

The Founders

Facts Compiled from McAllister/Tucker, *Journey in Faith*, and Other Sources

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Barton Stone (1772-1844)

1772: Born near Port Tobacco in southern Maryland. His great-great-great-grandfather, William Stone, was the first Protestant governor of Maryland. In 1779, he moved with his mother and family to Pennsylvania County, Virginia (on the Virginia-North Carolina border). The family's church ties were in the Church of England.

1790: Stone began school at David Caldwell's academy in Guilford, North Carolina. This school was run by Caldwell, a Presbyterian minister. Here, Stone heard the Calvinist preaching of James McGready and was impressed by it. Yet, he was converted under the preaching of William Hodge, who stressed more the love of God than the judgment of God. He taught for a year at Succoth Academy, a Methodist school founded by Hope Hull, in Washington, Georgia. Stone was positively influenced by Hope Hull, and Hope Hull was influenced by the Republican Methodist leader James O' Kelly. O' Kelly's group, in 1794, took the name "Christian" at the suggestion of Rice Haggard. Much later, in 1931, they would merge with other churches to become the Congregational Christian Churches, which later merged with Evangelical and Reformed Churches to become the United Church of Christ.

1796-98: Returned to North Carolina and was licensed to preach. Later that year, he moved to Kentucky, where he became pastor of two churches, Cane Ridge and Concord. As pastor of two permanent churches, he now turned to ordination. On October 4, 1798, he became an ordained minister of the Transylvania Presbytery.

1801: Cane Ridge Camp Meeting: A revival with Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist preachers. Anywhere from 10,000-30,000 in attendance. Controversy with Presbyterian authorities arose because unordained preachers were preaching and beliefs of Calvinism were being ignored.

1803-1804: Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard McNemar, John Thompson, and Barton Stone withdrew from the presbytery because of its objections to the revival and established the Springfield Presbytery. Less than one year later, they disbanded the presbytery they had formed and wrote the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." Summary: (1) rejection of old orthodox Presbyterian doctrine that Christ died only for the elect; (2) belief that Christ died for all and that anyone could believe and be saved; (3) reliance on Bible alone, without creeds as standards of doctrine; (4) demand for independence of each congregation; and (5) desire to "sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." Rice Haggard suggested the name "Christian." Fairly quickly, McNemar and Dunlavy became Shakers while Marshall and Thompson returned to the Presbyterians.

1824: Stone and Campbell met for the first time at Georgetown, Kentucky.

1831-32: In the Fall, Stone worked with John T. Johnson, an admirer and follower of Campbell, to bring together a Christian and a Disciple congregation in Georgetown. At Hill Street Church in Lexington on January 1, 1832, Stone and “Raccoon” John Smith sealed a union between Christians and Disciples. An evangelist representing each group was appointed and together they traveled around bringing the groups together.

Thomas Campbell (1763-1854)

1763: Born in County Down, Ireland, Thomas was the son of a Roman Catholic turned Anglican. He studied for three years of classical training at the University of Glasgow (Scotland) and then went to the seminary of the Anti-burgher division of the Seceder branch of the Presbyterian Church. He went five terms of eight weeks each; all the instruction he received was given by one professor.

1798: He became minister of the Ahorey Church, about thirty miles southwest of Belfast; he remained there until he departed for America.

1806: Schism in the Church: The name of Campbell’s church reflected its many divisions: Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church. In 1733 the Seceder Presbyterian Church withdrew from the Church of Scotland to protest the patronage system which gave the right to appoint ministers to the lay landlords of the churches. A little while later, the Seceder Church split again. A law in Scotland required that the Burgesses of the cities swear loyalty to the established state church (Presbyterian, but not “Seceder”). The Anti-Burgher wing of the church opposed these oaths. Both Burghers and Anti-Burghers sent missionaries to Ireland. The division between these groups had no relevance in Ireland; nevertheless the division continued. Finally, in 1806, the Old Light/New Light split took place and had to do with whether civil magistrates had any power over matters pertaining to religion. All these divisions weighed on Campbell’s heart and he set his mind on Christian Union.

1807: Landed in America, and established himself in Philadelphia. He joined the Associate Synod of North America, a group of Seceder Presbyterians in America. Within a few months after he began preaching, another preacher brought informal charges against him for heretical teaching and for practices not in line with the Presbyterian churches. Among other things, he was found guilty of open communion, encouragement of lay preaching, and expressing his belief that he felt it okay for lay members to listen to preaching from ministers who were in opposition to Presbyterian testimony.

1809: The Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania was organized. Its motto was “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” Thomas Campbell also published his famous *Declaration and Address*, a lengthy document justifying the establishment of the association. The document’s most famous sentence is “The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.”

Summary: (1) Rejection of human creeds in favor of the Bible alone; (2) Rejection of jurisdiction of synods and presbyteries; (3) Objective was reunion of Christians; (4) the means to that end was the restoration of primitive Christianity.

Alexander Campbell (1788-1866)

1808: Along with the rest of the Campbell family, Alexander leaves for America. After a shipwreck, the family members make it to Glasgow where they remain for nearly one year. Here, Alexander encountered concern for the restoration of the primitive church; the independence of local churches; the rejection of clerical privileges and the right of lay people to have a voice in the church; the weekly observances of the Lord's Supper; and the conception of faith as the belief of testimony, an act that all people are capable of by using their intelligence to believe the evidence of Scripture.

1809: He arrived in America and read the *Declaration and Address* and found total agreement.

1811: He helped to establish the Brush Run Church. With this action, these Christians became a separate and unaffiliated church. Thomas was chosen elder; four deacons were elected, and Alexander was licensed to preach. On New Year's day, 1812, Alexander was ordained.

1812: Alexander's first child, Jane, is born. He studies baptism and decides that believer's immersion is scriptural. In June, the two Campbells and their spouses, and a few others, were baptized in Buffalo Creek.

1815: These reformers joined the Redstone Baptist Association. They ran into trouble with the Baptists through Alexander's publication of *The Christian Baptist*. Alexander and others joined the Mahoning Baptist Association (eastern Ohio) in 1823, before he could be kicked out of the Redstone group.

1820: First of many debates that helped to solidify Alexander's reputation as a thinker and a prominent religious figure in America.

1821-22: On a visit to Pittsburgh, Campbell met Walter Scott, a young Presbyterian from Scotland. They discovered agreement with one another on restoration and unity.

1830: The Campbells and Scott dissolved the Mahoning Baptist Association. This meant dissolving their association with the Baptists and again set off on their own.

1832: These reformers affirmed the union with the Christians brought about by Barton Stone, John T. Johnson, and "Raccoon" John Smith. Campbell always preferred the name "Disciples" over the name "Christians." Stone and the others preferred the name "Christians" over the name "Disciples." Thus, we still have the confusion in name.

Walter Scott (1796-1861)

1796-1818: Born in Moffatt, Scotland, Scott eventually attended the University of Edinburgh

1818: He traveled to America, spending a year teaching in Long Island before going to Pittsburgh in 1819, where he began teaching in the school of George Forrester. Forrester's church members thought of themselves as "primitive Christians" and practiced immersion, footwashing, and the "holy kiss."

1820: Forrester died and Scott took over the school. Influenced by Forrester's library, and particularly a tract on baptism by Isaac Errett's father, he closed the school and went to New York to visit the church that produced the pamphlet. He quickly returned to Pittsburgh to become the tutor to Robert Richardson (who later became a professor at Bethany, and the biographer of Alexander Campbell).

1821-22: He met Alexander Campbell and discovered they had religious interests in common. After this meeting, both men began to place more emphasis on the restoration of primitive Christianity.

1824: He wrote a series of articles in *The Christian Baptist* which tried to show preachers that they should produce Christian belief by arguing based upon the evidence of Scripture, rather than by trying to produce a state of "assurance of pardon," or by using emotional techniques, or by painting vivid pictures of what happens to those who refuse Jesus. Here Scott began to react against the emotionalism that revivalism had begun to produce in excess on the frontier. He began to present what in his view was a more intelligent and scriptural method for preaching the gospel.

1827: He was appointed the evangelist of the Mahoning Association. It is interesting to note that he was not ordained, not a Baptist, and not a member of any of the Mahoning churches at the time this occurred. Scott preached the "Gospel Restored" and believed that anyone could become a Christian by simply believing the evidence preached to them. His restored gospel had five points: (1) the sinner must believe the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah; (2) the sinner must repent personal sins and resolve to sin no more; (3) the sinner must be baptized; (4) with these conditions fulfilled, God will provide remission of sins; and (5) grant the gift of the Holy Spirit (and eternal life). These beliefs represent the "five finger exercise." This represented no emotionalism, and was an attempt at a common sense approach to the scripture. Walter Scott was so successful in his evangelism that Thomas Campbell was sent to check him out.

1830: He encouraged the dissolution of the Mahoning Association. With this event and Scott's success as evangelist, Disciples experienced the birth of their own identity as a movement and started their step toward becoming a denomination. His success as an evangelist spread the movement far enough to come into contact with Barton Stone's movement.