began by presenting the annual report with Burnet reporting, “We are checkmated most disastrously by the tread of armies and the universal difficulty of obtaining money consequent upon a wide spread stoppage of trade.”²⁰⁶ The meeting was

²⁰³ Benjamin Franklin, “Thoughts,” *American Christian Review*, (May 1861): 31.

²⁰⁴ Tolbert Fanning, “May Not Christians Engage in War Against Their Brethren or Others?” *Gospel Advocate*, 7 (July 1861): 275.

²⁰⁵ *Report of Proceedings*, 1860, 22.

²⁰⁶ *Report of Proceedings*, 1861, 7.

primarily a business meeting with little coming out of the first two days. One positive note was that J.O. Beardslee, a missionary that had been sent to Jamaica, baptized 172 people.²⁰⁷

This laid back atmosphere would change greatly on day three of the meeting. It was during the afternoon session on the last day of the convention that Dr. John P.

Robison introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with the loyal and patriotic in our country, in the present efforts to sustain the Government of the United States. And we feel it our duty as Christians, to ask our brethren everywhere to do all in their power to sustain the proper and constitutional authorities in the Bible.²⁰⁸

D.S. Burnet addressed the convention stating that the second article of the Society's constitution might prevent such a resolution. The second article stated, "The object of this Society shall be to promote the preaching of the Gospel in destitute places of this and other lands."²⁰⁹ Burnet believed that this article implied that the society was not to be involved in political matters. Benjamin Franklin agreed with Burnet asserting that all political questions should be avoided to maintain movement unity. Vice President Isaac Errett, who was presiding over the conference, ruled the motion in order.

L.L. Pinkerton requested that the Society take a ten-minute recess. D.S. Burnet was asked to preside during the recess period, and Dr. Robison's resolution was read again. Several spoke in favor of the resolution, including James A. Garfield, a colonel at this time in the Forty-Second Regiment of the Ohio Infantry; he spoke in his military dress. Because Burnet was chairman over the recess meeting, he would not be allowed to

²⁰⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1861, 24.

²⁰⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1861, 19.

²⁰⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1861, 41.

protest the decision. Those in favor of the resolution had set up this recess meeting in order to bypass the restriction against voting as “the society.” By using a parliamentary recess for a group meeting, they could vote on the measure. A few months later, Benjamin Franklin reported in his journal that many of the delegates failed to realize what was happening. Franklin argued that had they known what they were doing, they would not have voted—not because they were against the resolution but because they still believed it was being introduced as part of the meeting on behalf of the Society.²¹⁰

When the resolution was announced, there was outrage from the Southern editors, as expected. Tolbert Fanning denounced the action and stated that he was heartbroken and angry over the action. In one of the last issues of the *Gospel Advocate* before it suspended publication, Fanning stated that the American Christian Missionary Society had “passed strong resolutions, approving most heartily of the wholesale murder of the people South who do not chose to be governed by a sectional party North.” Fanning believed that the ACMS was encouraging Disciples to join the Union cause in order to “cut the throats of their Southern brethren.”²¹¹

Some Northern Disciples also were also upset due to the events that transpired at the 1861 convention—for different reasons. The Society’s inability to adopt the resolutions without parliamentary trickery resulted in cries that the Society was not standing strong for the Union cause. These Disciples pushed for a stronger, more definitive stance from the Society.

²¹⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “Remarks,” *American Christian Review*, (January 14, 1862): 2.

²¹¹ Tolbert Fanning, “Ministers of Peace in the World’s Conflicts,” *Gospel Advocate*, 7 (November 1861): 347.

During this time, the anti-slavery Christian Missionary Society remained active. The supporters of the group did not feel that the Civil War was enough of a reason to disband their society. In the months preceding the 1862 ACMS Convention, John Boggs wrote several editorials detailing his thoughts on the war, slavery, and abolition. He also noted that he believed the ACMS was still in error. In a *Christian Luminary* editorial, Boggs wrote, “We stand before the world divided, inasmuch, as we have two general missionary organizations instead of one.”²¹² Boggs continued by stating that the reason for the divided societies was “that accursed thing known as American Slavery.” He argued that there was only one way for the two groups to come together: The ACMS had to admit that the cause of the war was slavery.”²¹³ Boggs offered what could be construed as an ultimatum:

The meeting of the Cincinnati Society, fortunately, comes two weeks before the one at Indianapolis thereby, giving it the opportunity, to speak in reference to Slavery, as to take away the necessity for the second organization. If at the Cincinnati anniversary, resolutions, charging home upon Slavery the responsibility of all our national difficulties, and declaring its inherent sinfulness –are introduced and passed, it will be sustained by a Christian brotherhood; and the Indianapolis Society, as a matter of course, would go down as a supernumerary institution. But if the brotherhood should be gagged, and preachers and others who are known to be secessionists are received as brethren in the Lord, all true Christians will repudiate the Society, and unit with the one organized at Indianapolis.²¹⁴

At the 1862 ACMS Convention, the group did not discuss this proposal. Indeed, there was little discussed in the area of politics. The meeting was short and primarily focused on financial issues and future plans. Due to health concerns, it was the last

²¹² John Boggs, “Our Position,” *Christian Luminary* (September 1862): 74.

²¹³ Boggs, “Our Position,” 76.

²¹⁴ “The Christian Missionary Society,” *Christian Luminary* (September 1862): 79.

convention that Alexander Campbell would attend. His presence at the meeting for the prior several years hardly had accomplished anything due to his age and consequent yielding of responsibilities. R.M. Bishop presided over the floor where he reported that the Society had raised \$6,733 the previous year. Bishop also reported that the work in Jamaica was going well, leading to the immersion of 172 individuals. He also reported that during the previous year, James Barclay's mission work had ended.²¹⁵

The Annual Report referred to the Civil War in only one place and called it "a rebellion, the gravest in character and most colossal in proportion which history records."²¹⁶ J.W. McGarvey objected to the report's wording. He wanted to change "rebellion" to "attempt at revolution." The objection was voted down.²¹⁷

The 1863 Convention would go down as one of the most critical meetings in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. D.S. Burnet, who was presiding over the first day of the convention, announced that the work in Jamaica would be ending the following spring because James Beardslee wanted to focus his work elsewhere. Even in wartime, the ACMS still was receiving a large amount of funds. It was announced that the Society had collected close to \$9,000 the previous year. The local mission efforts also were expanding with missionaries being placed into Kansas and Nebraska.²¹⁸

Since the passage of the loyalty resolution in 1861, many Disciples had grumbled that the resolution did not go far enough in proclaiming support for the Union. Robert

²¹⁵ *Report of Proceedings*, 1862, 12.

²¹⁶ *Report of Proceedings*, 1862, 15.

²¹⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1862, 17.

²¹⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1863, 9.

Faurot, an important minister among the Indiana Disciples, offered the following resolution:

Whereas, “there is no power but of God,” and “the powers that be are ordained of God;” and whereas, we are commanded in the Holy Scriptures to be subject to the powers that be, and “obey magistrates;” and whereas, an armed rebellion exists in our country, subversive of these divine injunctions; and whereas, reports have gone abroad that we, as a religious body, and particularly as a Missionary Society, are to a certain degree disloyal to the Government of the United States; therefore—

Resolved, That we unqualifiedly declare our allegiance to said Government, and repudiate as false and slanderous any statements to the contrary.

Resolved, That we tender our sympathies to our brave and noble soldiers in the field, who are defending us from the attempts of armed traitors to overthrow our Government, and also to those bereaved, and rendered desolate by the ravages of war.

Resolved, That we will earnestly and constantly pray to God to give our legislators and rulers, wisdom to enact and power to execute, such laws as will speedily bring to us the enjoyment of a peace that God will deign to bless.

When these resolutions were presented, Isaac Errett was once again presiding over the convention. He ruled that the motion was out of order, and it was appealed and reversed. The mood of the organization had changed over the past two years. The war had wearied the Society, and it was now willing to consider such a resolution during official proceedings. When the vote was taken, only a handful of people cast dissenting votes.²¹⁹

Because the *Gospel Advocate* had ceased publication in 1861 at the outbreak of hostilities, there exists no immediate recorded reaction by Southern Disciples to the passage of the loyalty resolutions. There was no other major Southern publication at the time, so Disciples in the South had to wait until after the end of the Civil War to voice their outrage in print.

²¹⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1863, 24.

Reactions from the northern Disciples to the new resolutions were mixed. The abolitionists were satisfied with the ACMS statements and responded by dissolving their rival society. In contrast, the more vocal pacifists within the movement were unhappy with the resolutions. Benjamin Franklin wrote that the Society had stepped over the line: By discussing the war, they were advocating a violent position. He argued that the only legitimate way to keep the peace was to “keep out bones of contention, exciting and irrelevant questions of every sort.”²²⁰

D.S. Burnet wrote in to the *American Christian Review* and objected to the criticism that Franklin had leveled against the Society. Burnet argued that the ACMS had a moral obligation to speak out on the issue of union and loyalty because “if you divide the country, you divide the brotherhood.”²²¹ Franklin replied that there were larger issues involved. He argued that if the Society had the right to adopt a politically-based resolution, then that could lead to the Society abandoning its original purpose and becoming a political organization or one that involves itself in secular matters instead of matters of the church. Franklin stated, “When they become mediums for evil, contention, and strife among the children of God, and are turned aside from the good work which they proposed to do, they will find the Disciples united in nothing. This will seal their fate.”²²² Franklin ended by saying that if the Society could not once again focus on its stated goals, it should disband.

²²⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “The American Christian Missionary Society,” *American Christian Review* (November 1863): 186.

²²¹ D.S. Burnet, “Letter to Brother Franklin,” *American Christian Review*, (December 1863): 12.

²²² Benjamin Franklin, “Missionary Society,” *American Christian Review*, (December 1863): 202.

The Disciples in the border state of Kentucky were not happy with the resolutions. The passage of the loyalty statements drew the ire of J.W. McGarvey and Moses E. Lard, two of the most influential ministers in the movement. McGarvey served as the pulpit minister for the Main Street Christian Church in Lexington, one of the largest churches in the entire Disciples movement. Moses Lard was a traveling minister who had founded *Lard's Quarterly*, a journal that was gaining a large following.

McGarvey went straight to the point in his denouncement of the Society. He asserted that the Society should be “dissolved immediately.”²²³ McGarvey stated that while most Disciples believed in the concept of a Society, they were agreed on by most as “dangerous institutions” that were only used for matters of expediency.²²⁴ McGarvey believed that whenever an institution caused infighting among the brethren, it should be disbanded. McGarvey stated, “By this standard, I have judged the American Christian Missionary Society, and have decided for myself, that it should cease to exist.”²²⁵ He ended by stating that ACMS served no purpose but to cause strife, and that the state missionary societies could do just as well as a national organization.

Lard's criticism was also biting. He stated, “A hundred thousand hearts would rejoice to see the Society die.”²²⁶ However, he maintained that the group should be given another chance to refocus on its original intent. He concluded by stating that should the group ever attempt to pass another political resolution, “we hope no child of God will

²²³ J.W. McGarvey, “Missionary Societies,” *American Christian Quarterly Review*, 2 (November 1863): 343.

²²⁴ J.W. McGarvey, “Missionary Societies,” 344.

²²⁵ J.W. McGarvey, “Missionary Societies,” 346.

²²⁶ Moses Lard, “Missionary Societies and our Hymn Book,” *Lard's Quarterly*, 2 (January 1865): 140.

ever after that place one cent more in its treasury and that it may die an instant and disgraceful death.”²²⁷ Lard argued that whenever a group pronounced a judgment on a doctrinal question or instructed a Christian on his political responsibilities, then it was engaging in an unwarranted assumption of power. Lard called the 1863 loyalty resolution “mournful and humiliating.”²²⁸ However, he continued to argue that the group should be given a chance to redeem itself by remaining committed to its original purpose and staying out of politics.

The warnings from the dissenting Disciples did not deter the Society from another foray into politics. At the 1865 American Christian Missionary Society convention, the Society adopted another political resolution. J.W. Lanphear, a Disciples minister from Ohio, proposed the following:

Resolved, that we have great and abundant reason for thanksgiving to the Ruler of Nations, not only in the return of peace to our suffering country, but also in the emancipation of slaves and the triumphant vindication of our free and beneficial government.”²²⁹

The resolution was sent to committee where the wording was changed. The following resolution was finally adopted:

Whereas, the conflict of the last four years has resulted in the emancipation of four millions of slaves, and the return of peace to our suffering country, for which we render devout thanks to our Heavenly Father, now opens an effectual door for Missionary efforts among a destitute people within our own borders. Therefore,

Resolved, That we gratefully accept the leadings of Providence, and will endeavor to meet the exigency, that the poor may have the gospel preached unto them.²³⁰

²²⁷ Moses Lard, “Missionary Societies and our Hymn Book,” 143.

²²⁸ Moses Lard, “Notes,” *Lard’s Quarterly*, 2 (January 1865): 138.

²²⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1865, 5.

²³⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1865, 14.

Along with the adoption of this resolution, the Disciples offered an “olive branch” to the Southern Disciples. The formal convention report called for a renewal of fellowship between the northern and southern churches. Despite the great conflict that had occurred, “We can well afford to extend anew the right hand of fellowship to each other, without regard to dividing lines, from Maine to the Gulf.”²³¹ It would be up to the Southern Disciples to accept this attempt at reconciliation.

However, it soon became apparent that reconciliation would not occur after the battlefield hostilities came to an end. While the divide had widened during the Civil War, it was not the national politics or military actions that led to continuing debate among the Disciples. Instead, different interpretations of Scripture became manifest in the missionary society debate, which led to the further distancing between the northern and southern Disciple congregations. This fracturing would eventually lead to the split of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

²³¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1865, 17.

Chapter 6 – The Movement Divides

The year 1866 was a pivotal year for the Stone-Campbell Movement. On March 4th, Alexander Campbell passed away, leaving a void in the Disciples, as the founder of the movement was a key component in maintaining unity within the disconnected congregations. After his death, members of the Movement became bolder in opposing what he had believed. Writers used his writings to their advantage and attributed many of his later beliefs to senility.

Historian W. T. Moore, in his *Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ*, stated that the “Disciples don’t have bishops: they have editors.”²³² Throughout the first decades of the movement, this was true – after the Civil War, it was truer than ever. Because the Disciples did not have a headquarters or a leadership hierarchy, journals and other periodicals were the only way to communicate ideas within the Movement. Beginning in 1866, three major periodicals would shape the future course of the Disciples: the *Gospel Advocate*, the *Christian Standard*, and the *American Christian Review*.

At the beginning of the Civil War, publication of the *Gospel Advocate* ceased. Once the hostilities ended, Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb began to work on resuming publication and turning the paper into a weekly journal. This was a risky venture; due to the South’s economic condition, it was uncertain whether a weekly periodical was financially feasible. On January 1, 1866, the first issue of the revamped *Gospel Advocate* was published. Fanning stated in the inaugural issue that the reason for the new journal was to further the cause of Christ. Fanning wrote, “We have no local or

²³² James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1962), 147.

peculiar institution to defend and nothing new to set forth. We earnestly desire to cultivate the most kindly feelings towards all men.”²³³ Fanning stated that they would act independently and would defend or oppose any views or practices as necessary.

Although both Fanning and Lipscomb were listed as the editors, it quickly became evident that David Lipscomb would become the voice of the Southern Disciples. Lipscomb had studied at Franklin College under the instruction of Fanning and shared many of his conservative beliefs on church cooperation, missionary societies, and opposition to government. Lipscomb became the sole editor in 1868 and would lead the paper for over fifty years, becoming so influential that he was often referred to as the “Alexander Campbell of the South.”²³⁴

Lipscomb and Fanning believed that Christians should not take part in politics or governmental affairs. Lipscomb wrote that the *Gospel Advocate* had been started after the Civil War “with a view of opposing all sectionalism in religion, and of striving to keep politics out of the church.”²³⁵ Although Lipscomb and Fanning might have believed this, there were sectional overtones in the newly reborn *Gospel Advocate*. While stating that he was opposed to sectional issues, Lipscomb wrote in the same article, “The fact that we have not a single paper known to us that the Southern people could read without having their feelings wounded by political insinuations and slurs, had more to do with calling the *Advocate* into existence, than all other circumstances combined.”²³⁶

²³³ Tolbert Fanning, “Salutatory,” *Gospel Advocate*, (January 1, 1866): 1.

²³⁴ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement*, (Abilene, Texas: College Press Publishing Company, 1981), 236.

²³⁵ David Lipscomb, “The Advocate and Sectionalism,” *Gospel Advocate*, (May 1, 1866): 273.

²³⁶ David Lipscomb, “The Advocate and Sectionalism,”: 274.

The issue of missionary societies and cooperation appeared in the second issue of the *Gospel Advocate*. In an article entitled “Missionary Societies,” Fanning warned against such “human inventions becoming a test of fellowship” among the Disciples. Fanning warned that any Christians who believed that one must support societies to be a true Disciple, “we may be compelled to bid you adieu.”²³⁷

The year 1866 was also the year that a new influential journal was begun. During the Civil War, some Disciples believed that the *American Christian Review* had become out of touch with their beliefs. The increasingly conservative editorial stance along with the lack of support for the Union drove many to believe that a new journal was needed. Isaac Errett, James Garfield, and a small group of ministers adopted a resolution that called for the formation of a joint stock company. The publication would be located in Cleveland and would be called the *Christian Standard*. Isaac Errett was named the editor of the new journal.²³⁸

The first issue of the *Christian Standard* was published on April 7, 1866. The majority of the inaugural issue was dedicated to the life of Alexander Campbell. In the first issue, Errett promised his readers that he would maintain a “bold and vigorous advocacy of Christianity.”²³⁹ He wrote that the magazine would discuss “missionary and education enterprises, and every worthy form of active benevolence.”²⁴⁰ The *Christian Standard* was a newspaper-size journal and was designed to be more of a family periodical than previous Disciples papers had been. Along with religious articles and

²³⁷ Tolbert Fanning, “Missionary Societies,” *Gospel Advocate*, (January, 9, 1866): 21.

²³⁸ Lamar, *Memoirs of Isaac Errett*, I, 300-303.

²³⁹ Isaac Errett, “Prospectus,” *Christian Standard*, (April 7, 1866): 8.

²⁴⁰ Isaac Errett, “Prospectus,” 9.

editorials, the *Christian Standard* contained poetry, political news, scientific articles, financial stories, and numerous nonreligious advertisements.

Despite strong financial backing, the *Christian Standard* struggled during its initial years of publication. The lack of subscribers proved that the mood of the Disciples had been misjudged. Errett stated that this was because the *American Christian Review* “was run on a lower plane, and catered to a lower taste”; therefore, people were not ready to support a journal such as the *Christian Standard*.²⁴¹ In late 1867, the directors voted to stop publication of the paper. When Isaac Errett offered to take full financial responsibility, the directors gave him complete ownership of the paper.

The *Christian Standard* quickly made its position on missionary societies known. In the third issue, Isaac Errett published a lengthy article entitled “Missionary Work.” In his editorial, Errett argued that the church had a missionary responsibility. He wrote, “Whether the work shall be carried on by individual labor, but the united contributions of an entire church, or by the joint contributions of twenty, a hundred, or a thousand churches, is a simple question of ways and means.”²⁴² Errett criticized those Disciples who were trying to “weaken and destroy our missionary societies by uncharitable and unjust constructions of the proceedings of the societies.”²⁴³ In regard to those who criticized the societies and said that individual churches should support missionaries, Errett argued that the churches should “let their deeds be their only argument against the societies.”²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Lamar, *Memoirs of Isaac Errett*, I, 304.

²⁴² Isaac Errett, “Missionary Work,” *Christian Standard*, (April 21, 1866): 20.

²⁴³ Isaac Errett, “Missionary Work,” 21.

²⁴⁴ Isaac Errett, “Missionary Work,” 23.

The year 1866 was a year of change for the *American Christian Review*; the editorial policy of the journal changed toward the missionary society. In the past, Benjamin Franklin, the editor of the paper, had been a strong supporter of the concept of societies and had personally held a position within the American Christian Missionary Society for seventeen years. When the journal was founded in 1856, the inaugural issue contained several articles pertaining to cooperation and the benefits it held.

Franklin's defense of missionary societies was based on his assumption that they were simply part of the church and not a separate organization. Over the years, Franklin wrote many articles defending this position. However, in time, Franklin began to realize that the American Christian Missionary Society as well as state societies were separate organizations and not part of the overall church. There was no indication in his journal or in the minutes of the ACMS regarding the point when his position changed. In late 1865, the editorial stance of the *American Christian Review* became clearly anti-cooperation. For several months, the paper contained no articles or editorials regarding societies or any other matters of cooperation.

In December 1866, the first article appeared criticizing the missionary society concept. Franklin argued that churches could cooperate without organizations such as the ACMS. He warned that it was unscriptural for conventions to be organized as permanent associations. In early 1867, Franklin continued his criticism of the society. He wrote, "It is not missionary work to which we are opposed, but empty plans, schemes and organizations, after sectarian models, which have proved failures; expensive, cumbrous and lamentable failures in doing missionary work." Franklin's change in position was a large defeat for the American Christian Missionary Society, as many considered him the

most popular preacher among the Northern Disciples.²⁴⁵ Franklin's journal was also the most popular Disciples periodical in the North. W. K. Pendleton commented that the *American Christian Review* was "the most popular paper amongst us, and wields an influence that should fill its editor with a profound sense of responsibility for its proper conduct as regards all the great interests of the church."

Franklin's opposition to the American Christian Missionary Society came as a shock to the supporters of the organization. Charles Loos wrote about Franklin in May 1867, saying that "so sudden and radical a transformation hardly seemed possible."²⁴⁶ Loos argued that six months prior, Franklin had stated at a meeting of the Ohio Missionary Society conference that "the legitimacy and right of such societies was clear." He concluded by stating that Franklin's new position was "very extraordinary and very difficult of explanation."²⁴⁷

To answer his critics, Franklin wrote a statement that he requested be published in the *Millennial Harbinger*:

We have all the time since our first efforts in the work of the Lord, felt some scruples about Missionary Societies, formed after sectarian models, but for years tried to be satisfied that if they were confined exclusively to missionary work, they might be employed without objection. But, after writing more to reconcile the brethren to them and give them efficiency than any other man among us we were forced to the conclusion that there was no possibility of confining them exclusively to missionary work; that they opened the way for dangerous and mischievous elements to be thrown in, spreading contention in every direction; that such confederations were wrong in themselves; that their constitutions were nothing but annoyances.... Having been compelled to this conclusion some four

²⁴⁵ Henry K Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples* (Bethany, West Virginia: Bethany Press, 1966), 211.

²⁴⁶ Charles Loos, "Items," *Millennial Harbinger*, 39 (December, 1867): 712.

²⁴⁷ Charles Loos, "Bro. Franklin's Argument for the Missionary Society," *Millennial Harbinger*, 38 (May, 1867): 241-245.

years ago, we have been unable to make any defense of these Societies deserving the name, or to advocate them in any effective manner since.²⁴⁸

From his statement in the *Millennial Harbinger*, it was obvious that Franklin's change of opinion stemmed from the controversy over the loyalty resolutions.

The year 1866 was a key year for the American Christian Missionary Society. At the close of their 1865 convention, an olive branch was offered to the Southern Disciples, who had been angered by the actions of the ACMS during the Civil War. Prior to the start of the convention, it was evident that a year had not helped heal the wounds between the two sections. Tolbert Fanning wrote that all of the Canadian Disciples and 99 percent of the Southern Disciples were still opposed to the missionary society concept.²⁴⁹

To explain the position of the American Christian Missionary Society as well as to defend the scriptural validity of the organization, W. K. Pendleton prepared a lengthy address to be presented at the 1866 convention. In his speech, Pendleton summarized three major points of contention. These were the major complaints against the society prior to and after the Civil War.

Pendleton's first objection was to the claim that the early founders of the Stone-Campbell Movement were against missionary organizations. Pendleton began by reminding the critics that the basic premise of the Stone-Campbell Movement was the absolute authority of the Bible and not the opinions of man. Pendleton stated, "But now, we throw away the time honored motto and appeal to the authority of venerated names."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Benjamin Franklin, "On Missionary Societies," *Millennial Harbinger*, 38 (January, 1867): 14.

²⁴⁹ Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 301

²⁵⁰ W. K. Pendleton, "Address," *Millennial Harbinger*, 37 (November, 1866): 497.

The second objection Pendleton addressed was the accusation that the concept of a missionary society was unscriptural. Pendleton did admit that there was no statement in the New Testament specifically authorizing a missionary society. He continued by arguing that there was likewise no statement that forbids such a society.

The question Pendleton was considering was the biggest dividing line within the Stone-Campbell Movement. Did silence of the Scripture forbid an activity or belief, or was silence permission unless strictly forbidden? Although the missionary society was the test case for this issue, the matter of interpretation of the Bible was the issue that would ultimately divide the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Pendleton remarked that Thomas Campbell's famous statement, "Where the Scripture is silent we are silent," was one of the founding ideas of the Stone-Campbell Movement." However, he stated, "It was not valid to apply to the society."²⁵¹ Pendleton argued that at the time Thomas Campbell wrote this statement, he was in the process of creating the Christian Association of Washington, which was essentially a missionary society. Pendleton continued by stating that what Thomas Campbell had meant was that the church was not able to impose "articles of faith" or "terms of communion" that were not specifically commanded in the New Testament.²⁵² He concluded that Campbell's famous words had no bearing on the adoption of human expedients in implementing the ideas of Scripture and said, "We fall back upon the combined wisdom and piety of the church, and adopt by general consent, a human expedient."²⁵³ Pendleton ended this point

²⁵¹ W. K. Pendleton, "Address," 498.

²⁵² W. K. Pendleton, "Address," 500.

²⁵³ W. K. Pendleton, "Address," 501.

by stating, “Let it not be said, then, that disciples of Christ are to take the silence of the Scripture on a given subject as a positive rule of prohibition against all freedom of action or obligation of duty. No rule could produce more mischief than this.”²⁵⁴

The third objection that Pendleton answered concerned the fact that the American Christian Missionary Society charged dues to be a member of the organization. Pendleton stated that the reason for a money-based membership was simple. He argued that it was necessary “because the raising of money is the very first object of the organization.” He continued by commenting that the raising of funds did not create an aristocracy or exclude the poor. The annual membership fee was only one dollar, and that dollar bought the same number of votes as the money of a life member. Pendleton announced to the gathering “one dollar a year gives as much power of voting as one million.”²⁵⁵

The Pendleton address was distributed by the American Christian Missionary Society to all of its members and supporting congregations as an individual newsletter. It was also published in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Isaac Errett called the address “a masterful vindication of the Society.”²⁵⁶ David Lipscomb was, as expected, critical of the presentation. Lipscomb argued that the only real defense that could be made for cooperative societies was “that there must be a universal organization of the church of God with an earthly, central head.”²⁵⁷ Although this sort of group was unthinkable to Lipscomb, he feared that Pendleton’s argument would open the door to such an organization in the future.

²⁵⁴ W. K. Pendleton, “Address,” 505.

²⁵⁵ W. K. Pendleton, “Address,” 511.

²⁵⁶ Isaac Errett, “American Christian Missionary Society,” *Christian Standard*, (November 3, 1866): 244.

²⁵⁷ David Lipscomb, “The Missionary Question,” *Gospel Advocate*, (January 10, 1867): 26.

At the start of 1867, David Lipscomb increased his attacks on the ideas of cooperation, missionary societies, and the ACMS. Starting in January, the *Gospel Advocate* published a discussion between David Lipscomb and Thomas Munnell. Munnell worked for the Kentucky Missionary Society and served as corresponding secretary for the ACMS. Over the course of the discussion, which comprised twenty articles, three major questions became the focus of their exchange.

The first question centered on whether it was possible for churches to cooperate with one another without forming some type of organization. Both men agreed that it was scriptural for churches to cooperate. Lipscomb wrote, “We insist on the duty of churches of Christ co-operating in every good work; and when the work is of sufficient magnitude, it is as legitimate for ten thousand churches to co-operate in it, as for two individuals.”²⁵⁸ Munnell replied that he did not understand how the critics of the Society could have cooperation without some type of organization. He challenged Lipscomb to present a “business-like, practical way of getting at the work of co-operating without organization.”²⁵⁹

Lipscomb replied that there were several ways congregations could cooperate without creating an organization separate from the churches. He suggested that churches might cooperate by supporting a common missionary, as the New Testament churches did with Paul. Congregations could send out a messenger to various churches requesting aid for a particular work or missionary. This would be cooperation through collective funds, but would still be under the directorship of one congregation. Lipscomb

²⁵⁸ David Lipscomb, “The Missionary Question,” 29.

²⁵⁹ Thomas Munnell, “Discussion – Missionary Societies,” *Gospel Advocate*, (March 14, 1867): 205.

commented that during 1867 and 1868, many churches had been sending money to assist with the rampant poverty among Southern Disciples but “without the shadow of an organization except the congregations of Christ.”²⁶⁰

The second major question in the Lipscomb-Munnell articles involved the inconsistency of those who were against organized cooperation. Munnell argued that the *Gospel Advocate* was just as much of a human invention as was a missionary society. He stated that the periodical was never published during the time of Christ and that the newsletter was a “pretty well organized society with its editor, agents, and subscribers.”²⁶¹ Munnell also questioned the college that Tennessee Disciples, along with Lipscomb, were in the process of establishing. Munnell asked, “Would not its President, Curators, faculty, and students constitute an organization distinct from the church?” Munnell commented that as an adulterer has not right to condemn adultery, “So no man has a right to oppose a work which he, under another name perhaps, is doing himself. You oppose all human organizations, and yet establish them yourself.”²⁶²

Lipscomb fired back that the only issue Munnell should be interested in was whether the American Christian Missionary Society and similar organizations were scriptural. Lipscomb denied that the *Gospel Advocate* was an organization. He argued that the journal was preaching by the written word. Lipscomb also responded to Munnell’s charges regarding the college. The purpose of the college, he stated was “general education,” and this was not the work of the church.

²⁶⁰ David Lipscomb, “Discussion – Missionary Societies – No.2,” *Gospel Advocate*, (March 21, 1867): 230.

²⁶¹ Thomas Munnell, “Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 3,” *Gospel Advocate*, (March 28, 1867): 246.

²⁶² Thomas Munnell, “Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 5,” *Gospel Advocate*, (May 2, 1867): 344-345.

The third question discussed was whether the New Testament authorized an organization like the American Christian Missionary Society, and Lipscomb argued that this was the only question that really mattered. He summarized what he thought the issue was as follows:

1st All assumption upon the part of man or men to form organizations or to amend, modify, or form new combinations of the appointments of God to spread the Gospel, or do any other work that God has committed to the Church is anti-scriptural, and embodies a rebellion against God.

2nd The organizations known as Christian Missionary Societies are such organizations, and as such constitute a rejection of God's appointments and a rebellion against God.²⁶³

Munnell argued that although the New Testament specifically authorized the worship practices of Christianity, it was never meant to provide the intricate details for carrying out every command. Munnell wrote, "The chief mistake of the anti-society men is their effort to sink the Bible down to the plane below where God designed it to operate, and make it trouble itself with all the business arrangements that belong to the province of common sense."²⁶⁴ Munnell summarized his position by stating, "The Bible often gives us authority in general precepts, rather than by specifying the particular plans of doing good."²⁶⁵

Lipscomb disagreed with Munnell's argument. Lipscomb believed that groups such as the ACMS served as a substitute for true missionary work. He argued that God's plan was for Christians to be inspired so that "every one, whether a doctor, merchantman,

²⁶³ David Lipscomb, "Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 5," *Gospel Advocate*, (May 19, 1867): 357.

²⁶⁴ Thomas Munnell, "Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 4," *Gospel Advocate*, (April 4, 1867): 263.

²⁶⁵ Thomas Munnell, "Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 8," *Gospel Advocate*, (May 23, 1867): 401-402.

trader or slave, male or female, becomes a missionary of the cross wherever providence casts his lot.”²⁶⁶ Lipscomb ended by stating, “The above is not a very business-like way of spreading the gospel—I admit. It is a very divine way.”²⁶⁷

After the conclusion of the Lipscomb-Munnell discussions, the *Gospel Advocate* reduced its criticism of missionary societies. Lipscomb believed that he had made his point and that there was little more to offer to the argument. Most of the Disciples who read the *Gospel Advocate* held the anti-Society position, and any further discussions were unwarranted.²⁶⁸

Although the Southern Disciples’ position on cooperation was well known, the Northern Disciples were not as unified. The battle for Northern opinion took place in the two leading journals of the North: the *American Christian Review* and the *Christian Standard*. In early 1867, it was clear that Benjamin Franklin had turned the *American Christian Review* into an anti-Society paper. Although he was strongly against the ACMS, Franklin did not viciously attack the group in his paper. The number of articles was small but direct in the denouncement of cooperative organization. Franklin summarized the journal’s opinion by stating the following:

We shall do everything in our power to aid and encourage evangelizing at home and abroad. No man need argue in favor of “associated efforts” in evangelizing or “co-operating” in this good work. We are and have been for evangelizing all the time for “associated efforts,” “co-operation,” of the broadest, most extended and effective kind, but not for the sectarian society scheme. But if other brethren will work in that way, be it so; our way is clear, and we shall work on in the way which the Lord shall open to us.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ David Lipscomb, “Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 9,” *Gospel Advocate*, (May 30, 1867): 419.

²⁶⁷ David Lipscomb, “Discussion – Missionary Societies – No. 9,” 421.

²⁶⁸ Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 295.

²⁶⁹ Benjamin Franklin, “Introduction,” *American Christian Review*, (January 7, 1868): 4

Benjamin's son, Joseph, wrote several articles that were sterner than those of his father. Reciting the words of Thomas Campbell, Joseph said that if the Disciples believed the famous slogan, "Speak where the Bible speaks; be silent where the Bible is silent," then "we will be compelled to abandon the advocacy of missionary societies, co-operation, and consultation meetings. The Scriptures are silent on these subjects."²⁷⁰

Once the *American Christian Review* became an anti-Society journal, the *Christian Standard* reacted by defending the existence of cooperative organizations. Isaac Errett reported in the March 2, 1867, edition that the *Christian Standard* was the only weekly journal supporting the American Christian Missionary Society; he wanted his readers to be aware of that fact. Over the next eight months, nineteen articles appeared defending the ACMS. At the end of 1867, many began to feel that a compromise, rather than a defense of the organization, must be put into place lest the Stone-Campbell Movement divide.

Although both sides of the issue were strongly supported, many began to question whether an issue such as cooperation was worth the division of the Disciples. Many who were in favor of the Society began to question elements of the group, such as the manner in which the Society had been organized.

A committee was formed to review the ACMS constitution and to recommend any changes necessary. When the Society held its 1868 Convention, the proposed changes were presented and were adopted. The changes included the elimination of life memberships and life director positions. The rules for membership were also altered. The

²⁷⁰ Joseph Franklin, "Untying the Missionary Knot," *American Christian Review*, (September 22, 1868): 300.

constitution now stated, “The members of this Society shall consist of delegates annually chosen by the church of Christ contributing to its funds, and of members of churches who annually contribute to the funds of the Society.”²⁷¹ The changes also included reducing the number of vice presidents and a new process for amending the constitution.

Although the changes to the constitution helped ease the minds of some of the Disciples, many still had issues with the American Christian Missionary Society. In early 1869, many supporters of the cooperative efforts realized that opposition to the Society was a threat to the success and continuance of the organization. The Society held a meeting to discuss the matter and developed the following resolution, “Resolved, That a committee of Twenty be appointed to take into consideration the whole question of evangelization and report, if possible, a scriptural and practical plan for raising money and spreading the gospel, said committee to report at the Louisville meeting in October next.”²⁷² Among the twenty men were W. T. Moore, W. K. Pendleton, Isaac Errett, Benjamin Franklin, and various leaders of local and state cooperative efforts. With the exception of Kentucky, no Southern state attended the conference. It was obvious that the Louisville Plan, as the compromise would become known, was designed to placate Northern critics of the ACMS such as Benjamin Franklin.

The 1869 Convention convened in Louisville, and the committee gathered to compile its report. Even though he had been invited to participate, Benjamin Franklin did not serve on the committee. This did not mean that he disagreed with the attempt to reform the group. When the report was presented to the convention, Franklin signed the following statement: “The undersigned, not being present at the meetings of the

²⁷¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1868, 31.

²⁷² *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 11.

Committee, beg leave to say that they approve the above report.”²⁷³ R. M. Bishop delivered the annual presidential address and stated, “For the past fifteen or twenty years our missionary efforts can not be regarded as more than experiments. We have now reached a period in our history when we must do better.”²⁷⁴

The primary order of business at the conference was to develop a new compromise plan, which became known as the Louisville Plan. The plan called for the formation of district, state, and national missionary boards. On the district level, there would be an annual convention to raise money and oversee local and foreign work within the district. A secretary would be appointed in each district whose responsibility would be to visit the congregations within his district, and he would “induce them to contribute and send to the District Treasurer money for the support of missions.”²⁷⁵ The district boards would report to a state convention and board. The state conventions would “manage the missionary interests in their respective states” and would consist of individuals who would represent “two or more churches, or all the churches of a district.”²⁷⁶ Finally, there would be a general board of presidents and corresponding secretaries of the state boards along with nine additional members appointed by the annual general convention. One of the most important features was the proposal for financing the activities of the missionary boards. The committee proposed the following:

As our whole financial system is based upon a general co-operation of the churches, we recommend that each church, over and above the sums it may contribute for missionary work under its immediate control, give a pledge to pay annually to its District Treasurer a definite sum for other missionary work, and

²⁷³ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 34.

²⁷⁴ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 6.

²⁷⁵ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 12.

²⁷⁶ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 13.

that one-half of such contributions may be under the control of the District Boards for missionary work in the districts, the other half to be sent to the State Board, to be divided equally between it and the General Board for their respective works.

According to the details of the plan, the responsibility for fund raising would be at the district level. The district boards would send half of what they collected to the state boards, which would then send half of those funds to the general board. This part of the plan sparked a great deal of discussion during the convention. J. W. McGarvey suggested that the plan be amended to allow each congregation to determine what part of their funds would go to the state and national boards. His suggestion was struck down.²⁷⁷

After the convention had discussed the details of the plan, John Shackleford, a minister from Indiana, suggested a delay in the adoption of the plan. He proposed, “Since the unanimity which is necessary to insure the success of the proposed plan is lacking, the adoption of the plan should be delayed one year to allow the whole brotherhood a chance to discuss its adoption.”²⁷⁸ The convention rejected his plan and voted to pass the Louisville Plan. The plan required a rewriting of the Society’s constitution. In place of the old American Christian Missionary Society, a new organization, called the General Christian Missionary Convention, was created.

The Louisville Plan was designed to appease those who had opposed facets of the old Society, and those looking to placate such individuals were happy when Benjamin Franklin, one of the largest detractors, approved the plan. Franklin wrote in the *American Christian Review* that although he did not participate in the actual work of the committee, he had been at the convention and viewed the results “with pleasure and praise.” He wrote that he did not know how anyone could not “work in harmony with the new

²⁷⁷ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 19.

²⁷⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1869, 21.

proposals.” He was happy that this plan was unlike anything offered in the past. He emphasized that the new plan was simply an agreement among churches regarding cooperation in missionary endeavors. Franklin wrote that the plan was “in our estimation the most simple, natural and wise arrangement ever made. We hope now that every friend of evangelizing will put his hand to the work and push the work and let us hear no more about plans and societies.”²⁷⁹ Franklin supported the new plan because he believed that it was not an organization separate from the church. He stated, “We get rid of any society, or societies, separate from the churches, molded after sectarianism and have a simple arrangement in which individuals can co-operate in sending the gospel abroad.”²⁸⁰

As expected, the *Christian Standard* approved the plan. Isaac Errett wrote, “So far as the *Christian Standard* is concerned, it stands committed to this work. All that we have ability to do shall be done to further the interests of this general co-operation and to unite our whole brotherhood in its support.” Errett noted that the plan would succeed or fail based on the men who were appointed to raise funds. He believed that what was needed was “not enthusiastic dreamers, but patient, plodding, self-sacrificing workers.”²⁸¹

The one major critic of the plan was David Lipscomb. After ignoring the subject of cooperation for two years, Lipscomb published the entire contents of the plan in the *Gospel Advocate*. Lipscomb believed that the plan was just another “missionary scheme.”²⁸² Writing in response to Benjamin Franklin’s support of the new plan,

²⁷⁹ Benjamin Franklin, “Great Convention,” *American Christian Review*, (November 2, 1869): 348.

²⁸⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “Evangelizing,” *American Christian Review*, (November 30, 1869): 380.

²⁸¹ Isaac Errett, “Our Missionary Work,” *Christian Standard*, (November 13, 1869): 364.

²⁸² David Lipscomb, “The Report and the Readers of the Advocate,” *Gospel Advocate*, (November 18, 1869): 1061.

Lipscomb stated, “Brother Franklin goes into complete ecstasies over it and announces that ‘this is essentially different from anything ever before proposed among us’ – that it destroys the Missionary Society.”²⁸³ Lipscomb believed that there was little difference between the new plan and the old ACMS. He wrote that there was still “sufficient leaven of Christian conservatism in the churches” to defeat the new plan.²⁸⁴ A month later, Lipscomb wrote, “We not only believe the organizing of such societies a usurpation of divine power, adding to the word of the Lord in its most offensive sense, but we believe them all practically destructive of efficiency in religious labor.”²⁸⁵

Although it seemed that peace had been established among the Northern Disciples, that peace was short lived. In 1869, Benjamin Franklin and Isaac Errett became involved in controversy over issues other than cooperative efforts. The first of these issues was the use of instrumental music within worship services. The issue had arisen earlier in the 1850s, and Alexander Campbell had quickly denounced the use of mechanical instruments. In 1849, W. L. Pinkerton became the first Disciples minister to bring an instrument into the church building in Midway, KY. Stating that his congregation’s singing was so bad that it would “scare the rats,” Pinkerton brought a melodeon into the worship service to aid in the song service.²⁸⁶

The problem grew after the end of the Civil War. In 1868, Benjamin Franklin estimated that more than 50 of the 3400 congregations were using instrumental music in their worship. Over the next few years, instruments began to appear in more and more

²⁸³ David Lipscomb, “The Report and the Readers of the Advocate,” 1063.

²⁸⁴ David Lipscomb, “The Report and the Readers of the Advocate,” 1065.

²⁸⁵ David Lipscomb, “The New Missionary Scheme,” *Gospel Advocate*, (December 30, 1869): 1178.

²⁸⁶ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 310.

churches, especially in wealthier congregations.²⁸⁷ Once again, a divide occurred over an issue that highlighted the two factions appearing within the Disciples movement. As with the dispute regarding the missionary society, interpretation of the Scriptures was at the center of this debate. Benjamin Franklin and David Lipscomb led the group who were against the concept of instrumental music in the worship service. These congregations saw instrumental music as an innovation not mentioned within the pages of the New Testament. The other group, consisting almost exclusively of Northern congregations and led by Isaac Errett, favored a looser interpretation of the Bible. The issue of instrumental music contributed to the widening gulf between the two groups that had started with the issues of cooperation and missionary societies.²⁸⁸

In 1871, the newly reorganized missionary society held its annual convention in Louisville. The financial report showed that in the two years since the Louisville plan had passed, the general board had not received sufficient funds to enable the establishment of any local or foreign missions. The district and state boards had raised a total of \$46,568, but only \$2,652 had been forwarded to the general board.²⁸⁹

Some of the Disciples began to question the Louisville Plan soon after the end of the 1871 convention. John F. Rowe wrote that although he would try to support the current plan, he believed that it was not the best method for raising funds. Rowe argued that a better plan would be to have a large mass meeting once year that involved as many congregations as wanted to attend. If this were done, Rowe argued, “We would raise ten

²⁸⁷ Garrett, *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 412.

²⁸⁸ For an excellent discussion on the role of instrumental music in the division of the Stone-Campbell Movement, see J. C. Choate, *Sounding Brass and Clanging Cymbals: The Significance of Instrumental Music in the Restoration Movement* (Henderson, Tennessee: Freed-Hardeman Press, 1990).

²⁸⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1871, 11.

times as much real missionary money.”²⁹⁰ Benjamin Franklin mentioned that the general board had not received enough funds to pay for the corresponding secretary’s salary. He questioned why it was that \$46,000 had been raised but little had been forwarded to the general board. It was obvious that the congregations did not feel obligated to forward their funds to the general board. They had raised the money, and they believed they should spend the funds where they had determined the greatest good could be accomplished. Franklin noted, “This demonstrates that, in the judgment of the churches, the Board in Cincinnati is not needed.”²⁹¹

A new issue arose that deepened the rift between the Disciples. On February 11, 1872, Isaac Errett dedicated a new building erected by the Central Christian Church in Cincinnati. The new building cost \$140,000 and was the largest church in Cincinnati, with a capacity of over 2,000 worshippers. The building was described as having the largest stained-glass window in America, with windows that displayed an “impression of grandeur.”²⁹²

The dedication of the building set off a new round of arguments between the conservative and progressive Disciples. Franklin was outraged at what seemed an extravagance. He responded by publishing a long editorial attacking the church. Franklin recalled that when he had first begun his ministry, the Disciples were a “plain and unpretending people, full of love and zeal for the cause.” Franklin argued that if the leaders of Central Church “had been deliberately meditating how they could cut off every

²⁹⁰ John Rowe, “American Christian Missionary Society,” *American Christian Review*, (October, 31, 1871): 349.

²⁹¹ Benjamin Franklin, “General Convention,” *American Christian Review*, (November 7, 1871): 356.

²⁹² “Opening of the Central Christian Church,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, February 11, 1872.

sympathetic chord between themselves and the great mass of the preachers and brethren abroad, they could never have adopted a more successful course.” Franklin stated that he could never speak of “the ancient order” or “the gospel restored” in that building.²⁹³

Franklin was especially upset over the use of an organ in the building. Franklin argued that “an overwhelming majority” of the Disciples were against instrumental music in worship, writing, “This is the kind of millstone they would hang about our necks to sink and disgrace us.” He also spoke out against the “Grand Organ Concert that took place soon after the dedication.” The church charged \$1 admission for the event. Franklin wrote, “Primitive Christianity? Ancient Order? No. This is fashion, pride, apostasy, and corruption.”²⁹⁴

Inevitably, the missionary society and the Louisville Plan were caught up in the controversy over the new Cincinnati church. The leaders of the missionary society were members of Central Church. The missionary society had held twenty of its annual conventions in the old Central Church building. Franklin reminded his readers that although the missionary requests had gone unfulfilled, “What can we say now? That the Society has no money? Then the poor brethren in one church in the city get \$140,000 to build their costly temple and put up an \$8,000 organ?” Franklin continued, “They have put us to the test, to come up and tacitly endorse their folly, extravagance, and pride, with their corruption of the worship or stay away. We can tell them plainly that we will never endorse them in their present worldly course.”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Benjamin Franklin, “Central Christian Church,” *American Christian Review*, (February 20, 1872): 60.

²⁹⁴ Benjamin Franklin, “Central Christian Church,” *American Christian Review*, (March 26, 1872): 100.

²⁹⁵ Benjamin Franklin, “Central Christian Church,” *American Christian Review*, (February 20, 1872): 60.

W. T. Moore, the pastor of the Central Church responded in defense of his congregation. Moore argued that the lack of funds within the missionary society had nothing to do with the Central Church, because it had contributed “more to the cause of missions than any other church in the brotherhood.”²⁹⁶ Isaac Errett joined in defense of the church. He asked why Franklin had not attacked the Fourth Street Church in Louisville when it had spent over \$100,000 for a new building. Errett stated that the reason Franklin was attacking the church was that he was opposed to the Louisville Plan and was attacking the Central Church as an indirect means of attacking the missionary society. Errett wrote, “The missionary men understand that this whole affair to be not so much opposition to the Central Church as to missions.”²⁹⁷ Neither side let up in the attacks, which continued in every issue of the *American Christian Review* and the *Christian Standard* for months to come.

The financial plight of the organization was not improving. In 1872, the general board received funds from two states: Ohio and Indiana. After expenses, the general board had spent less than \$200 on mission work.²⁹⁸ The 1873 financial report showed total disbursements of \$91,869 by the state and district boards, but only \$4,158 to the general board.²⁹⁹ It was clear to many that the Louisville Plan was not working.

A special committee was formed at the 1873 convention to review the financial problems of the general board. The committee reported that because the general board had been unable to start a single mission work, many considered its existence “of

²⁹⁶ W. T. Moore, “Central Christian Church,” *American Christian Review*, (March 5, 1872): 77.

²⁹⁷ Isaac Errett, “The Central Church and Our Missions,” *Christian Standard*, (April 9, 1872): 117.

²⁹⁸ *Report of Proceedings*, 1872, 6.

²⁹⁹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1873, 13.

doubtful propriety.”³⁰⁰ The committee recommended that the constitution be altered to allow the general board to appoint individuals to solicit contributions directly from congregations. Although this amendment did pass, a year later, the financial picture had not improved. The general board’s expenditures still totaled only \$5,172.³⁰¹ Isaac Errett stated, “Our plan has failed to furnish the General Board with means for missions in destitute regions in this and foreign lands.”³⁰² It was now obvious that the Louisville Plan, which was intended to stop the war of words among the Disciples as well as optimize the finances of the churches, had accomplished neither goal.

The legacy of the Louisville Plan was that it ended all foreign missionary work among the Disciples. The provision that allowed the congregations to specify that their mission funds be spent in their own districts had concentrated funds on home missions and had left the general board with the task of providing for foreign missions with little money. Isaac Errett commented that even though the Disciples had over 500,000 members, “we present a humiliating spectacle when, with the immense and inviting fields that God is opening in Mexico, South America, Spain, Italy, and Germany, the facts show that we have not a single missionary in any of these vast dominions.”³⁰³

During the 1874 convention, W. T. Moore, Isaac Errett, and others held a series of informal sessions on resuming foreign mission work. A plan was made to present a report at the 1875 convention on how to accomplish this goal. W. T. Moore presented the report at the 1875 convention. The committee recommended the formation of a separate foreign

³⁰⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1873, 36.

³⁰¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1874, 57.

³⁰² Isaac Errett, “Missionary Work,” *Christian Standard*, (November 14, 1874): 364.

³⁰³ Isaac Errett, “Missionary Work,” 365.

missions board. The organization of the new group, named the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, was similar to that of the original American Christian Missionary Society. It was a voluntary society that consisted of individuals who would contribute to the spread of foreign missions. The plan laid out the various dues and levels of membership. Isaac Errett was elected president, and W. T. Moore was vice president.³⁰⁴

As expected, the journals were filled with comments about the new organization. Errett commented on the new society in an editorial. He reminded his readers that some Disciples had “always favored a voluntary association of individuals, but when the Louisville Plan was adopted, they had yielded their preference and had supported the new arrangement to promote unity.” He continued, “They have worked in the new harness until it is beyond doubt that it does not avail for missionary work in foreign fields, and can not reach beyond the homes fields for many years to come.”³⁰⁵

Benjamin Franklin believed that the formation of the new group meant that the Louisville Plan would be no more. He commented by writing, “Six years’ experiment had laid it quietly on the shelf.”³⁰⁶ He remarked that the new society was not scriptural. Franklin wrote, “We have no zeal to oppose it, or write much about it. There is nothing dangerous in it. It will not do much harm and certainly will do no good. It will amount to but little in any way.”³⁰⁷

Franklin was wrong in his assessment of the newly formed organization. Under the leadership of Isaac Errett, the Foreign Christian Missionary Society became a

³⁰⁴ *Report of Proceedings*, 1875, 40.

³⁰⁵ Isaac Errett, “Foreign Missions,” *Christian Standard*, (November 6, 1875): 353.

³⁰⁶ Benjamin Franklin, “The Conventions,” *American Christian Review*, (November 23, 1875): 372

³⁰⁷ Benjamin Franklin, “The Conventions,” 373.

successful endeavor. At the society's first convention, the group reported that it had already sent missionaries to Denmark and England. The following year, missionary works were begun in France, England, and Turkey. Within the next five years, additional works were started in England, Turkey, India, Japan, and Panama.³⁰⁸

With the success of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, the progressive wing of the party believed they had scored a victory for their side. They believed they had proven that the method they had devised of spreading the Gospel had worked, and they were self-assured in their belief that their methods were in accordance with the Scriptures. It was apparent that the spirit of reconciliation and compromise was over, and they were now "determined to dismiss the opposition."³⁰⁹

This new spirit had begun to appear as early as 1872. Isaac Errett addressed the society convention and stated, "Let the grumblers alone, the do-nothings, and the arguifiers, and go to work."³¹⁰ In 1873, R. M. Bishop, then president of the missionary society, told the convention in his address that they must "ignore the critics or fail." He continued by stating the following:

We had just as well make up our minds to the fact that we cannot conciliate the men who have opposed our missionary organization. It has become too evident that nothing will satisfy them. They opposed the old plan because it was not a co-operation of churches, and now they oppose the new because it is. In fact they mean to oppose us, no matter what plan we adopt, and I really believe that if we had not plan at all, they would then oppose us because we had none.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity*, 495.

³⁰⁹ Earl West, *In Search of the Ancient Order*, 612.

³¹⁰ *Report of Proceedings*, 1872, 14.

³¹¹ *Report of Proceedings*, 1873, 6.

He concluded his address by stating that in the past, the opposition was influential throughout the brotherhood. He argued that they were no longer important and that “we need no longer wait on their co-operation.”³¹²

W. K. Pendleton made similar remarks at the society’s 25th Anniversary Convention. During his address, he surveyed the history of the organization and discussed many of the difficulties that the society had encountered. Pendleton singled out Benjamin Franklin, calling him the “Senior wrangler,” and accused him of causing a great deal of trouble. He ended by stating, “Let us turn from the indifferent, the hostile, and the false, and spread our sails for the farthest shore to which the gospel may yet be borne.”³¹³

W. T. Moore was more direct in his comments, calling for an end to comprising with those who stood in opposition to the society. Moore stated, “I think we ought to say to all such that we can not wait on them any longer.” In his opinion, “There never was a more profitless controversy than that which has been going on between our missionary and anti-missionary men.”³¹⁴

It was apparent that there was an ever-growing division among the Disciples. It was rooted in differences in scriptural interpretation, and it manifested itself in issues such as cooperation, societies, and instrumental music. Benjamin Franklin asked the question “Will we divide?” in an 1873 editorial. In the article, he wrote that there would be “occasional disruptions in congregations, factions, and disagreements, but no general

³¹² *Report of Proceedings*, 1873, 7.

³¹³ *Report of Proceedings*, 1874, 19.

³¹⁴ W. T. Moore, “The Missionary Spirit and the Missionary Work,” *Christian Standard*, (November 6, 1875): 354.

division can come.” He specifically denied that either instrumental music or cooperation issues could bring division. He argued that although the Disciples disagreed, members could choose a congregation that lined up with their particular beliefs.³¹⁵

The ultimate question was whether the Disciples would divide. Franklin and many other conservative Disciples failed to see that the Stone-Campbell Movement was greatly fractured. The best indicator of this was the creation of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. The creation of this organization was evidence that compromise had failed and that division was inevitable. Historian Dayton Keesee stated, “The crucible of division was filled with every essential ingredient except one – time.”³¹⁶

For the next two decades, the rift between the two factions continued to grow. Although lines cannot be definitively drawn, the matter came down to sectional divides, with progressives dominating the North and conservatives dominating the South. The victory of the more liberal wing of the Disciples was largely due to the work of Isaac Errett and his *Christian Standard* and the *Christian-Evangelist*, which was edited by J. H. Garrison. These two men provided leadership to the larger wing of the movement, strengthening and unifying their readers. The conservative wing in North faded with the death of Benjamin Franklin in 1878. No real leader continued his role of guiding the Northern conservatives.

The congregations in the South were unified under a more conservative understanding of the original teachings of the Stone-Campbell Movement. David Lipscomb continued to publish the *Gospel Advocate* until his death in 1912. Many of the

³¹⁵ Benjamin Franklin, “Will We Divide?” *American Christian Review*, (June 3, 1873): 1872.

³¹⁶ Dayton Keesee, *Churches of Christ During the Civil War* (Dallas: Star Bible Publications, 2006), 103.

later issues that had plagued the Northern Disciples, such as the Louisville Plan, instrumental music, and the Central Church, were paid scant attention by the Southern wing of the Movement. They had made up their minds years earlier regarding these positions in light of their New Testament interpretation. During the heart of these controversies, only a handful of articles appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* condemning these practices. Lipscomb believed that as his readers were united under the concept of “silence of the Scriptures,” there was little need to discuss these matters.³¹⁷

In 1889, an Illinois minister named Daniel Sommer took over the publication of the *American Christian Review*, the paper once headed by Benjamin Franklin. Sommer used the journal to attack the “inventions of liberalism” that were flourishing throughout the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement.³¹⁸ Sommer decided to hold a meeting in Sand Creek, Illinois, to discuss the matter. He drew up a document to draw the line against the “innovators” and entitled his speech, “An Address and Declaration,” an obvious play on Thomas Campbell’s “Declaration and Address.”

At least 6,000 conservative Disciples gathered for the meeting. The document criticized the use of choirs, societies, and “other objectionable and unauthorized things.” Sommer closed with a power statement against those who he believed failed to follow the teachings of the New Testament:

In closing up this address and declaration, we state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all such innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished, and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 695.

³¹⁸ Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, 710.

³¹⁹ Garrett, “The Stone-Campbell Movement,” 404.

With this statement, Sommer publically stated that many of the conservative Disciples were now viewing issues that in the past had been seen as matters of opinion as tests of fellowship. After the address, many of the churches in both the North and South began to use the name “Church of Christ,” which was the name of Daniel Sommer’s Illinois congregation. The progressive wing continued to call themselves “Disciples of Christ” or “Christian Church.” Over the next two decades, more congregations within the Movement continued to take sides, splintering into the two distinct denominations that we have today. It was clear by the 1906 U.S. Census that the Stone-Campbell Movement had clearly divided, and unity was no more.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The American Christian Missionary Society as well as other cooperative efforts ultimately led to the division of the Stone-Campbell Movement. While it was not the sole factor, it was the initial catalyst and largest issue to expose the fact that the movement designed to unify all Christians was, itself, far from unified. The fight over the missionary societies demonstrated that there were clearly two factions within the movement. Each group had its own method of scriptural interpretation; due to this conflict, the issue of the scriptural validity of missionary societies and other similar groups caused an irreparable divide within the movement.

As previously discussed, in 1906 David Lipscomb formally announced that there were two distinct groups within the original Stone-Campbell Movement: the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ. The 1906 census showed that the Disciples of Christ was the larger of the two groups (8,293 congregations and 982,701 members). The Churches of Christ had 2,649 churches and 159,658 members. While the Stone-Campbell Movement had divided into two groups, the division was not complete. In 1926, members of the Disciples of Christ who were unhappy with some of the practices of the denomination held a convention in Memphis, Tennessee. The issue was the idea of a denominational headquarters. Many of the churches wanted local autonomy and felt that leadership at the headquarters exerted too much power and was too liberal for their interests. These congregations eventually split from the Disciples of Christ and formed what are known today as independent Christian churches.

Today, the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement still wrestle with some of the same issues that plagued the churches during the nineteenth century. The Disciples of

Christ are more unified than the Churches of Christ, who are in a constant state of unrest. The Churches of Christ struggle with the issues of scriptural interpretation to this day. Many congregations split over instrumental music, female ministers, and cooperative efforts. Today there are approximately 690,000 members of the Disciples of Christ and six million members of the Church of Christ. At the time of the split, the Disciples of Christ was a Northern, more affluent denomination, while the Churches of Christ were primarily Southern and of a lower socio-economic status. Today, these lines have been blurred. The majority of Disciples of Christ congregations can be found in the South, whereas the Churches of Christ are spread throughout the country. Neither group can be defined by socio-economic status, since both denominations contain both wealthy and poorer congregations.³²⁰

It is unclear what the future contains for the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Some forces seek to unite the Disciples of Christ with some of the more progressive Church of Christ congregations. Many churches will continue to split off and perhaps form a new denomination. The only thing that is certain is that the movement that was started to unify all Christians did not accomplish its goal—and even the churches within the Movement are far from unified today.

³²⁰ Gary Holloway, *Renewing God's People: A Concise History of Churches of Christ*, (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2010), 89.

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