

RESTORATION APPRECIATION
WEEK 2023

JESSIE ELLIS HARDEN & WALTER D. ZORN

Edited by John C. Nugent



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Preface

Great Lakes Christian College proudly embraces our heritage in the Restoration Movement and celebrates that heritage with our constituent churches. To foster greater appreciation for our rich heritage among our students, staff, and affiliated churches we launched GLCC's first annual "Restoration Appreciation Week" back in 2016.

We were pleased to host our eighth annual Restoration Appreciation Week, October 17-20, 2023. Our celebration kicked off with church historian Jessie Ellis Harden's sobering look at the early Movement's mixed responses to American slavery. Harden has been teaching Restoration History at GLCC for many years. Her presentation, "Rugged Restoration Unity: Pursuing Harmony on the Eve of Civil War," outlines the diverse approaches of prominent leaders and challenges us to consider how we might champion Christian unity in our own day with its own volatile social and political schisms. On Friday, Walter D. Zorn, a former GLCC Professor of Old Testament, took a fresh look at key slogans that have long encapsulated Restoration thought and practice. Expanding beyond the typical list, Zorn identifies, unpacks, and engages ten distinct slogans. Most readers are sure to be surprised by the unique origins of these well-worn mottos. The Friday session was followed by a robust discussion between our two speakers and those who came to hear them. We seek to keep these important conversations going by making both presentations available in this pamphlet.

Both sessions were also live streamed, recorded, and made available to watch on GLCC's website

Preface

at <https://www.glcc.edu/advancement/restoration-appreciation-week>. Also available online are resources and pamphlets related to prior Restoration Appreciation Week celebrations.

GLCC continued this tradition by hosting Restoration Appreciation Week in October of 2024. For the most up-to-date information and congregational resources for past and future events, frequent our website at <https://www.glcc.edu/advancement/restoration-appreciation-week/>.

Rugged Restoration Unity

Pursuing Harmony on the Eve of Civil War

Jessie Ellis Harden

One of the things I love the most about teaching history is that I get to tell stories. Today I get to tell the story about the Restoration Movement in the time just before the Civil War. This was a time when the country was bitterly divided as threats of violence and calls for bloodshed echoed through the country. Yet the founders of our movement were convinced of the value of rejecting denominational divisions and uniting all Christians under the guidance of the New Testament. This story speaks admirably about who we are as a movement, but it also speaks about racial ideas that scandalize modern minds.

In the first decades of my experience with the Restoration Movement, unity was far from a foundational ideal. Rather, unity was desirable as long as one agreed with our church's core practices. Unity came from rescuing other parties from their erroneous beliefs. Prioritizing unity amid disagreement over strongly and sincerely held beliefs was a foreign concept.

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

Nevertheless, teaching Restoration History at Great Lakes Christian College while at the same time intensively reading Civil War history, I began to understand what a monumental task the Restoration Movement had undertaken. As I taught through the beginnings of the movement—a movement that preached unity in the early 1800s and beyond—I couldn't help but impress upon the class that "all this was happening while the country was gearing up for the Civil War!" I couldn't help but marvel that the founders of this unity movement were going out into the world, often among border states whose citizens violently disagreed about the issues of slavery and the government of the Union, and telling people that Americans should be united. Numerous other voices were calling for the biggest separation our country had ever faced!

In this essay, I examine what the country was going through during the early 19th century while Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone were gathering like-minded Christians and boldly declaring "let unity be our polar star." They preached unity as other men devised a division in this country and among humanity that would lead to America's bloodiest sacrifices. I will also highlight how prominent leaders in the Restoration Movement dealt with the slavery issue that was tearing Christians apart.

The United States had endured a troubled history with slavery since its inception. Different states gradually came to regard slavery in disparate ways, with northern states often opposing slavery and southern states depending on slaves to run their agricultural empires. This doesn't mean, of course, that everyone in the North advocated abolition and everyone in the South supported slavery. People in both areas had different viewpoints, but

by 1804 all states north of Maryland had abolished slavery outright or provided for gradual emancipation.

As states were crystalizing their position on slavery, the Second Great Awakening, a religious revival beginning in 1790, swept through the country. People attended revivals and were overcome by a great desire to return to God. Men and women committed their lives to serving the Lord with heightened religious fervor.

How did such faithful Christians reconcile slavery with the practice of Christianity? It seems alien to our 21st century minds that those so touched by the power of God would have condoned slavery. Not surprisingly, even to moderns, the Bible could be used to either support or denounce slavery, as we'll see shortly. Northern abolitionists vehemently decried the evils of slavery, while Southerners defended their way of life, economy, and benevolence. As segments of the country became increasingly polarized, the controversy inevitably assailed the church, including our fledgling unity movement.

At the turn of the century, as states north of Maryland were ridding themselves of slavery, early Restoration leaders were forging convictions on both slavery and unity. Some arrived early at an anti-slavery stance. One leader, Barton W. Stone, undoubtedly opposed slavery. During a 1797 tour of the South he was shocked by the conditions slaves endured, particularly at a slave auction.¹ Stone “continued to oppose slavery until the day he died” and even moved his state of residence in order to legally

¹ Jeffery Herbener, “A House Undivided: Slavery and the Restoration Movement,” Austrian Scholars Conference (March 2002): 3.

free slaves that he and his wife had inherited.² Those members of the movement who were directly influenced by Stone retained this anti-slavery stance throughout the controversy.

Barton Stone's unity convictions shone through in his actions. He sincerely believed in the unity of all men, and slavery would not compromise his belief system. When he preached "there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling,"³ he meant it.

While Stone was trying to convince Christians that we are meant to be the body of Christ together, the country was deciding if and how it could be a body together. Tensions were high as the country tried to balance admission of slave states to the Union with admitting states that prohibited slavery. Each side of the slavery issue vied for control of the country's political arena. Agreements such as the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which established restrictions for admitting slave states, were mere patchwork agreements that did not resolve the issue; they only held the country together for a little while longer. During this time church members, including Alexander Campbell, deeply felt the conflicts of the day.

In the 1830's, while the Stone and Campbell groups were uniting as one, Campbell was careful not to entrench himself in either camp. He spoke strongly against the institution of slavery, but also defended the master-slave relationship in order to preserve the unity of the religious

² David Bailey, *Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery 1783-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985): 172.

³ Barton W. Stone, "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," *Foundational and Controversial Stone-Campbell Movement Documents*, 8.

group whose theme was, in fact, unity.⁴ Campbell prioritized unity so much because he believed, based on his reading of John 17:20-21, that the evangelization of the world and the full arrival of God's kingdom depended on Christian unity.⁵ Nothing else mattered more. So when national events escalated, pressuring Campbell to pick a side, he chose to walk a middle line that seemed contradictory at times. From a biblical perspective, Campbell supported slavery. From a human-interest perspective, he rejected common abuses of the system. Harold Lunger explained Campbell's approach as follows: "Curiously enough when he dealt with slavery from the point of view of Scripture, he generally approved it...but when he wrote or spoke as a 'politician' or citizen, he opposed it."⁶ More than anything, Campbell strove to hold the unity of the movement to which he had lent his name, remembering the ideals put forth in the *Declaration and Address* of his father: "Division is terribly sinful, obstructing the mission of the church...[and] Christ is the only source of unity."⁷

The earliest mention Campbell made of slavery in his publication, *The Millennial Harbinger*, indicated that he

⁴ Harold Lunger, *The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell* (St Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1954): 193.

⁵ See Alexander Campbell, "Foundation of Christian Union," in *Christianity Restored: The Principal Extras of the Millennial Harbinger*, Revised and Corrected (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1959; originally published under title: *A Connected View of the Principles and Rules by Which the Living Oracles May Be Intelligibly and Certainly Interpreted*, Bethany, VA: 1835) 103-104.

⁶ Lunger, *Political Ethics*, 194.

⁷ Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement*, revised ed. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 106.

was opposed to the injustices of the institution. In 1830 he wrote in his journal that he hoped to inspire “exaltation from [the] present degraded condition” of slaves.⁸ In the only article Alexander Campbell wrote that year concerning the topic, he encouraged Christians to fight state laws that forbade whites from teaching blacks to read.⁹ While this seems like too delicate a stand against such a contentious issue, Campbell was as yet reluctant to enter the fray of slavery. Perhaps by first concentrating on one of the social conditions of slaves, he believed he could better slaves’ lives while not pitting factions of Christians against one another.

Further articles addressing the issue were slow to appear. In 1832 Campbell “urged Virginia to find a practical method of emancipation.”¹⁰ In 1835 he predicted that the future of the nation, as well as millions of its inhabitants, lay uncertainly hinged on the slavery question.¹¹ Only as tensions escalated over the admission of Texas into the Union as a slave state in 1845 did Campbell finally address the subject more thoroughly in a series of twelve articles. He recognized the issue as a serious threat to the ideal of Christian unity.¹²

Practicing what he preached, Alexander Campbell vowed to let the Bible alone serve as the guiding force of his position on slavery. He came to three conclusions.

⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Prospectus,” *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1830): 129.

⁹ Herbener, “House Divided,” 2.

¹⁰ Alexander Campbell himself enacted the idea of gradual emancipation by freeing two slaves he had bought when those men reached the age of twenty-eight (Bailey, *Shadow on the Church*, 174).

¹¹ Herbener, “House Divided,” 3.

¹² Herbener, “House Divided,” 3.

First, the Roman system of slavery was not better than the American one. Second, the early church, under the guidance and regulation of the apostles, consisted of both masters and slaves. Finally, Campbell concluded that nowhere does Scripture definitively argue that slavery is completely outside of the law of God.¹³

Campbell thus decided to argue the point that, while the master-slave relationship was not inherently un-Christian, it was ripe for injustices. Campbell believed that, in as much as such injustices were performed in that union, he would stand against them. When two men debated the slavery issue and both supported Campbell's position publicly during their debate,¹⁴ Campbell congratulated himself on having discovered a middle way in which abolitionists and pro-slavery factions could not only dialogue, but also actually achieve accord with one another.

When faced with the divisiveness of the slavery issue, Alexander Campbell chose to uphold the unity of the church as more important than the single topic of slavery. He believed that Christians had a duty to remain united, no matter what the political atmosphere of the country dictated. Campbell thought that "anyone who promotes religious division is a fanatic and fails to understand that religious unity is the underpinning of the Union."¹⁵ He even believed that this unity would eventually lead to the freedom of slaves.

Of course, many others disagreed with Campbell's assessment of the situation. In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Law passed, requiring even citizens of free states to return escaped slaves to their masters. Isaac Errett, a minister

¹³ Herbener, "House Divided," 7.

¹⁴ Herbener, "House Divided," 8.

¹⁵ Herbener, "House Divided," 11.

from Ohio who later became the editor of the *Christian Standard*, criticized Campbell's idea of Christian responsibility to accept the institution of slavery, particularly in light of this new slave law.¹⁶ Errett also looked to the Bible and cited several texts in which persons disobeyed the ruling authorities to uphold a greater law and were rewarded for their beliefs.¹⁷ These examples included the Hebrew midwives who hid babies against the orders of Pharaoh, as well as Obadiah who hid hundreds of the Lord's prophets from Ahab and Jezebel.

Other prominent members of the Stone-Campbell Movement directly supported abolitionist efforts. John T. Johnson, Tolbert Fanning, and "Raccoon" John Smith all publicly renounced slavery.¹⁸ A Disciples preacher in Iowa, Aaron Chatterton, declared that he was "for war, open war—a war of conquest and extermination, to be prosecuted in the spirit of Him who 'goes forth conquering and to conquer,' and with 'weapons mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.'"¹⁹ Those of the Stone-Campbell Movement dedicated to abolition were convinced that God's plan did not tolerate any acceptance of slavery, including the so-called compromises of the moderate view. They interpreted

¹⁶ Lunger, *Political Ethics*, 226. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 provided that "A Negro accused of being a runaway was denied trial by jury and the right to testify on his own behalf. He could be removed to slavery by the presentation of an affidavit by the man who claimed ownership. Federal Marshals were required to enforce the Act. Cf. *Robert Tibbs Maxey, Alexander Campbell and the Peculiar Institution* (El Paso, TX: Spanish American Evangelism, 1986): 226.

¹⁷ Lunger, *Political Ethics*, 227.

¹⁸ Bailey, *Shadow on the Church*, 174.

¹⁹ C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1985): 177.

New Testament verses to imply that “the Christian is divinely commanded to love his neighbor as himself, and to do to all as he would have them do to him, therefore Christians should have nothing to do with encouraging involuntary servitude.”²⁰

However, coloring the popular views of the Stone-Campbell Movement, several prominent men, Alexander Campbell included, owned slaves. Moreover, the American and Foreign Antislavery Society reported that, as of 1850, the members of the Disciples of Christ “owned more slaves per capita than members of any other denomination.”²¹ Those who discovered slavery to be compatible with Christianity cited texts in which “God sanctioned owning and trading slaves and permitted children to be born into slavery.”²² They concluded that individuals are intrinsically unequal. Some believed that if slavery was the “most servile and degrading character,” it was still “divinely pronounced and inflicted.”²³

Proponents of slavery believed that not only were they biblically sound, but they were practicing benevolence on the grandest scale with their slaves. One minister even

²⁰ Goen, *Broken Churches*, 177.

²¹ Bailey, *Shadow on the Church*, 177.

²² Bailey, *Shadow on the Church*, 5. One must note that some of the material both supporting slavery and opposing slavery were written by one person. For instance, Alexander Campbell authored writings that may be used without context to support either side of the issue. It is possible, therefore, that each side could quote him as advocating their viewpoint.

²³ Thomas Campbell, “Elder Thomas Campbell’s Views on Slavery,” *Millennial Harbinger* 1 (January 1845): 3-5. Thomas Campbell’s cited verses include Gen 9:25, 27; 14:14; 17:12, 13; Exod 12:43-45; 20:17; 21:20, 21, 26, 27, 32; 21:2-4; Lev 25:39, 40, 44, 46; Isa 24:12; Deut 24:7; 23:15, 16; 1 Cor 7:20-24; Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22, 25; 4:1; 1 Tim 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; 1 Pet 2:18, 20.

said, “Have our slaves . . . been wronged in being raised, through the institution of slavery, to a condition of moral, intellectual, and civil improvement, and to a state of protection, comfort and happiness never elsewhere, not in any period of the world’s history, known to any person of the [their] race?”²⁴ Many Christians felt they were engaged in caring for those less fortunate as directed in the Bible by caring for their slaves. They felt slaveholders were providing for a people who would otherwise have been left to a fate more degraded, impoverished, and animalistic than the life provided by the slave system.

To 21st century Christians, 19th century Christian support of slavery seems generally unfathomable. To this way of thinking, slavery completely dehumanizes those who should be equal with their Christian brethren and disregards Christ’s mandates of love and compassion. While one may want to criticize Alexander Campbell’s policy for denying passion for either side of the issue and striving not to “rock the boat,” it may have been just that mentality that actually kept the movement together more wholly than many other denominations which split before and during the Civil War. One historian states that the “Disciples’ center of strength was in the critical border states, where their churches held together by virtue of their decentralized polity and Alexander Campbell’s teaching that “one’s opinion on slavery was a matter of opinion rather than faith and should not become a test of Christian fellowship.”²⁵

Working within the framework of what Christians could agree upon, Alexander Campbell attended to the

²⁴ Southern Clergyman, *A Defense of Southern Slavery Against the Attacks of Henry Clay and Alexander Campbell* (Hamburg, SC: Robinson and Carlisle, 1851): 9.

²⁵ Goen, *Broken Churches*, 135.

Christian duty to reform slavery. In the reformation to correct the injustices and cruelties shown to those in slavery, Campbell argued that the church must set an example in kindness and, eventually, the manumission of slaves in order to peaceably show the love of God and neighbor to black men and women who had previously been denied this grace.²⁶

The issue of slavery was a topic that not only divided the nation, but also viciously split religious groups. Some adamantly opposed the existence of slavery, some passionately supported it, and some tried to find a middle way between the two. The Stone-Campbell Movement, like many other groups of Christians, struggled to accommodate all these factions in unity while maintaining faithfulness to the moral guidelines provided by God. In the end, after considering the concepts put forth in the Bible and explained by the leaders of the group, each person could only take the stand that seems best to his or her own understanding.

As we reflect on the issue of unity during the time before the Civil War, we might feel a sense of familiarity: polarizing issues with life and death consequences . . . using the Bible to both defend and condemn both sides of an issue . . . a country and church unable to find a place where opposing sides might meet. This sounds a lot like today's world. America is no more divided today than it was at the beginning of the 19th century. Men like Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone plead for Christians to join together as one body of Christ amid highly volatile times. We may not always agree with the compromises that sustained their fragile unity, but may we find bold, even if imperfect, ways to preach and live

²⁶ Herbener, "House Divided," 9.

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

out our unity in Christ in our time and place, for the sake of world evangelism.

The Restoration Movement

Its Clichés, Slogans, and Mottos

Walter D. Zorn

It is an honor to participate in Great Lakes Christian College's "Restoration Appreciation Week." The Restoration Movement has not often moved in the way we think it ought to, but it is still "moving"! I have chosen to address the Movement's clichés, slogans, and mottos in order to enrich your appreciation for these maxims. I consulted my trusty *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, fourth edition, to get a dictionary definition of each of these terms:

- Cliché – "an expression or idea that has become trite."
- Slogan – "a catchword or rallying motto distinctly associated with a political party or other group" (our "other group" being the churches of the Restoration Movement).
- Motto – "a word, phrase, or sentence chosen as expressive of the goals or ideals of a nation,

group, etc. and inscribed on a seal, banner, coin, etc.” It can also mean “a maxim adopted as a principle of behavior.” (Again, our “group” being the churches of the Restoration Movement.)

I do not claim to engage this subject exhaustively; otherwise, the reader would soon suffer exhaustion. Nor do I assume the reader will agree with my opinions about the slogans, but let me say with the great P. H. Welshimer: “Let us disagree without being disagreeable!”

In the *Christian-Evangelist* magazine of the Disciples of Christ (1949) a series of five articles were written by different Disciples authors on various “Slogans of the Disciples.” They were given in this order:

1. “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”
2. “In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things charity.”
3. “The restoration of the New Testament church.”
4. “No Creed but Christ.”
5. “The church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one.”

To these five we must add another five which were clearly a part of “Restoration Movement” treasury of slogans:

6. “We are Christians only, but not the only Christians.”
7. “Call Bible things by Bible names.”
8. “We are free to differ, but not to divide.”
9. “The New Testament is our only rule of faith and practice.”
10. “Unity is our polar star.”

Depending on one's interpretation, some of the above could be simply labeled "clichés" and thus trite. But most could be declared "slogans," a few "mottos." We will seek to show how each may be truly a slogan or motto. We will consider each one, but not in the same order as listed above. Leroy Garrett in 1996 wrote an article entitled "Our Heritage at its Best."¹ In this article he declared that there were "four founding slogans" which he also called "maxims" of the Restoration Movement or as Garrett preferred: "The Stone-Campbell Movement." I will consider Garrett's "founding four" first.

FOUR FOUNDING SLOGANS

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the
Scriptures are silent, we are silent"

This is one of the earliest slogans and perhaps most popular. Thomas Campbell advanced this slogan at the organization of the Christian Association of Washington (PA) on August 17, 1809. Garrett writes that the slogan was intended to do two things: strike a blow against human creeds and confessions of faith as terms of communion and point to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.²

In 19th century America, creeds of the Protestant churches divided Christendom to such a degree that many began to question them, especially when they did not match with clear statements in the New Testament.

¹ Leroy Garrett, "Our Heritage at Its Best," in a paper "Exploring Our Destiny: 2," presented at the World Convention of Churches of Christ (Calgary, Canada in 1996): 2-3.

² Garrett, "Heritage," 3.

Alexander Campbell was “kicked out” of the Presbyterian Church due to his objection to the Westminster creed when he attempted to take communion. Barton Stone was ordained as a Presbyterian minister but only as he hedged his acceptance of the creed by saying “only as it conformed to the Scriptures.” These founders rejected the human creeds of the Protestant churches and emphasized the importance of returning to the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, for its statements on faith and salvation.

Unfortunately, the slogan seems to have led many next generation “Restoration” or “Reformation” leaders to advance the idea that since the New Testament does not mention “instrumental music” in the context of corporate worship that such a thing is “wrong” or “forbidden.” Only a cappella singing was scriptural. This thought, along with several others, brought about a major split with the Disciples of Christ by the 1906 census, which included a separate listing for Churches of Christ (a cappella). On the more liberal side Disciples asked questions like those expressed by W. J. Jarman in his *Christian-Evangelist* article:

For what is really involved here is the whole question of the authority of our religion. Is the Bible the authority? If it is, to what authority do you appeal when sincere, honest and capable men disagree as to what the Bible says? If it is not the authority, why is it a holy book? In what does its distinction from other books consist? If you accept it as the authority, are all parts on an equal level so that it is a kind of spiritual almanac? If they are not, how do you tell which part counts most? What is your principle of

interpretation? Moreover, if we are to obey the Spirit and not the letter of the book, does the silence of the Bible limit the gospel? These are a few of the questions which are implicit within the slogan.³

Jarman attempted to answer his own questions about Scripture by advocating the Lordship of Jesus: "The truth to which Christianity witnesses is the Lordship of Jesus. If the authority is in the truth, then the authority is in Him. And this is precisely what we mean when we say that He is the Word of God. The Word of God is not a book or any part of a book. The Word of God is the person of Christ, and all authority is given to Him because He is the truth."⁴ For many this is an unsatisfactory answer. After all, the only Jesus we know is the One revealed in Scripture. So we are back to where we started!

Jarman's ultimate conclusion about the slogan is this: "There is nothing which we have to say as Christians to the world that is not contained in the authority of the Lord."⁵ Jarman seems to bypass the Scriptures altogether by his view of the slogan.

On the other hand, the uniqueness of the Restoration Movement with this "slogan" was that a person did not need a "miracle" to believe the truth of Scripture about Jesus as Lord. A person did not need some mystical or emotional experience to prove his or her conversion; rather, a person could trust his or her mind to acknowledge the truth of Christianity as manifested in the

³ W. J. Jarman, "Slogans of the Disciples (1)," *The Christian-Evangelist* (1949): 1031.

⁴ Jarman, "Slogans (1)," 1032.

⁵ Jarman, "Slogans (1)," 1032.

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

Lordship of Jesus (of course, as expounded in the Gospels). It was rational, not irrational! The last words of Jesus recorded in Matthew seal the deal: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).

I wish to reaffirm this slogan. But my wish is that where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent! We must not divide over that of which the Scriptures are silent. “Silence” does not mean “forbidden,” “unscriptural,” or “sinful,” according to my opinion! In fact, it should be part of the things that are “non-essential” and perhaps even “cultural.” I am certain there are “silent” things in relation to Scripture that we should or should not do, but most of them fall in the category of opinion. This slogan declares that only the Bible and the Christ it exalts is the basis for Christian unity on things essential! It certainly became a “problematic” slogan, in spite of the fact that all “Restoration Movement” leaders supported it. That leads me to the next founding slogan.

“In essentials unity, in opinions, liberty, in all things
charity”

This popular slogan of the Restoration Movement has a history all its own, long before the Movement even started. Hans Rollmann (St. John’s, Newfoundland) wrote an interesting article detailing the history of this saying. We will briefly recount it in three stages to understand its source.

Stage One: The saying (slogan) is “the product of an irenic Lutheran theologian and pastor living in Augsburg during the early seventeenth century by the name of Peter Meiderlin. In his publication he used the Latin anagram of his German name: Rupertus Meldenius.”⁶ He lived during the period of “the Thirty Years War and one of much strife between Lutherans and Calvinists as well as a period of discord within Lutheranism itself.”⁷ The Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648 A.D.) was basically a political and religious war between Catholics and Protestants.

The desire for peace among theologians was high. Thus, Peter Meiderlin wrote a book in Latin of which the English title was “A Prayerful Admonition for Peace to the Theologians of the Augsburg Confession.” He spoke of “essentials” for salvation agreed upon by all theologians as well as non-essentials upon which theologians debated. Rollmann explains, “Meiderlin tries to avoid both extremes, that of a disintegrating sectarianism and of a leveling orthodoxy, by taking a middle position that affirms salvific essentials but also maintains a responsible theological freedom. The regulative principle by which a church can maintain both and keep the peace is love, Paul’s most excellent way. Thus, Meiderlin’s dictum: ‘We would be in the best shape if we kept in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in both charity’ (in Latin).”⁸

⁶ Hans Rollmann, “In Essentials Unity: The Pre-History of a Restoration Movement Slogan,” *Restoration Quarterly* 39 (1997): 130.

⁷ Rollmann, “Essentials,” 130.

⁸ Rollmann, “Essentials,” 133.

Stage Two: Meiderlin's book and dictum had little influence among the Lutherans at this time, but it still had universal appeal for any ecclesiastical strife. Stage two began when Richard Baxter, a Puritan writer, picked up the statement and used it for another church conflict during the English Restoration Period (conflicts among Presbyterians, Independents, and Anglicans). Also, John Amos Comenius,⁹ a seventeenth-century humanist and educator, quotes the saying in his book, *The One Necessary Thing*. He was the last bishop of the old Bohemian Brethren.

Friedrich Lücke's (a German Lutheran) publication can be considered stage three (1850). But it was not until 1906 that the author behind the "Rupertus Meldenius" anagram was discovered by Ludwig Bauer to be Peter Meiderlin, the pastor and teacher in Augsburg. From the mid-1800s to the present this "Peace Saying" spread and was embraced and used by many famous people such as Abraham Lincoln and Pope John XXIII.

According to George R. Davis, the slogan was "appropriated by the leaders of the Restoration Movement, and their later followers."¹⁰ He notes "From 1890 to the end of 1918, *The Christian-Evangelist* carried at its masthead, 'In faith, unity; in opinion and methods liberty; in all things, charity.'"¹¹ One cannot but observe that the masthead added the term "methods" to its category of "liberty" and perhaps changed "essentials" to

⁹ In James DeForest Murch's *Christians Only*, he quotes Comenius' dictum: "In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; and in all things, charity." Which is original, "faith" or "essentials," I do not know, but I think "essentials" is original.

¹⁰ George R. Davis, "Slogans of the Disciples (2)," *The Christian-Evangelist* (October 26, 1949): 1059.

¹¹ Davis, "Slogans (2)," 1059.

“faith.” This was done perhaps as a result of the growing controversy over open membership, missionary societies, and comity agreements on the mission field as well as the previous split with Churches of Christ (a cappella) in 1906.¹² The issue of “open membership,” meaning the acceptance into membership of those who were baptized as infants instead of adult immersion, was a major issue toward the growing division of the Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ starting in 1927 by the establishment of the first North American Christian Convention. That division would not be totally recognized until 1968 when the Disciples restructured themselves into full denominational status. The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (Independents) have tried to stay clear of that status.

Getting back to the original slogan, Davis opined, “The logic of the slogan hinges upon ‘how much,’ ‘just what,’ or ‘who’ is considered essential. And the logic of the slogan also depends upon ‘the logic’ by which the truth in the slogan is held in the mind as being true. Too often men have held ‘their opinions’ to be essentials.”¹³ He continued to say, “Liberty of opinion, unless disciplined, may keep us from learning truth from each other.”¹⁴ He declared that the phrase “In all things, charity (love)” could be an invitation to “indifference” or worse “an easy toleration or cheap condescension.”¹⁵

¹² The division took a long process, for most rural churches did not have instruments to accompany singing. The division was only recognized by the census of 1906, a separate listing for Churches of Christ (a cappella).

¹³ Davis, “Slogans (2),” 1059.

¹⁴ Davis, “Slogans (2),” 1060.

¹⁵ Davis, “Slogans (2),” 1060.

Ultimately, Davis's essential for unity was reduced to one thing: "faith in Jesus Christ." If that is our only "essential," then we must agree with various churches, cults, and sects who claim "faith in Jesus Christ." We have never been able to agree on what is "essential." To me, what makes us Christian and a member of Christ's body on earth is essential.

While I believe the slogan "In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things love" is still valid,¹⁶ its practical outworking has not prevented the "Restoration Movement" from splintering into three branches and each branch splintering even more with different sects. The questions remain: What is essential for salvation that all can be unified in every church? How far should opinions be expounded freely especially when those opinions are based on the study of the Bible? Finally, how do Christians express true love for all who may differ on essentials and opinions? I find that one's attitude toward the Scriptures makes all the difference in the world, and still, we may differ! We need to recover this slogan.

"We are Christians only,
but not the only Christians"

This slogan goes back to John Wesley's holiness movement where he encouraged his followers to be "Christians simply." The Restoration Movement took the idea and used it to advance their unity plea. Garrett notes, "The name [Christian] also pointed to the authority of Christ rather than to any human authority. If we are

¹⁶ Note that the original slogan was "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, freedom, in all things charity" (in Latin). In time words were exchanged: "faith" for "essentials," "opinions" for "non-essentials," and "love" for "charity."

Christians, Christians only, we can wear that name, yield to the rule of Christ, and be united. It was an impelling plea.”¹⁷ Recognizing that we are not the “only Christians,” meaning there are Christians among the denominations, gave the slogan a universal appeal while still advocating the desire to be “Christians only.” I find this slogan to be workable as a personal motto. Treating “other Christians” with respect, in spite of different understandings of Bible interpretation, enables one to communicate better the “Restoration” plea to be “Christians only.” It also is the humbler approach to those who disagree with us.

“We are free to differ, but not to divide”

This is the fourth of Garrett’s “four founding slogans.” I like what he said about it: “Ours is a heritage of freedom: free in Christ, free to think and interpret for ourselves, free to question, even free to be wrong in our search for truth. And, yes, free to differ, not only as individuals but as churches. No church has to be a carbon copy of another. The churches in the New Testament, with all their diversity, attest to this.”¹⁸

Leroy Garrett, himself, lived out this slogan/motto. He was a teacher, editor, and historian at the highest level. He lectured and taught at colleges and churches in all three traditions within the brotherhood in North America. Garrett detested our divisions and worked tirelessly to unite all three “branches” into one (again!). We are not free to divide the “body of Christ on earth.” Yet Garrett

¹⁷ Garrett, “Heritage,” 2.

¹⁸ Garrett, “Heritage,” 3. This slogan may have been offered by W. T. Moore, 2nd generation in the 1870s.

knew the slogan did not mean there were no limits to unity and fellowship. Faith in Christ and lifting him up in all that the New Testament (and Old Testament) teaches about him is “essential.” All other matters must never be an occasion for division. It is “anti-Scriptural, anti-Christian, anti-natural... Division is not an option in settling differences.”¹⁹

SIX REMAINING SLOGANS

“The restoration of the New Testament church”

Hallie G. Gantz, a Disciple preacher of First Christian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, wrote about this slogan, or better a motto (November 16, 1949).²⁰ While the founding fathers of the “Restoration Movement” referred to their activity mainly as a “Reformation,” the attempt to encourage various denominations to return to “primitive Christianity” by “restoring the New Testament church” was the means to their goal of unity. They attempted to do this by abandoning denominationalism, adopting biblical names for themselves (“disciple” or simply “Christian”), and finding patterns for church worship and ministry from the Book of Acts. According to Gantz, this slogan “has served as a summary statement of our purpose and program.”²¹ This would fit the definition of a “motto.”

I agree with Gantz that in spite of our problem with three branches of the “Restoration Movement,” we have

¹⁹ Garrett, “Heritage,” 3.

²⁰ Hallie G. Gantz, “Slogans of the Disciples (3),” *The Christian-Evangelist* (November 16, 1949): 1136-37.

²¹ Gantz, “Slogans (3),” 1136.

contributed to Christendom the idea of “Bible names for Bible things.” If any church group or denomination shares the premise of restoring New Testament Christianity, it will usually agree with biblical names like “Christian” or “Disciple.”

Secondly, the discovery of “rational requirements for church membership” was radical at the time. Gantz refers to Walter Scott’s “five-finger exercise” whereby even young children could understand how to become a Christian and thus a member of a “New Testament Church.” Scott reduced Campbell’s six items into five for an easy remembrance on one hand: faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit (which led to eternal life). A later five-finger exercise had hearing, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (which emphasized what mankind does). Scott’s initial exercise emphasized what God does as a result of man’s response to the gospel. This was greatly innovative and effective evangelistically at the time.

Thirdly, the restoration of baptism as immersion for adults and emphasis on regular or weekly participation in the Lord’s Supper has become more and more an emphasis among emerging charismatic and Bible churches. Even established denominational churches have taken notice. In the early church there was little distinction between the idea of clergy and laity,²² and our founding fathers agreed with that. Yet somehow we continue to make a distinction between “the preacher” and “the people,” despite the fact that we eschew the term “Reverend” as a title.

²² There was some distinction if one considers Ephesians 4:11. Having a paid and educated leadership makes a distinction to some degree.

Finally, Gantz mentioned areas where the “Restoration Movement” has not done a good job such as “social justice” (Matt 23:23), living the “Christian way of life” resulting in a deep dependence upon prayer, and a love for one another such that the world could take notice.

The early church had many differences but one thing they all had in common and united on was the Lordship of Jesus the Messiah. The early Church has never been perfect as evidenced by the content of the letters to the seven churches as recorded in Revelation 2-3. Gantz concludes, “We must go back to the New Testament for the pattern of the perfect church. But we must go forward in the spirit of Christ to its realization. . . . The church is the body of Christ. If we love him we love it.”²³ The “pattern of the perfect church” in the New Testament has been effectively challenged by many scholars of the New Testament. “Patternism” has created more problems than it solves. I do not find “patternism” in the New Testament. Yet I understand why some do. We certainly celebrate the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day because of the “pattern” we see in the New Testament (Acts 20:7). We still seek to “restore the New Testament church.” We can only do that by living out the instructions as given by apostolic letters of the New Testament.

“No creed but Christ” and
“Let unity be our polar star”

“No Creed but Christ.” This slogan was greatly used by the leaders of the “Restoration Movement” because they considered denominational creeds and confessions a cause of division among the churches, because the Petrine

²³ Gantz, “Slogans (3),” 1137.

confession (“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”) was good enough, and because Locke’s “Reasonableness” philosophy helped shape their thinking (especially Walter Scott and Campbell before him). The founding fathers considered the creeds major barriers to unity. Thus, the only essential creed was what was found in the New Testament in Matthew 16:16.

This slogan could be considered “trite,” for it says too much and too little at the same time. By such a saying, Barton W. Stone had a much more liberal attitude toward what would make for the unity of the churches throughout Protestantism.

After Barton W. Stone and Racoon John Smith began uniting their followers—the Stone “Christians” and Alexander Campbell’s “Disciples” (January 1, 1832)—Stone wrote in December of 1832 in his *Christian Messenger* in response to criticism of his “latitudinarianism” (tolerance of a variety of religious opinions), “Have we not always had in our church, Calvinists, Armenians, Trinitarians and Unitarians? Have we by such union agreed to receive all their errors? No. In the great leading principles, or facts of the New Testament we agree, and cheerfully let each other have his opinion, as private property.”²⁴

Barton Stone’s motto was “Let Christian unity be our polar star.”²⁵ As a true liberal Disciple of Christ preacher, Langston aligned with Stone’s assessment of how the church can be unified—by allowing a wide latitude of differences as long as we held to the central person of

²⁴ Langston, “Slogan (4),” 1195.

²⁵ Douglas A. Foster, editor, et al, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004): 688. This motto is inscribed on Stone’s grave marker: “Unity is our polar star.”

Christ as found in the leading principles and facts of the New Testament. He averred that they were spiritual, not legal; graceful, not logical; and charitable, not controversial. This seems to be the attitude of all five authors of the “Slogans of the Disciples.” For Langston, “No Creed but Christ,” was the best slogan, for it encouraged “fellowship” with all Christians rather than division. This has been the emphasis of our more liberal brethren who have sought “unity” as an end in itself. This approach led to “open membership” and “comity agreements” on the mission field throughout the 20th century. The establishment of the “Disciples of Christ” as a denomination in 1968 revealed the consequences of such thinking.

This non-creedal statement, so succinct, naturally became expansive at some point: “No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but love, no name but the ‘divine.’” The expansive version is a combination of other motto ideas. Langston would not have agreed with the second statement: “no book but the Bible.”

When the Restoration fathers decried the creeds (in principle), they discovered that they had to offer the world-at-large and the Christian community-at-large what they themselves believed. In essence, they had to develop a “creed” (what we believe) of some kind.

In truth, the early Church had a number of “oral” and maybe “written” creeds that one can discern in the New Testament itself. Thus, long before the New Testament was put together, Christian leaders summarized the gospel in a variety of ways, the Apostle Paul being one of the greatest with 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Paul’s other statements include 1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 10:9-10; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:12-20; 2:9-15; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16. Other possible statements include

Matthew 16:16; 28:18-20; Mark 12:29-31; and John 1:1-3, 10, 12-14.

When James A. Garfield, a Disciple preacher, lawyer, Ohio senator, Civil War major general, and President of the United States was asked what the Disciples of Christ stand for, he published a classic statement of faith in 1880s called “What We Stand For.” It made the following claims:

1. We call ourselves Christians, or Disciples of Christ.
2. We believe in God the Father.
3. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and our Savior. We regard the divinity of Christ as the fundamental truth of the Christian system.²⁶
4. We believe in the Holy Spirit, both as to his agency in conversion and as indwelling in the heart of the Christian.²⁷
5. We accept both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures as the inspired Word of God.
6. We believe in the future punishment of the wicked and the future reward of the righteous.
7. We believe that the Deity is a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God.
8. We observe the institution of the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day. To this table we neither

²⁶ Some among the Disciples during Garfield’s day disagreed with the “divinity of Christ.” They emphasized Jesus’ humanity over against any divinity, teaching the “subordination” of the Christ (see 1 Cor 15:28).

²⁷ Some among the Disciples also disagreed on the Holy Spirit’s “agency in conversion.” They insisted that the Holy Spirit only worked through the Word of God. This apparently comes from Campbell’s teaching.

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

invite nor debar; we say it is the Lord's Supper for all of the Lord's children.

9. We plead for the union of God's people on the Bible and the Bible alone.
10. The Christ is our only creed.
11. We maintain that all the ordinances should be observed as they were in the days of the Apostles (baptism by adult confession, repentance, and immersion).

If ever a non-creedal church had a creed, this is it! However, the difference is that Garfield's "What We Stand For" was not a "creed" that every person becoming a Christian had to confess. It simply described what the "Restoration Movement" advocated in a condensed form. Most denominations would have agreed with most of Garfield's statements. Yet, differences are clearly there.

"Call Bible things by Bible names"

This slogan has meant much to me through the years. For some people that may be "trite," but I have taken it seriously in my own study of the Bible. A good example is the term "Trinity," not found in the Bible (Old or New Testaments). But we all agree that somehow the Scriptures present God as Father, Jesus as Son of God, and both are somehow connected to Holy Spirit—all Divine. Yet, the Scriptures never use the term "Trinity" to describe the "Godhead." A "can of worms"? You bet! I have a Christian friend, a scholar, who is arguing this issue within several books now. This issue arose at the very beginning of the "Restoration Movement" with Barton W. Stone's view antagonizing that of Alexander Campbell. The issue has never gone away or been

adequately answered; unless, of course, you simply give “Bible names to Bible things.” Let the Bible speak for itself!

“The New Testament is
our only rule of faith and practice”

Thomas Campbell expressed this idea throughout his “Declaration and Address” of 1809. Later, Alexander Campbell’s “Sermon on the Law,” delivered in 1816 at the Redstone Association of Baptists at the Cross Creek Baptist church, cinched the idea that “the New Testament is our only rule of faith and practice.” It sent shock waves throughout the Baptist churches, north and south. Essentially, the sermon declared, “The Christian dispensation is not merely a continuation of the Mosaic law as was commonly taught in Calvinist theology, but a new system of grace.”²⁸ After seven years of controversy with this idea, Campbell began to gradually “separate” from the Baptists, yet many Baptist churches were converted over to the “Restoration/Reformation” plea of Campbell.²⁹

We have already commented on Barton Stone’s motto that “Unity is our polar star,” a fitting motto that Stone

²⁸ Leroy Garrett, “Campbell, Alexander (1788-1866),” in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, eds. Foster, Blowers, Dunnnavast, and Williams (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004): 120.

²⁹ David Eubanks tells of preaching at the Christian Church near Salem, Indiana where a whole Baptist Association dropped their denominational ties and name and became Christians only. It was the 175th anniversary for one of these churches. Many churches of the Baptist persuasion experienced the same, especially “Free Will Baptists.”

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

embraced and lived. We come now to our last slogan which is just as old as our first slogan presented.

“The church of Christ on earth is essentially,
intentionally, and constitutionally one”

We’ve now come full circle. This is an early statement by Thomas Campbell in his “Declaration and Address,” published in 1809 to explain the purpose of the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, known as a charter document of the Restoration Movement. It was never really a “slogan” as such but a rationale for the efforts of Thomas and Alexander Campbell to unite the churches of all denominations rather than starting another church. As a result of this statement, the “Reformation” of the churches, as the Campbells called it, emphasized “unity” and “restoration of the New Testament church.” As we say so often, the rest is history! I like and agree with the “slogan” such as it is. Slogans and mottos, in and of themselves, do not advance the cause of unity and love as Jesus prayed for us. The slogans and mottos must be “incarnated” in every believer before they become effective in society. But why were they effective in the 19th century?

CONTINUING EFFECTIVENESS

Why were these slogans effective in the 19th century
and can they be effective today?

The American experience from 1800 on was ripe for a unity movement. The Protestant divisions that had begun in Europe took root in America, but the expanding horizons of America in its westward movement grew tired

of such divisions in the religious realm. Many came from Europe for religious freedom as well as political and economic opportunity. The melting pot of people yearned for the freedom of self-expression, to share one's thoughts, and believed this freedom was God-given. In this new world of thought people began to reject denominational control of bishops, assemblies, and creeds. There was optimism in the air about the future—a “Manifest Destiny” for America—anything was possible!

A good education was difficult to come by in the frontier states. Few had the education of the Campbells, Stones, and Scotts. Most were like “Raccoon” John Smith who essentially educated himself and obtained most of his knowledge from the Bible and “hard knocks.” Thus, slogans were an excellent way to get across to the mostly uneducated public ideas that had profound truth to them. The common sense expressed through them appealed to the people.

Leaders of the “Restoration Movement” used the best technology of the day: the printing press and publishing of journals. In these journals and pamphlets, “Restoration” leaders advanced the simplicity and power of their message by using such slogans like the ten above. They were easy to remember and had power to persuade.

David Eubanks wrote, “To these people who were coming from Europe and breaking ties from their mother countries or second-generation settlers moving west, the plea of the ‘Stone-Campbell’ movement was ‘drop your denominational ties and creedal allegiance and be Christians only, following the Bible only.’”³⁰ Thus, the

³⁰ From a brief presentation of notes by Dr. David Eubanks entitled: “What Caused the Movement to Grow so Rapidly.”

slogans became an excellent “tool” to further the message of unity and restoration of the New Testament church.

They still can be effective today, even with the iPhone in every hand! Modern advertisements attest that short, explicit, and memorable statements “sell” their products. Politicians use such slogans today as evident with the “MAGA” slogan. Modern day Christians ought to use every modern technology to advance the gospel, the plea for unity, and love of Christ’s body on earth.

CONCLUSION

The ten slogans we have overviewed express the spirit and purpose of the “Restoration Movement”: the *desire* for unity in essentials among all the churches for the church of the New Testament is essentially one; the *emphasis* upon the New Testament alone for what we believe and practice; the *freedom* to disagree but not to divide over opinions; and, finally, the *submission* of ourselves to the authority of Christ and the Scriptures.

Terry Miethe summarized their purpose in this way: “These and other slogans encapsulated the Movement’s emphasis on the free, unencumbered association of Christians, their rights of conscience, and their aspiration to ecclesial unity. They served as rubrics or rallying points to divert Christians from the peculiarities of individual theological opinion and to gravitate the Movement’s constituents toward the central plea of restoring ‘New Testament Christianity.’”³¹

³¹ Terry Miethe, “Slogans,” in Foster, et al, eds., *Stone-Campbell Movement*, 688.