

## Let's Go Deeper...

### Wednesday, January 27, 2016

I was certainly proud of the number of you who got out of your driveways and subdivisions for worship last Sunday morning. I figured if 20,000 people would come downtown for a basketball game on Saturday afternoon, surely 200 would make the effort for worship. You did.

Sunday's theme was **Central's history**. Sunday's message, "Roots and Wings," focused on Central's roots in the Cane Ridge revival of August, 1801. Mark your calendars now for Sunday morning, February 7, at 9:30 a.m., when James Trader, Curator of Cane Ridge, tells "**The Cane Ridge Story**" during an all-church Sunday School Hour. If you were unable to be present in person or listen on the radio, **Sunday's sermons** can be heard on our web site: <http://centralchristianlex.info/podcast-page-mint-themes/>

Visit **the Cane Ridge web site** at: <http://www.caneridge.org/>

### Unity

What caught 29-year-old pastor Barton W. Stone's attention at Cane Ridge was the sight of Christian unity: Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were fellowshiping and worshipping together. Stone spent the rest of his life promoting Christian unity, including the founding of what is today Central Christian in 1816 and the joining together of his "Christians" with Alexander Campbell's "Disciples" on New Year's Day 1832. Stone called that union and the nascent movement for Christian unity "the noblest act of my life."



Stone and Campbell were united despite not seeing eye-to-eye on several things:

Finding no biblical warrant for salaried pastors, Campbell advocated for churches led by lay elders and deacons and derided what he called "hireling clergy." Stone asserted the value of an educated, ordained, salaried clergy.

Campbell looked askance at revivals and was deeply distrustful of emotional expressions of religiosity. Stone firmly believed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit along with the Spirit's fruits and power is essential to fullness of life in Christ.

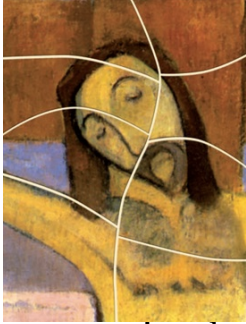
Campbell staunchly insisted upon baptism by immersion and for many years insisted that only "the immersed" be invited to the table. Stone, to the contrary, perceived the mode of baptism as a matter of "forbearance."

Campbell loved to debate biblical or theological issues in order to champion the truth of his movement. Stone found such disputation unnecessarily divisive, writing, "I ever stood opposed to such debates, considering them as a species of

ecclesiastical dueling, degrading to the character of a gospel minister.<sup>1</sup>”

Despite these differences, Stone, Campbell, and their followers remained united.

## Division



Not so for the next generations of their followers. In the decades after their deaths (Stone in 1844; Campbell in 1866), the movement born of a passion for unity divided twice.

**The first fracture** resulted from the introduction of organs into worship. Some, finding no New Testament affirmation of instruments and resenting them as ostentatious displays of wealth, disapproved of those who gladly embraced something that would uplift congregational singing. By 1906, the congregations known as Churches of Christ (*a capella* or non-instrumental) had dissociated themselves from the Christian Churches that had instruments.

Over the next decades, **a second division** ensued. Though its causes were multifaceted, including whether or not to cooperate with other denominations in mission work, the primary rift had to do with interpreting Scripture.

“Conservatives” charged “modernists” with denying the authority of Scripture by employing the latest historical and scientific knowledge and undermining traditional interpretations of the Bible. The “modernists” asserted they were honoring the authority of the sacred texts and loving God with all their hearts, souls, *minds* and might by utilizing every resource at their disposal to better understand a text’s meaning in its original culture and context and discerning its meaning and application for a new day. Generally, those insisting upon a more literal reading became what are today the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ while the Disciples of Christ espouse a more progressive interpretation.

## Restoration 200

Stone and Campbell maintained unity in spite of their differences. Can their ancestors? We’ll see. Put **May 15, 2016** on your calendar as the date on which Lexington-area non-instrumental Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ are planning a joint worship service downtown at Fifth Third pavilion. I don’t know yet how it all pan out, but in the name of Christian unity and in celebration of Central’s 200<sup>th</sup>, yours truly is one of the planners and preachers of the day. More information to come.



**This Sunday...** we’ll focus on **1 Corinthians 12:1-12**. See you then!

<sup>1</sup> quoted in A.W. Fortune, *Disciples in Kentucky*, p. 135.