What I Learned about Churches of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ[1]

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Churches of Christ (a cappella) and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (independent) both contain multiple streams. In the early twentieth century there were three streams in the Churches of Christ. Today there are two. There are currently three streams in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Similarities linking streams across these two groups and with the leadership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are rooted in similar views of the norm of the restoration of apostolic Christianity.

Neither Churches of Christ (a cappella) nor Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (independent) are monolithic. And, they never have been. The Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement has always had streams within these streams.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST (A CAPPELLA)

When the first division of the North American Stone-Campbell Movement was formally recognized in 1906, Disciples of Christ viewed Churches of Christ as uniformly conservative. In reality, three major traditions existed in this stream: (1) the Tennessee tradition, led by David Lipscomb (1831–1917) and James A. Harding (1848–1922); (2) the Indiana tradition, led by Daniel Sommer (1859–1940); and (3) the Texas tradition, led by Austin McGary (1846–1928). These three struggled for dominance as Churches of Christ tried to define the boundaries of their distinct identity in the post-Civil War era. The labels do not mean that the traditions were restricted to their respective geographical regions or that everyone in those regions agreed with the dominant tradition in that area. Rather, they identify theological orientations that reflect the primary geographical origin of each.

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[1] This article is adapted from an address presented originally for the SCJ Conference, April 12-13, 2012, at Lincoln Christian University.

Stone-Campbell Journal 15 (Fall, 2012) 165–176

The Tennessee Tradition

David Lipscomb and James A. Harding, who in 1891 cofounded what is now Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, were the most influential Stone-Campbell educators and editors east of the Mississippi and south of the Ohio in the early twentieth century. Theologically, both represented a fusion of the apocalyptic and positive law traditions of the Stone-Campbell Movement.[2] The apocalyptic tradition arose from Barton Stone's growing frustration in the 1840s with the failure of state and federal governments to abolish slavery, which led him to reject participation in civil government. The positive law tradition was rooted in Alexander Campbell's primitivism but was more fully developed by Benjamin Franklin (1812–1878). Franklin explained the difference between positive law and moral law in his sermon, "Divine Positive Law." Obedience to positive law was the ultimate evidence of reverence for divine authority because it was obedience to a command for which there was no reason for obedience except God's command. In contrast, obedience to moral law frequently reflected little more than informed self-interest. Immersion in water for the forgiveness of sin was an example of positive law.

While Lipscomb and Harding embraced the positive law tradition, they framed it with an apocalyptic vision of the dynamic in-breaking of the reign of God. God was acting to carry out the divine will. For Harding, especially, God empowered holy living by the indwelling of the Spirit. Both opposed all political involvement as compromise with the world, yet insisted that the church's mission was much broader than evangelism. The church—as the presence of Jesus in the world—preferred the poor and shared its wealth with the disadvantaged. The inspiration for discipleship was not law, but the reign of God in the person of Jesus as taught in the Sermon on the Mount. This apocalyptic orientation prevented their positive law emphases from degenerating into mere legalism.

The Indiana Tradition

The thought of Benjamin Franklin provided the roots of the conservative stream north of the Ohio. Franklin, formerly of Cincinnati, moved his base of operations to Anderson, Indiana, in 1864. While Lipscomb's focus was a strong countercultural view of the kingdom and Christian life, Benjamin Franklin and other northern conservatives accentuated the positive law tradition. Without an apocalyptic orientation, such a focus often reduced divine grace and presence to law and obedience. Daniel Sommer, who wrote for Franklin's *American Christian Review* in the 1870s, charged that colleges, including those established by leaders of the Tennessee tradition, centralized power, promoted elitism and impoverished the church by constructing brick and mortar buildings rather than disciples.[3] Yet his chief opposition to the colleges was the positive law rationale that they were unauthorized by Scripture.

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[2] This material is dependent upon John Mark Hicks, "The Gracious Separatist: Moral and Positive Law in the Theology of James A. Harding," *ResQ* (Summer, 2000) 129-147.

The Texas Tradition

Texans did not receive the apocalyptic message well. Unlike Middle Tennessee, where many Stone-Campbell leaders were pacifists and had refused to participate in the Civil War, many Stone-Campbell leaders in Texas had fought in the Civil War. The positive law tradition, along with a Southern socio-sectional ideological influence—also formative in the Tennessee tradition—dominated Texas Churches of Christ. A Confederate veteran and twice sheriff of Madison County, Texas, Austin McGary had joined Churches of Christ in 1881 at age thirty-five. When he attended the 1884 Texas State Meeting at Bryan, he became disturbed that "the majority of brethren were drifting away from the ancient landmarks."[4] McGary also feared the influence of the Lipscomb's *Gospel Advocate*. In particular, he opposed Lipscomb's position that the simple desire to obey God was a sufficient motive for baptism, even when candidates did not know that baptism was for the remission of sins. McGary's journal, *Firm Foundation*, embraced the view that only those immersed with the specific understanding that baptism was for the remission of sins and necessary for salvation are genuinely baptized. The Texas tradition also taught that the Holy Spirit only dwelled representatively in the believer through the word of God, embraced a deistic understanding of providence, and fully identified the church with the kingdom.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Tennessee tradition was dominant. The Indiana tradition, which was more open to women's leadership than either of the other two traditions, struggled to be heard in an overwhelmingly Southern church. At the same time, however, some in the South shared the noninstitutional emphases of the Indiana tradition, and this cleavage would reveal itself in the mid-twentieth-century emergence of the noninstitutional churches of Christ. By 1960 just over ten percent of the total membership of Churches of Christ had aligned themselves with noninstitutional churches, churches that opposed church-supported colleges and other church-supported institutions such as orphanages.[5]

The Tennessee Tradition as a theological consensus, however, had come increasingly under attack for its positions on special providence, rebaptism, millennialism, the Holy Spirit, and the role of civil government. By mid-century the tradition had largely collapsed as an identifiable trajectory, and a subtle deism emerged. Pacifism almost disappeared. Rebaptism became the majority position, even in Tennessee. Millennialism was driven out. The personal indwelling of the Spirit became the minority view. Many came to ridicule special providence. The Texas tradition had won the day.

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[3] Daniel Sommer, "College, What Is It?" *Orthographic Review* (March 1, 1910) 3.

[4] Austin McGary, "Five Years Work," *Firm Foundation* (September 3, 1889) 4.

[5] David Edwin Harrell, *Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century: Homer Hailey's Personal Journey of Faith* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000) 145.

As early as the 1950s, however, dissonant voices had begun preparing the way for the emergence of a new stream that would challenge the Texas tradition. One of these voices was W. Carl Ketcherside (1908–1989). Ketcherside had been nurtured in the Indiana Tradition. However, by 1957 he had undergone a transformation. He rejected the exclusivist sectarian part of his heritage and promoted unity meetings among the streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement in North America. Christians cannot experience unity through conformity, he insisted, but only through Christ in the midst of diversity.[6]

Another such voice was Leroy Garrett (b. 1918). Rooted in the Texas tradition, his years of experience and education at Southern Methodist University (M.A., 1943), Princeton Theological Seminary (B.D., 1948), and Harvard University (Ph.D., 1957) moved him toward a more ecumenical position. Garrett exposed sectarian exclusivity in Churches of Christ and called for the recognition of unity among all followers of Christ.[7]

Other voices also provided an alternative to the Texas tradition. In 1952 K.C. Moser published *Christ versus a "Plan*," a scathing rebuttal of the widespread "plan-of-salvation" mentality."[8] Rather than thinking about steps to salvation, Moser argued faith and trust in Jesus as savior is the means of salvation, and baptism is the embodiment of faith.

In 1958, Abraham Malherbe and Pat Harrell founded *Restoration Quarterly* as a place for dialogue among the growing community of graduate-educated Churches of Christ scholars. *ResQ* published several articles that anticipated a hermeneutical shift in Churches of Christ, one of the most significant being Roy Bowen Ward's "'The Restoration Principle': A Critical Analysis." Ward reflected some of the same impulses seen in the work of the Disciples Panel of Scholars.

The Panel of Scholars was charged by the Disciples with examining Disciples doctrine in light of contemporary scholarship. This panel, composed primarily of teachers from Disciples schools, met for four years beginning in 1957. In 1963, the Panel's papers were published in a three-volume series titled *The Renewal of the Church*.[9] In "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church," the concluding essay of volume 1 of the Panel's report, Ronald E. Osborn asserted that "Apostolicity was an explicit ideal of Disciples from the outset" but that Thomas Campbell had taken a fatal turn when he defined it as restoration of a NT constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the church. While Campbell's intentions were catholic, seeking to serve unity and freedom, his ideology proved to be sectarian because it was founded on a series of false assumptions that he shared with others of his era.[10]

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[6] W. Carl Ketcherside, *Pilgrimage of Joy: An Autobiography of Carl Ketcherside* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1991).

[7] Leroy Garrett, *A Lovers Quarrel, An Autobiography: My Pilgrimage of Freedom in Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2003).

[8] Kenney Carl Moser, *Christ versus a "Plan"* (Searcy: Harding College Bookstore, 1952).

[9] William Barnett Blakemore, ed., *The Renewal of the Church: The Panel of Scholars Reports* (3 vols.; St. Louis: Bethany, 1963).

First among these false assumptions was that that the NT is a constitution for the church. A comparison of any book in the NT with Leviticus would quickly reveal that the NT is not a constitution, nor does it contain one, in the sense of specific prescriptions for the order, worship, faith, and life of the church. Another false assumption was that the NT gave shape to the church. Rather, the church was formed by the gospel as proclaimed by the apostles. The NT contained samples of their preaching and directives to the churches, but "fidelity to the gospel rather than to deductions about ancient church organization should give shape to the church."[11]

Finally, it was a false assumption that once the books of the NT had been completed, the Holy Spirit ceased to guide the church except by these writings. If true, the church could no longer follow the first-century practice of facing a problem prayerfully and taking counsel in the light of its best understanding of the gospel, as was the case in the decision to admit Gentiles to the church. Osborn concluded, "The subsequent divisions within the movement are due not so much to the bad spirit of a people whose professions of unity must be regarded as hypocritical as they are to the ambiguity, confusion, and contradiction arising from the ill-starred attempt to make a constitution out of the New Testament."[12]

If restoration was no longer justifiable as an interpretation of apostolicity, was there a defensible interpretation of the concept? Osborn answered that there was and that Thomas Campbell had pointed toward that interpretation when he wrote that "nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion; but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the word of God." Apostolic faith and order viewed in this light, Osborn argued, points to what is essential to the life of the church over against that which is peripheral or transitory.[13]

Ward discussed the development of the canon and the nature of the NT documents, suggesting a move away from the positive law hermeneutic. "The Restoration Principle," he wrote, "is meaningless unless the hermeneutical problem is carefully considered." In line with the position advocated by Osborn, Ward redefined restoration as understanding the theology of the NT and reapplying it to new contexts, not duplication of NT forms.[14]

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[10] Ronald E. Osborn, "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church," in Blakemore, *The Renewal of the Church*, 1:315-316.

[11] Ibid., 1:317.

[12] Ibid., 1:316-318.

[13] Ibid., 1:318-319.

By the mid-1980s a significant hermeneutical divide was apparent. A leader of the shift to a "new" hermeneutic was Thomas H. Olbricht (b. 1918) who taught biblical theology at Abilene Christian University (1967–1986) and Pepperdine University (1986–1996). Olbricht sought to reorient the hermeneutical focus of the church away from "command, example, and inference" to "God, Christ and the Holy Spirit." According to Olbricht, the church needed to recover the central theological message of Scripture in light of the mighty acts of God. Theology was rehearsing those mighty acts rather than dissecting the text through the lens of a positive law hermeneutic.[15]

The hermeneutical discussion did not stay at the academic level, however. It was at the heart of conflicts ranging from "worship wars" to the church's very mission. Debates over worship practices ranging from handclapping to drama in the assembly reflected growing differences in biblical interpretation in local congregations. The shift also renewed discussion about instrumental music in worship as some congregations added instrumental services in the early twenty-first century.[16]

While conservatives feared that any move away from the traditional stance would result in the loss of beliefs and practices essential for remaining true to Scripture, progressives believed a hermeneutical change was essential for the group's survival. Rather than reproducing patterns found in the NT through the positive law approach, progressives looked for the theological roots that should shape Christian life.[17] This shift involved focusing on the gospel rather than patterns of church as the key element of Christianity.

While a broad middle remained in the 1990s, twenty-first century Churches of Christ reflect a clear bifurcation between conservatives and progressives. Progressives increasingly focus on aspects of the Christian faith that have often been neglected or opposed in Churches of Christ. Urban ministries give significant attention to social justice and attack institutionalized racism. Women exercise increasing leadership in the public assemblies, and a growing liturgical freedom allows new ways to worship and proclaim the gospel. Many have become aware of the rich insights of the twenty centuries of Christian history, including the traditions of Christian spiritual formation as churches seek to deepen their relationship with God. Progressives claim these moves are rooted in both Scripture and the Stone-Campbell heritage of freedom and unity.

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[14] Roy Bowen Ward, "'The Restoration Principle': A Critical Analysis," *ResQ* 8.4 (1965) 210.

[15] Thomas H. Olbricht, *Hearing God's Voice: My Life with Scripture in the Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1996).

[16] Lindy Adams, "Instrumental Worship: Isolated or Key Trend?" *Christian Chronicle* (September 2003): in October and November 2010 the online journal *New Wineskins* carried articles examining the issue and interviewing ministers at churches that had added instrumental services, http://www.wineskins.org/page.asp?SID=2&Page=375.

[17] Bill Love, *The Core Gospel: On Restoring the Crux of the Matter* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1992); Jeff Childers, Douglas A. Foster, and Jack R. Reese, *The Crux of the Matter: Crisis, Tradition and the Future of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2001).

Conservatives are active in evangelizing their neighbors, and are heavily involved in global missions. They continue to promote the values of the Texas Tradition through lectureships, periodicals, electronic media, and Gospel Meetings. They generally oppose church involvement in social justice, reject a larger role for women in the public assembly, are suspicious of the disciplines of spiritual formation rooted in Christian history, and oppose changes in worship style.

The relative strength of each of these positions is difficult to measure. Each has its own schools, papers, and spokespersons; and each has its own ministries and world mission work. A survey of ministers in Churches of Christ taken in 2000 indicated that those who identified themselves as theologically "moderate" served congregations that together made up slightly more than forty percent of members of the group. Just over fifty percent of the total membership was in congregations whose ministers labeled themselves as "conservative."[18]

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST (INDEPENDENT)

Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have often been caricatured as ideologically and sociologically homogenous, the embodiment of a Fundamentalist revolt among Disciples of Christ. In reality, independents, as this stream was identified prior to its separate listing in the 1971 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, developed three significantly different schools of thought: (1) Foundationalist Restorationists, (2) Neo-Restorationists and Neo-Evangelicals, and (3) "Free Church Catholics."[19]

Foundationalist Restorationists[20]

This group had its roots in hard-line opposition to perceived Disciples liberalism and ecclesiasticism—a term used to refer to hierarchical and authoritarian rule. It began as a large and vocal group in the 1920s, but in the late twentieth century diminished considerably and by the beginning of the twenty-first was a small minority. The group drew its inspiration from leaders who viewed Disciples in the 1920s as standing at a fork in the road. The two options were rigorous adherence to what they saw as the restoration program (the "old paths"), or accommodation to Protestant liberalism, which they believed would lead to the rapid annihilation of the Stone-Campbell Movement. In this respect these staunch restorationists look like classic Fundamentalists who saw the church embroiled in an all-out war with modernism.

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[18] Douglas A. Foster, Mel E. Hailey, and Thomas L. Winter, *Ministers at the Millennium: A Survey of Preachers in Churches of Christ* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2000) 70, 165-166.

[19] A. T. DeGroot critically analyzed these divergences among "independents," deemed "Church of Christ Number Two," in his *New Possibilities for Disciples and Independents* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1963) 45-67, 92-97. Later, three studies attempted to define ideological groupings in the Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ: C. J. Dull, "Intellectual Factions and Groupings in the Independent Christian Churches," *The [Cincinnati Bible] Seminary Review* (1985) 91-118; G. Richard Phillips, "From Modern Theology to a Post-Modern World: Christian Churches and Churches of Christ," *Discipliana* (Fall, 1994): 83-95; Paul Blowers, "Christian Churches, Churches of Christ," in Hans Hillerbrand, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (2 vols.; New York: Routledge, 2004) 1:398-402.

[20] This group is termed "foundationalist" restorationists to avoid the label "fundamentalist," which could create confusion with other Fundamentalists with whom they had some significant theological dif-

An early representative of this group was Rupert C. Foster (1888–1970) of Cincinnati Bible Seminary, whose own education at Harvard Divinity School and Yale University gave him credibility to attack liberal Protestantism among Disciples.[21] Foster had no use for what he saw as Reformed creedal Fundamentalism and distanced himself from many of its doctrinal positions, such as its view of baptism. Nevertheless, he shared the Fundamentalists' abhorrence of biblical higher criticism and their devotion to the King James Version.[22]

Foundationalist restorationists were among the strongest advocates for minimal church bureaucracy and independent (direct support) missions.[23] Their lasting legacy, however, was their insistence that Christian unity and world evangelism could be achieved only by a strict return to New Testament Christianity, which included their conception of the biblical plan of salvation, believers' immersion, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and congregational autonomy. Restoration—not ecumenical compromise or "secular" agendas like "Social Christianity"—was the true vocation of the Stone-Campbell Movement.[24]

Tensions within this group developed as early as the 1920s when R.C. Foster complained that some hard-line preachers were undermining the restoration cause by embracing controversy for its own sake.[25] By the 1940s, the conservative restorationist consensus was teetering, especially because of the work of James DeForest

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ferences. They were foundationalists in the sense of a fervent commitment to a purely objective, original, and comprehensive NT platform of faith and practice.

[21] For a good profile of Foster in relation to Fundamentalism of the time, see Kevin Kragenbrink, "Dividing the Disciples: Social, Cultural, and Intellectual Sources of Division in Disciples of Christ, 1919–1945" (PhD diss., Auburn University, 1996) 176-180.

[22] R. C. Foster, *The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Pittsburgh: The Evangelical Fellowship, 1946); R. C. Foster, *The Battle of the Versions* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Bible Seminary, 1953; reprinted from *Christian Standard*, January–March 1953).

[23] David Filbeck, *The First Fifty Years: A Brief History of the Direct-Support Missionary Movement* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1980) 175-210.

[24] Robert Elmore, "Christianity versus Rationalism," in Z.T. Sweeney et. al., *The Watchword of the Restoration Vindicated: Five Masterly Arguments* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1939) 79.

[25] Foster, *Christianity versus Pacifism*, 16. On restorationist infighting, see also DeGroot, *New Possibilities*, 46-67.

Murch. Despite his strong support of the restoration agenda, Murch feared that restorationism could fall into sheer parochialism. By the 1960s this "old paths" group was increasingly regionalized and marginalized, especially as Bible colleges adapted to new educational trends, some older independent missions faltered while new missionary organizations proliferated, and later, as a younger generation of church leaders grew weary of a biblicism that thrived on controversy.

Neo-Restorationists and Neo-Evangelicals

A second identifiable group included two dynamically related subsets termed here "neo-restorationists" and "neo-evangelicals." Representing a majority of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ in North America at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this group ran the gamut from desire to recover a restoration agenda, to a willingness to downplay the restoration ideal to find common cause with mainstream Evangelicalism. What gave them a common identity was their rejection of what they saw as a declining mainline Protestantism that had lost its doctrinal grounding and zeal for evangelism and missions. All would agree that restoration must be cast as an inviting appeal reflecting current cultural realities rather than a stark appeal to scriptural conformity.

A major visionary of this group was James DeForest Murch (1892–1973), whose own thinking on the nature of restoration evolved over his long career.[26] Though some historians have classified Murch, at least in his early years, as a fundamentalist, he resisted the label.[27] What Murch offered conservatives was more than merely another voice of opposition to Disciples progressives. He framed the Stone-Campbell restoration agenda as part of the centuries-long crusade of "free churches" against ecclesiastical tyranny. Faithful restorationists were part of an anti-tradition tradition, a lineage of New Testament Christians that had endured persecution from established churches since the second century. They were champions in the larger "Protestant Revolt" and historic players in the embodiment of a free church ecclesiology.[28]

Murch experienced conflicts with foundationalist restorationists, who criticized his willingness to maintain lines of communication with the left as well as the right. In 1938, for example, he proposed holding unity meetings that would include "progressives" as well as conservatives.[29] In 1945, Standard Publishing, having assumed an avowedly more rigorous position against Disciples agencies, fired Murch, accusing him of being a compromiser.[30]

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[26] James DeForest Murch, *Adventuring for Christ in Changing Times: An Autobiography of James DeForest Murch* (Louisville, KY: Restoration Press, 1973) 65, 84-85.

[27] Kragenbrink, "Dividing the Disciples," 193-206.

[28] James DeForest Murch, *The Protestant Revolt: Road to Freedom for American Churches* (Arlington, VA: Crestwood Books, 1967); James DeForest Murch, *The Free Church* (Louisville, KY: Restoration Press, 1966); and James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard) 9-18.

[29] James DeForest Murch, "Progress toward Brotherhood Unity," *Christian Standard* (January 8, 1938) 29.

The censure came just before the National Association of Evangelicals (est. 1942) invited Murch to edit its magazine, *United Evangelical Action*. Murch's presence in this national conservative coalition provided a powerful example for later leaders who began to forge new alliances and cultivate new resources that would have been unacceptable to an earlier generation of restorationists reluctant to associate with Calvinists and Pentecostals.[31] The Protestant Neo-Evangelicalism that developed in American Christianity in the mid-twentieth century was a fragile coalition from the beginning because of its internal diversity (the prefix "neo" was dropped in the 1960s). Nevertheless, the American Evangelicalism of the 1950s provided Disciples neo-restorationists a fresh context to voice their platform of biblical truth.

In the 1950s and 1960s, some Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, following Murch's example, began to support the Billy Graham Crusades, to use Christian education resources from Evangelical publishing houses, and later to interact with Evangelical church growth and mission organizations and find their place in campaigns against abortion and other social causes important to Evangelicals. Bible college professors took graduate degrees from Evangelical seminaries and joined Evangelical scholarly societies. Some fought long and hard to convince Christian Churches/Churches of Christ to embrace biblical inerrancy (as distinct from "infallibility") as a *restoration* principle, despite Alexander Campbell's denial of the Reformed doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration of scripture.[32]

"Free Church Catholics"

The third group in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ was probably the smallest at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and reflected the legacy of certain influential individuals who had struggled to find a middle way between conservative and progressive Disciples. This group has variously been called "Old Conservative Disciples"[33] and "high church sacramentalists."[34] Many in their ranks however, called themselves "free church catholics," a name coined by Disciples historian and theologian Alfred T. DeGroot (1903–1992). The group's identity was centered in academic institutions like Milligan College and Emmanuel School of Religion, now Emmanuel Christian Seminary, schools more open to higher-critical biblical scholarship. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, only a tiny fraction of local congregations retained any significant identification with this "free church catholic" ethos.

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[30] Murch, *Adventuring for Christ*, 148-152.

[31] On the coalition of "Neo-Evangelicals" taking over the mantle from earlier Fundamentalists in American Protestantism at mid-century, see George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 62-64, 73-77, and 100-109.

[32] Jack Cottrell and Myron Taylor, "Inerrancy as a Restoration Principle" (debate manuscript), North American Christian Convention, Indianapolis, July 8-9, 1985. Cottrell clarified, however, that inerrancy should be a restoration principle but not a "term of salvation." See also Jack Cottrell, *The Authority of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

[33] Dull, "Intellectual Factions and Groupings," 95-98; Dull, "The *Declaration and Address* among Independents," in Thomas Olbricht and Hans Rollmann, ed., *The Quest for Christian Unity, Peace, and Purity: Thomas Campbell's* Declaration and Address (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2000) 417-420 and 421-423.

[34] Phillips, "From Modern Church to Post-Modern World," 88.

Most of this group's heroic figures were voices of moderation among mid-twentieth-century Disciples. Frederick Kershner (1875–1953), Dean and Professor of Christian Doctrine at the Butler University School of Religion, now Christian Theological Seminary, from 1924 to 1944, was especially revered. Ecumenical in spirit and friendly to early Disciples involvement in the ecumenical movement, Kershner nonetheless opposed the progressive Disciples practice of open membership and insisted that restoration would hold its own in the new ecumenical atmosphere of the twentieth century.[35] A number of younger figures guaranteed a place for the legacy of free church catholicism, among them Dean E. Walker (1899–1988), who called for refocusing the restoration ideal on the person of Jesus Christ rather than an "ancient order" of apostolic Christianity—though he too opposed open membership, hierarchical and authoritarian church structures, and other perceived deviations from the NT.[36]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, considerable fluidity still remains among the three discernable groups in Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Colleges, seminaries, missionary organizations, and congregations have become more complex and not always easily labeled. Furthermore, individual leaders often cross between these groups and resist alignment with any single group.

MERGING STREAMS

Simple distinctions between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ do not convey the diversity within each of these streams. Neither do they reflect the similarities linking groups across these two streams. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, "Free Church Catholics" and Neo-Restorationists and Neo-Evangelicals within Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have more in common with different groups across the spectrum of progressives within Churches of Christ than they do with Foundationalist Restorationists within Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Likewise, progressive

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[35] Byron Lambert, "The 'Middle Way' of Frederick D. Kershner," 260-270, in *Emmanuel at 40: Heritage and Promise* (ed. Dan Lawson; Johnson City: Emmanuel School of Religion Press, 2005).

[36] Dean E. Walker, in William Richardson, ed., *Adventuring for Christian Unity and Other Essays* (Johnson City, TN: Emmanuel School of Religion, 1992) 147-150 and 525-550.

Churches of Christ have more in common with different groups within the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ than they do with conservative Churches of Christ. Furthermore, though the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) does not fall within the scope of this paper, "Free Church Catholics" and some groups of progressives within Churches of Christ have as much in common with the leadership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as they do with other groups in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the Churches of Christ.

At the heart of these contemporary similarities among groups across the three major streams of the North American Stone-Campbell Movement is the fresh appraisal of the norm of the restoration of apostolic Christianity that emerged more than a half century ago in all three of these streams. **SCJ**