CAMPBELLITE AND RESTORATIONIST TRADITIONS IN THE SOUTH

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THE FRENZIED EXCITEMENT of nineteenth-century frontier revivalism not only helped to imprint the evangelical style on much of Southern religion, but also led to the emergence of an interest in returning to the practices of primitive Christianity. Both commonsense rationalists and emotional revivalists sought to return to a presumably more pure Christian practice untainted by the accretions of time that had corrupted authentic Christianity. While this restorationist impulse attracted many campmeeting advocates, including Barton W. Stone, in time it coalesced around Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). Restorationists discarded denominational labels at first as signs of division within the one church, preferring to call themselves simply "Christians." In time, however, the followers of Alexander Campbell grew into one of the first indigenous denominations in the United States, the Disciples of Christ or the Christian Church.

As the movement grew, it enlarged its vision to include a conviction that American society itself could be transformed into a culture replicating the pure simplicity of New Testament Christian communities even as it extended its following into both the North and the South. For many years Campbell maintained an unofficial headquarters in Bethany, West Virginia. As with other groups, the sectional divisions over slavery brought tension to the movement, which combined with disagreement over religious practices (such as the use of musical instruments in worship, the support of ecumenical missionary societies, and the like) to split the developing denomination in two by 1906,

though for all practical purposes the emerging schism was obvious at least two decades earlier. The more "conservative" group adopted the name Churches of Christ and still maintains its base of strength in the South. By the time of the formal division, it was also clear that the Disciples of Christ had come to place more emphasis on ecumenical and cooperative ventures than on restorationist principles. Hence the restorationist impulse has been more closely associated with the Churches of Christ as the twentieth century progressed. Differences regarding methods of biblical interpretation also entered into the controversy. Later internal disputes over requiring baptism by immersion for admission into fellowship led the more adamant proimmersion party of the Disciples in 1927 to become popularly known as the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, though allied congregations have eschewed denominational structures and still regard themselves more as a federation of independent congregations.

A significant body of literature has appraised the history and development of these groups and their leaders, whose stories are intertwined for nearly a century and often treated together. For many years, the work of church historian Winfred Ernest Garrison dominated the field. His early study, *Alexander Campbell's Theology: Its Sources and Setting (10),* attempted to locate the movement's ideology within the broader theological tradition as well as within the American context of frontier revivalism. Garrison's conviction that the religious style of the frontier was essential to understanding the contours of the Campbellite thrust formed the thesis of his*Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ (13),* while its corollary, the specifically American context that gave birth to the movement, is developed in his *An American Religious Movement: A Brief History of the Disciples of Christ* (11). His most synoptic study was coauthored with A. T. DeGroot:*The Disciples of Christ: A History* (12). But Garrison's work, as others of the "church history" genre, is hardly critical, representing the "institutional triumphalism" school of Disciples history, although it is grounded in traditional historical method. More recently, William Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (43)* has become the basic Disciples denominational history. A more popular study, lacking rigorous analysis, is Louis Cochran and Bess White Cochran, *Captives of the Word (6).*

The standard denominational history for the Churches of Christ is the three volume work of Earl Irvin West, *Search for the Ancient Order (46).* West works from an "issues and answers" perspective, but does not bring critical analysis to his study. Different in approach is William S. Banowsky, *The Mirror of a Movement (4),*which looks at themes characterizing the more conservative Churches of Christ and vignettes in that group's history as they have been articulated through a recurring lecture series at the denomination's

Abilene Christian College (now University). A recent comparison of differences in ideological styles between the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ is F. Maurice Ethridge and Joe R. Feagin, "Varieties of 'Fundamentalism': A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis of Two Protestant Denominations" (8), based on a 1972 study of Texas congregations. For the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, or Independent Christian Churches, see James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (36).

By far the most penetrating portrayal of the Disciples and Churches of Christ, particularly before the formal separation in 1906, is found in the work of David Edwin Harrell, Jr. Harrell, a member of the "noncooperation" wing of the Churches of Christ, leaves behind all traces of the filiopietism that marks most studies of denominations written by adherents and also the simple chronicling of names, dates, and events characteristic of most traditional denominational histories written by scholars, though Harrell has mastered such "facts." Aware of tenets advanced by sociologists of knowledge concerning how ideas are absorbed and transformed into systems for understanding the whole of empirical reality, Harrell is also keenly sensitive to the way

cultural and religious forces interact and mutually influence each other. Harrell's two volumes on the Disciples of Christ (which include coverage of the tensions that eventuated in the emergence of the separate Churches of Christ), *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (18) and *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900* (22), unravel precisely how a religious world view becomes a way of constructing social reality, which in turn becomes a blueprint for society and social behavior. In several articles, Harrell has treated specific themes, some of which are also covered in his monographs: "The Significance of Social Forces in Disciples History" (21), "From Consent to Dissent: The Emergence of the Churches of Christ in America" (17). "The Sectional Pattern: The Divisive Impact of Slavery on the Disciples of Christ" (20), "The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ" (19), "The Disciples of Christ and Social Forces in Tennessee, 1865-1900" (62), and "The Agrarian Myth and the Disciples of Christ in the Nineteenth Century" (16). The Harrell corpus remains a model for a solid, scholarly, and insightful approach to denominational studies.

The differences of opinion over biblical criticism that were part of the schism between the Disciples and the Churches of Christ come into focus in Anthony L. Ash, "Attitudes Toward the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament Among the Disciples of Christ, 1850-1905" (1). Ash has published a series of four articles in*Restoration Quarterly* based on this dissertation (2). Numerous other works have attempted to identify other ideas, ranging from the presumed isolation of churches in the South during the era of the Civil War to the belief that restorationism inherently breeds division, as the fundamental cause of division, though none has been successful in making a

convincing case. Representative of studies of this ilk are Arthur V. Murrell, "The Effects of Exclusivism in the Separation of the Churches of Christ from the Christian Church" (37), and Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches (9).*

Numerous works treat the Campbellite-Restorationist tradition along state lines, though most of these are semipopular in style and avoid sharp critical analysis. Among more recent studies in this genre are Herman A. Norton, *Tennessee Christians: A History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee* (72), and Wilbur H. Cramblet, *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia: A History of Its Co-Operative Work.* (53). H. Jackson Darst explores early and mid-nineteenth-century Campbellite developments in Virginia in *Ante-Bellum Virginia Disciples: An Account of the Emergence and Early Development of the Disciples of Christ in Virginia* (55), while Carter E. Boren traces a parallel story for Texas in his *Religion on the Texas Frontier* (49). Charles C. Ware has written several short monographs of a popular sort on Campbellite history in Carolinas, including histories of three individual North Carolina Disciples of Christ churches (79, 80,82). His two more synoptic studies are the now dated *North Carolina Disciples of Christ: A History of Their Rise and Progress, and of Their Contributions to Their General Brotherhood* (81), which appeared in 1927, and *South Carolina Disciples of*

Christ: A History (83). William J. Barber, *The Disciples' Assemblies of Eastern North Carolina* (48), is notable for its inclusion of the denomination's work, albeit limited, among its black adherents. On the coming of the Disciples to Oklahoma, see Stephen J. England, *Oklahoma Christians: A History of Christian Churches and of the Start of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma* (57). An important study for the Churches of Christ is William Woodson, *Standing for Their Faith: A History of Churches of Christ in Tennessee, 1900-1950* (87). Woodson's study, an outgrowth of a doctoral dissertation, appreciatively but objectively chronicles the denomination's development in the state that was of strategic importance in the evolution of the Churches of Christ, paying particular attention to the emergence of a distinctive denominational identity.

The standard biography of Disciples founder Alexander Campbell remains Robert Richardson's two-volume *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (108), published more than a century ago. Most later biographers have relied heavily on Richardson's work. More recently Campbell's life and thought have received attention in several articles by John F. Morrison that deserve wider circulation than they have witnessed to date: "A Rational Voice Crying in an Emotional Wilderness" (104), "The Centrality of the Bible to Alexander Campbell's Life and Thought" (103), "Alexander Campbell: Moral Educator of the Middle Frontier" (102), and "Alexander Campbell: Freedom Fighter of the Middle Frontier" (101). Perry E. Gresham, ea., *The Sage of*

Bethany (93) contains essays by several prominent historians, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Roland Bainton. Also valuable in delineating Campbell's understanding of the nation and his vision of America is Harold L. Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (98). On this subject for the Churches of Christ, see Royce L. Money, "Church-State Relations in the Churches of Christ since 1945: A Study in Religion and Politics" (32), which emphasizes the role of anti-Catholicism and anti-Communism in determining this denomination's position on church-state issues. Views on other social, ethical, and theological issues advanced by Campbell and by the denominations that have evolved from his teaching are the subject of several works identified in chapters 4, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

A vital influence on Alexander Campbell and on the spirit of ecumenicity associated with Campbell and the Disciples was his father, Thomas Campbell. Alexander Campbell, ea., *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell, Together with a Brief Memoir of Mrs. Jane Campbell (90),* remains fundamental because of its inclusion of important primary material on both father and son. Two later biographies also merit mention: William H. Hanna, *Thomas Campbell: Seceder and Christian Union Advocate* (94); and Lester G. McAllister, *Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book (99).*

Two individuals prominent in the early growth of the Disciples who later exerted strong leadership in the conservative wing of the denomination that became the Churches of Christ were Tolbert Fanning (1810-74) and David Lipscomb (1831- 1917). Neither has been the subject of a critical biography. James R. Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement (116), is* the best study to date of this major antebellum Disciples evangelist and critic of Disciples involvement in missionary societies. Similar, popularly written appreciations of Lipscomb, who was baptized by Fanning and had a long tenure as editor of the *Gospel Advocate,* are Robert E. Hooper, *Crying in the Wilderness: A Biography of David Lipscomb (95),* and Earl West, *Life and Times of David Lipscomb*(114). Also see John L. Robinson, *David Lipscomb: Journalist in Texas, 1872* (109).

The bibliography that follows identifies first denominational and topical studies that deal with either the Disciples of Christ or the Churches of Christ or both. Studies that focus on the Campbellite-Restorationist tradition in individual Southern states or communities follow. The final section lists biographical or autobiographical studies of individuals affiliated with either or both groups. Also important is *Restoration Quarterly,* a journal that contains articles of both historical and contemporary interest for this tradition. Sometimes useful for historical studies is *Discipliana,* the publication of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville.

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Titles in chapters 1, 2, 4, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21 are also relevant to the story of the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ in the South.

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