SKETCHES FROM THE HISTORY OF

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT IN CANADA

**Introduction**

The Restoration Movement arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a series of independent efforts in the British Isles and America to return to the teaching, faith, and practice of the apostolic church. This was thought necessary because of the state of religion in the Western world. Catholicism had moved so far away from the first century church as to lose all vestiges of the apostolic order. It also prevented people from reading the Bible for themselves and the church’s teaching made the people depend on the Roman Catholic hierarchy instead of Christ for salvation. The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation sought to correct basic flaws in Catholicism. It succeeded in breaking the power of the Catholic Church over thousands, restoring the Bible to the people in their own language, and showing them that salvation is by grace through faith, and not by meritorious works, as the Catholic priesthood taught.

Through success in these things, the Reformation prepared the way for the Restoration Movement. But the Reformation retained many features of Roman Catholicism and it failed to attempt a complete return to the faith and practice of the apostolic church. It resulted in the creating a multiplicity of denominational churches unknown in the Bible. Each Protestant church adopted its own distinctive name, creed, organization, and practices. This resulted in religious divisions that led to a state of confusion among the people and spiritual warfare among the various sects. Human creeds and ecclesiastical powers stifled individual liberty. So while the Reformation made the Restoration Movement possible, it resulted in conditions that also made it necessary.

By the beginning in the eighteenth century, many people had become dissatisfied with Protestant denominationalism. They longed the simplicity of the New Testament order, which they saw in the Bible, and they attempted gradually to restore some salient features of the early church. These restoration efforts began within established denomi-nations, but the restorers soon saw, as Martin Luther had many years before, that church reform is difficult to achieve from within. It became necessary for them to separate from denominational bodies and to from independent congregations to effect reform.

The restoration ideal that prompted the restorers’ action is apparent throughout history and in the Bible itself. It is simply the idea of people who recognize themselves to be astray from the way of the Lord seeking to return to it. This is the meaning of restoration: the act of bringing something back into a former unimpaired state or condition. The restoration ideal is expressed in the words of Jeremiah to apostate Judah: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.”1 “At this point it will be sufficient to note that, in the eighteenth century and the earliest part of the nineteenth, in both Great Britain and America, there were many independent movements which aimed at the restoration of what their promoters conceived to be the essential features of simple New Testament Christianity. Most of these gave little thought to Christian unity and were, in fact, perfectly content to become small separatist groups. But there were two, both in America, both in the first decade of the nineteenth century, which conceived of restoring New Testament Christianity not only as a duty in itself, but also as a means for the promotion of unity among Christians, which was also a duty.”2

In this study of the Restoration Movement as it developed in Canada, some general facts need to be kept in mind. (1) As in other lands, not all attempts to affect a restoration of the ancient order succeeded. They were often limited both in scope and accomplish-ment. Some were limited to one independent church, or at the most to a few interrelated churches. Further, many of these achieved only partial success before drifting back into denominationalism or ceasing to exist. Yet, some reached a high degree of success in their efforts. (2) The independent restoration efforts that make up the Restoration Movement developed gradually, not all at once. The adherents moved step by step toward restoring the ancient order as they slowly came to see more clearly the plan and purpose of God. (3) The restorers made no attempt to reestablish the church or kingdom of Christ for they did not believe that it had ceased to exist.3 They rather sought to rescue the church from the wilderness of denominationalism in which it had been hidden from many centuries. What they sought to restore was not the church itself, but the faith and practice of that church as it existed under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit. (4) Unity was achieved among some of the independent movements, notably those associated with Barton W. Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell. But most of the independent movements never united with the Stone and Campbell movements, although some of them made limited contributions to it. (5) Among those churches that achieved a high degree of restoration, many did not retain it and soon fell abandoned it.

The movements that were more successful in their efforts are identified with the names of Barton W. Stone of Kentucky and Thomas and Alexander Campbell in Virginia. These two movements established independent congregations in separate brotherhoods until their work began to overlap in many communities and they saw the similarity of their goals. They began to merge in 1832 to become, in the main, one united movement which attempted to restore New Testament Christianity.

Almost from the beginning of the Stone and Campbell movements, in America, the restoration ideal also arose in Canada. In fact, there were early restoration efforts in Canada that came from the British Isles and antedated the Stone and Campbell movements. Some of those who planted the restoration ideal in Canada had never heard of Stone or the Campbells when they began. However, it was natural that the influence of the American movements would spread into Canada and blend with the work already begun there. These sketches from the history of the Restoration Movement in Canada are limited primarily to the nineteenth century. Our plan is to review the beginning of the Restoration in Canada and to see its progress in that century. We will notice some of the men who were the early leaders in the movement, call attention to a few side lights along the way, and, hopefully, draw some important lessons that will be helpful for us today.

# General Review of the Restoration in Canada

It is a mistake to think that the Restoration Movement in Canada arose from the Stone and Campbell movements. While these movements had a significant impact on the Canadian movement, they were not its origin. But before discussing the origin of the Restoration in Canada, some important factors should be noticed. (1) The Canadian movement, like America movements, arose from independent sources and was gradual in its development. There was no uniform pattern of progress. Some churches arose independently of outside influences. Some came from the old Scotch Baptist line, a few developed from the Christian Connection, others had a Haldane Brothers influence and, of course, some had a Stone and Campbell background. (2) It is not the role of chroniclers to judge the point when God accepted a church that was seeking to restore the ancient order or the point when he “removed its candlestick” because it moved in the other direction. Such judgment belongs to God.

(3) No congregation remains static. It is always moving either toward apostolic perfection or away from it. When a new generation of leaders and members arise in a congregation, for all practical purposes, it is a different congregation, even though it may still hold the “pattern of sound words” and meet in the same building. Each congregation must be evaluated within a single generation and even then consequential changes in direction may occur. A church established in Toronto in 1832 would likely have little relation to one that exists there now. (4) Every congregation will eventually depart from the ground it originally occupied. In places where faithful churches of Christ once flourished, we may find no trace of them today, or if there are remnants of such churches, that is about all we find, or we find churches that cling to their roots sentimentally but not in practice. It is rare that a church will retain its original ground intact through several generations.

There were some general situations that prevailed in almost all efforts to plant New Testament Christianity on Canadian soil. These are recurring themes that need not be repeated in discussing different men and their work. Information about the beginning of the churches is defective because records were poorly kept, if kept at all, or they were burned for fear they might become a creed. At least in the beginning, many preachers worked in relative obscurity. They were more concerned about their immediate work than in preserving a record for future generations. Also in the early days, they were not aware of the great movement of which they were a part. The local churches were simply congregations of dedicated people trying to serve the Lord in their generation. Joseph Ash, Jr., in giving a history of, *The Rise and Progress of Our Cause in Canada*, after preaching half a century, had to rely on his memory. Ash, perhaps the greatest pioneer preacher of Canada, whose history would be extremely valuable, said: “From the beginning of my religious life I have kept no record of what I have said or done. I know not how many I have immersed, how many miles I have traveled, how many meetings I have held. All that I left for the recording angel to do”4

The pioneer preachers worked at great personal sacrifice. No missionary society sent them, and the churches they established were too poor to pay them, if they had been disposed to, which they often were not in view of their concept of the preaching ministry. They had to earn a living while trying to preach and they were also pressed beyond measure trying to minister to a large field in which the workers were few. In the beginning, the Restoration churches were small and they faced bitter opposition from the established churches and from the world. Sectarianism was deeply rooted in most of the religious people, and the worldly-minded had little use for any religion at all, except to pay homage to the god of this world. The preaching of the pioneers was so radically different from that of the established clergy that many people refused to listen and strong opposition arose against them. Meeting places were often hard to find. Denominational buildings were closed to the pioneers and they were often refused the use of public buildings and schools. Meetings were commonly held in private homes that could hold only a few. Most of the early churches did not own buildings until many years after their beginning. Transportation was difficult due to poor roads and means of travel. The pioneer preachers usually traveled on foot or horseback, but occasionally by stage, ship, or train. The early churches were moving toward the apostolic order, but they were moving over what to them was new ground. Progress was slow, mistakes were many, and human frailty took its toll. Many churches survived only one generation before abandoning the Restoration ideal.

Scotch Baptists is “the name generally given to the immersionist branch of the Sandamanians.” Walter Scott came in contact with a small church in Pittsburg, where he was an instructor in a school operated by George Forrester after coming to America. “This was one of many scattered ‘primitive Christianity’ congregations which had sprung up under the stimulus of the ideas of Sandeman and the Haldanes. It is impossible to determine, from existing records, to which of these strains it was most closely akin, and it makes little difference, for the impulse to reproduce the practice of the early church was common to them all, and the details of church procedure varied with each group”5

Scott, who had been reared in the Church of Scotland, became a member of this church. From Forrester’s library, he read books by John Glas, Robert Sandeman, James Alexander Haldane, and John Locke. The congregation of Scotch Baptists in New York to which Henry Errett belonged “held many of the views taught by the Haldanes.”6 Henry Errett was the father of Isaac Errett, founding editor of the *Christian Standard*, which was an influential voice for the progressives in America. It is likely that the early Scotch Baptists who settled in Canada and played a large part in the establishing of New Testament Christianity in the Provinces were a mixture of ideas derived from the earlier Restoration movements in Great Britain. They were called Baptists because they practiced immersion, which neither Anglicans, Methodists, nor Presbyterians did, and not because of any affiliation with Baptist Churches.

While much of the work in Canada sprang from British influences independent of the Stone and Campbell movements, there are traces of nearly all strains of the Restoration Movement in the beginning of the Canadian churches. These include the movements of Glas and Sandeman, the Haldane brothers, Elias Smith and Abner Jones (the Christian Connection), the James O’Kelly movement, and the Stone and Campbell movements. It is not possible to trace all of these strains as they influenced the work in Canada. Reuben Butchart, a Canadian historian of the Restoration, says: “Again, let it be stated, origins were, from the first, from at least four streams of influence. There were the Glas-Sandeman, the Haldanes, in the old land; and the succession from the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian bodies in America. Thus from these countries, the origins came: from Scotland (and Ireland), from the States of Virginia, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Kentucky.”7

The churches of Christ in Canada in their growth and development went through about the same kind of problems as their counterparts in the United States. During the first part of the century, they were struggling to find the apostolic order with varying degrees of success. About the time success was achieved, division set in. In the second part of the century, division began over the introduction of instrumental music into Christian worship and the organization of missionary societies. By the end of the century, division was fairly complete, and while the churches were basically conservative through most of the nineteenth century, in the last decades, they were becoming predominantly progressive (drifting away from the ancient order).

**The Beginning of the Restoration in the Provinces**

Looking first at the Maritime Provinces, we see the beginning the Restoration Movement in Eastern Canada and then in the Province of Ontario, or Canada West. W.W. Harding says: “The first church in Nova Scotia, and it may be the first in all Canada, was formed in River John, N.S. on the 18th of June, 1815, the same day that Wellington won the battle of Waterloo. The church was formed in the house of James Murray, after two persons had been baptized, and continued to meet there until a nice snug meeting house was built. James Sellars was the first preacher.”8. A.T. DeGroot says: “James Murray, a Scotch Baptist, who had won two to the faith and possessed the daring to baptize them amid the jeers of his neighbors, first observed the Lord’s Supper with three others that same day. This is the oldest existing church in the province.”9

Harding also writes: “The first members were Scotch Baptists, and were very rigid and legalistic in their church relations; the result was that many were repelled rather than drawn by their public services. They were extreme disciplinarians and the members were not always slow in withdrawing from one who had strayed away. But they were strictly honourable and upright in their dealings in business matters, and would take a wrong rather than inflict one. Their sterling character was unmistakable, but they lacked adaptability.”10

Writing in 1939, Harding was extremely biased in his view of the early efforts in Canada. He regarded those who adhered to God’s word as “very rigid and legalistic in their church relations.” These brethren may very well have been extreme in some things and overly rigid, but Harding considered what we might simply call adhering to the New Testament order as “legalistic.” But while he is unjustly critical of many of the early Christians and preachers in Canada, he actually shows that they were conservation through at least the major part of the nineteenth century.

Referring to the work in Nova Scotia, Harding said: “More than fifty years ago [1889], I talked with one of the very old members who had crossed the ocean and had taken part in the organization of the church. They had never heard of either Thomas or Alexander Campbell.”11 According to DeGroot: “In Halifax, the capital, a church had its beginning about 1832.”12 A preacher named Thomas was the first man associated with the Campbell movement in Nova Scotia. Harding said: “I do not find his name in any of the old papers, but some of the old members at Newport, N.S. who had heard him preach told me of his work. He came to Hants Co., N.S. and stirred up quite an interest, preaching in private homes as churches were closed against him. He also went to Halifax, and must have started a church, for as early as 1832 there was a strong church there, and in that year they published what was the first paper in Canada in the interests of the Reformation; it was called the *Christian Gleaner*.”13

There were two churches in Halifax in 1839. The preacher of the larger one went off after divine healing, but “a small one known as Zion church, carried on by a faithful band of Non-progressives, but divisions were caused, and the work dwindled, and dragged along for years. Dr. John Knox from Charlottetown came in 1859 and by wise management brought the people together, and soon a strong church was operating.”14 During the 1830s churches were established at Newport, Upper Rawdon, West Gore, Cornwallis, Falmouth, Milton, and other places. “In Upper Rawdon ... John Doyle broke from the Baptists and formed a church of about twenty-five members.”15 Benjamin Howard “organized a church at West Gore in 1837 and the year before George Garraty formed a church in Cornwallis of about thirty-five members, who were first known as ‘Christian Baptists.’”16 Garraty also established a church at Milton in 1840. Harding describes him as “a great preacher (who) did not fear man or devil, and was bitterly hated by those who were sectarian and denominational.”17

Another preacher of Nova Scotia was Donald Crawford from Prince Edward Island. He preached in Hants, Digby, and Queens Counties. At a cooperation meeting at Milton in 1855, he was appointed evangelist and established a church in Shubenacadie and Southville. Other early preachers were Beecher Knowles, E.C. Ford, and E.C. Bowers. According to Harding, a cooperation meeting was held at Falmouth 1840 with delegates from five churches in attendance. He said this represents the first attempt at organization among the churches in the province of Nova Scotia.

“Preachers found themselves at times with no friendly voice to offer entertainment for the night. Their sermons were misrepresented and they were looked upon as heretics of whom people had to beware. Most of the preaching was done in private homes…. One time when the preacher was speaking in one of the homes in Newport, the house was crowded to overflowing, and one man could not stand it any longer. He jumped to his feet and made for the door, but he made a mistake, and instead of opening the front door, he opened a door that led to a shed in which a hogs-head was kept to receive the water from the roof. It was full, and into it he went. After he had been rescued and regained his breath, he gasped, ‘These Campbellites will get you into the water anyway.”18

Dated August 25, 1832, a brother from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia who signed his name W.W.A., wrote a latter to Alexander Campbell. He said: “I have just returned from a two months tour through Nova Scotia, and have had an opportunity of witnessing something more of the evil’s of sectarianism, and of trying to do a little towards reform. I now stand connected with ten preaching brethren, who have agreed to take the scriptures as their only standard of faith and practice—and there are the same number of churches; but they have not all yet laid aside their creeds, and adopted the ancient mode of coming together to break the loaf on every Lord’s day. The prospect is beginning to brighten in this country…. The brethren united with me have formed a conference, and I am appointed to travel and labor in the word and doctrine, this year. I baptized a number during my late tour ...”19

The first Restoration churches in New Brunswick were in Charlotte County. Churches were started at Lord’s Cove and Leonardville on Deer Island (then known as West Isles) on the Bay of Fundy. There were also churches on Campobello and Grand Manan Islands. This area was evangelized by preachers whose last names were Smith, Cook, and Barnaby. Harris Greenlaw also preached there. Harding says, “Then George Garraty came on the scene, and there was a wonderful ingathering. Back Bay and LeTete were visited, organizations were effected; houses of worship were built, and it looked as if every body would become Disciples of Christ. But flocks needed shepherding and that they did not get.”20

A mistake often made in pioneer days, in establishing churches, both in America and Canada, was to leave them without effective leadership, letting them shift for themselves. The churches in some regions were up and down, probably due in part to lack of leadership, through most of the nineteenth century. Many were eventually disbanded or drifted into digression. “The St John congregation was established by George Garraty and showed its independent origin by first being called a ‘Society of Christians’” 21 Harding says this church was organized by Garraty in 1834 and a frame building was erected on Duke Street, which burned in 1877 and was rebuilt in 1879. “In 1873 some difficulty arose among the members and a number withdrew and held meetings in Horton’s hall ... Loss of members and inability to secure a permanent minister, caused the disbandment of the Duke St. church and the building was sold and used for school purposes. The group meeting in Horton’s hall so prospered that in 1876 construction of a building began on Coburg St.” D.O. Thomas was the first minister in Coburg Street. He was succeeded by T.H. Capp. “The Coburg St. church was the strongest in the Maritime Provinces and had a number of prominent citizens in its membership.”22 Both churches eventually went with the progressives.

Prince Edward Island saw a lot of Restoration activity in the nineteenth century in spite of its small size. “The beginning of the work on the island cannot be dated by any particular year, but is to be found in a trend of circumstances. In the year 1811, a Scotch Baptist minister came to the Island, named Alexander Crawford. He had been educated in the school of the Haldanes in Scotland. Mr. Crawford was Independent, and would not subscribe to the creed of the Baptists as it was at that time. He organized several churches, but after his death, most of them joined the Regular Baptists. The church at Lot 48, or Cross Roads as it is called now, remained true to their independence, and may truly be said to be the first church of the Disciples on P.E. Island. After a few years, during which it continued to meet regularly, Dr. John Knox, an Anglican minister from Edinburg, came to preach, and having made a study of the subject of baptism was immersed and began preaching for the church. He was a powerful preacher, well educated, and became a great influence among the people. In 1846 he organized the churches of Montague and East Point. Montague became the strongest church on the Island, but because of its isolation, East Point made slow progress.”23 The churches continued but they became progressive.

A.T. DeGroot also dates the beginnings in Prince Edward Island from the preaching of Alexander Crawford in 1811. Crawford was a disciple of the Haldane Brothers in Scotland, who had previously baptized his parents in the Isle of Arran.” He adds: “Dr. John Knox, from the University of Edinburg, came as a missionary of the Church of England and, becoming a Disciple, established Alexander Crawford’s churches on a New Testament basis, beginning in 1841…. A second noble entrance over the Atlantic was at Rustico Harbor in 1820 by a company of silk weavers from Paisley, Scotland, led by John Stevenson. From this group came Donald Crawford, who served many years in that island and adjacent provinces—some of his converts beginning the church at Vancouver, B.C. in 1905.”24

Harding says of these people: “They were Scotch Baptists, and remained in Rustico three years, when a number of them removed to New Glasgow on the Clyde River, about five miles from Rustico. John Stevenson was their leader, and he immediately started a service in his own home, and the first one baptized was his son Charles. A few years before this, Alexander Crawford had immersed the first person to be baptized on P.E. Island, and immersion was a novelty to many people. The second person to be baptized at New Glasgow was David Orr. The few brethren continued their work, and eventually erected a plain frame meeting house, which did them service until 1892 ... Donald Crawford was minister here for over fifty years.”25

When and by whom the church began at Charlottetown is unknown, but it was in the early nineteenth century. Harding says: “In 1844, when W.W. Eaton visited Charolottetown, there was a small church under the leadership of a Mr. Hughs, but they had no house of worship at that time. Soon after a building was ... erected on Great George St. and the church was strengthened by a number of splendid additions.”26 This church also eventually went with the progressives. A church was organized at Summerside in 1858 in the home of Benjamin Schurman by Donald Crawford. Later in the century, churches were organized at Greenmount, Murray Harbor, Breadalbane, and Frederickson, five miles from there. We have found no references to churches in Newfoundland for the early nineteenth century.

“For some years Dr. L.P. Pratley, of Montreal (in Catholic Quebec), has held together a conservative (antiorgan, antisociety) group”26 Work in the western provinces seems to have started late in the century and was carried on largely by the progressives. “The ambition to win the West became manifest among women in Toronto in 1880. Hitherto they had been ‘kept silent.’ They dared to raise independent funds and in 1881 send Andrew Scott to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, where the church was established and is still in being. The real expansion came under the Western Canada Christian Missionary Association, of Winnipeg (l901), amid a parish that emulated an empire. In Manitoba eight churches were developed.”27

**The Most Enduring Work Was in Ontario**

Alfred T. DeGroot says: “Ontario is Canada’s banner province for the Disciples. The beginnings were Scotch Baptists: Esquesing Township, 1820; Lobo, 1831; East Eramosa, 1832; Toronto, 1838. The year 1820 seemed to be the peak year for the Scotch Baptists elements, and they were active in New York at that time. The church in New York City, founded in 1810, sent two members to Ontario. James Black was the first local leader …”28 However, the work in Toronto began much earlier than DeGroot indicates. In a letter to Alexander Campbell, written October 21, 1834, Marshall B. Stone of Whitby wrote: “Since I wrote you last, I have had the happiness of knowing that there are a little band of reformers in the city of Toronto, about twenty in number. They have no particular teacher; but meet together every first day and attend the ordinances of God’s house”29

“In 1860 the chief center, Ontario, had thirty churches, with a membership of 1,600. An estimate of 4,000 members would cover the total number in the Maritimes and Ontario as of that date. The official Canadian census lists under Church of Christ (Disciples) the following: in 1881, 20,193 members (or of family alliance); in 1891, 12,763; in 1901, 17,164 ... The state-church psychology of Canadian census makers, causes them to enumerate children and other family connections as ‘members,’ so these figures must be corrected [to allow for this].”30

Describing the work in Ontario, DeGroot says: “Six men, all of British stock and called the ‘Pioneer Preachers,’ laid wide and deep foundations. Their names and dates of coming were: James Black, 1820; Dugald Sinclair, 1831; Alexander Anderson, 1836; James Kilgour, 1845; Edmund Shepherd, 1867; C.J. Lister, 1869…. James Black … left Scotland because of the strangle hold an established church had on liberty of thought, then became a [Scotch] Baptist and for years carried on as a schoolteacher and pioneer preacher on self-formed circuits. He was the leader of two Scotch Baptist churches up to 1825, when Campbell’s principles reformed his thinking.” “His spirit was uppermost in the Ontario’ Cooperation’ from 1843” 31

Alexander Campbell met Black on his tour of Ontario in 1855. He apparently came to St. Cathrines to meet Campbell. Campbell was impressed with Black and at Campbell’s suggestion, he accompanied him by train and stage to Black’s home in Eramosa. The Campbells spent one or two days at his “hospitable mansion” and preached twice in a large barn. Black was an avid admirer of Moses E. Lard and worked with him during Lard’s short stay in Canada. Black sent a report of Lard’s work to the *Millennial Harbinger*. Addressing it to the editor W.K. Pendleton, he said: “Brother Lard has a large field and has been kept very busy since he came to Canada. Our severe winter and the exposure after night meetings gave him a bad cold, from which he was recovering when I last heard from him. The churches in Oshawa, Ontario and Bowmanville, with which he labors, are in a more flourishing condition than ever before and the numbers added to them must be over 100 converts”32 Black, one of the leading preachers in Canada at the time, was about as influential as Joseph H. Ash, Jr. “With these three [Black, Ash, and Lard] sounding the pleas for the restoration of the ancient order and the unity of all believers, many Canadians found it impossible to resist and were numbered with the redeemed.”33

Cooperative work helped change the churches in the provinces. DeGroot says, “Canada has been timid in the forming of organizations because of conservative beginnings.” From this we see that the Restoration Movement in Canada was mainly established on a conservative foundation that endured most of the nineteenth century. But cooperative work helped change the churches in Canada. The cooperatives in the form of missionary societies, mainly seems to have centered in Ontario, although some also arose in the Atlantic Provinces.

A.T. DeGroot attributes the slowness of the society to develop in Canada in the twentieth century to its conservative roots. “Canada has been timid in the forming of organizations because of conservative beginnings. The oldest provincial society, ‘The Cooperation of Disciples of Christ in Ontario,’ has been styled that from its beginning in 1886. It was the natural heir of an earlier ‘cooperation’ begun in 1846, which itself descended from a ‘Meeting’ established in 1843 (*Millennial Harbinger*, Aug. 1843). The Maritime Provinces created a society in 1855, which still [1948] functions. Western provinces organized from 1905-1910, in affiliation with the United Christian Missionary Society or its previous American predecessors.34

Missionary societies grew out of earlier cooperative meetings in Canada as they did in the United States. But there seems to have been more objections to them from the beginning in Canada which accounts for the slow progress that DeGroot complains about. In 1834, Joseph Ash, Jr. wrote a letter to Barton W. Stone and John T. Johnson, co-editors of the *Christian Messenger*. He said: “My main object in writing this letter to you, is to let you know how we are getting along in serving our maker, and for the purpose of asking some advice from those, who are more acquainted, or who have a more perfect knowledge of scriptural facts than we have.” Then after telling about the progress of the cause in that region, he said: “I do not recollect ever seeing any thing from either of your pens on the subject of annual conferences. It has become a subject of considerable moment here at present. It was investigated at our late con. [conference], and it had like to have been totally abandoned, and general meetings substituted in its stead. Now, Brethren, if you think it expedient, we should like to have your views on this subject, or at least, what your practice is in your enlightened land.”35

Cooperatives had developed from general meetings of brethren for the purpose of edification and fellowship into “cooperatives”that were beginning to organize for evangelistic purposes. (The cooperatives or general meetings were forerunners of the missionary society). Ashes’ reference to abandoning the annual conference and substituting a “general meeting” suggests that the conference was taking on the nature of an organization instead of an informal gathering of brethren for mutual edification, hearing news of the brethren, and fellowship.

Joseph A. Ash, Jr., in his letter to Stone and Johnson, tells about the condition of the church in the lower part of Ontario. “Our annual conference has just broken up, and we found the cause in a prosperous state. There is in this part of U.C. extending from the bay of Quinty (Quinte) to Niagara [along the coast of Lake Ontario] 27 Churches; 17 travelling elders, and about 12 who are not ordained. There were 4 or 5 Churches planted during the last year, and there is a greater door open in this country for the spread of truth, than there ever has been before. Our evangelists here are generally poor, and almost worn out in the service already, so that it is quite a drawback upon us at present. We very much want 2 or 3 competent evangelists to travel through this province together, and hold 2, 3, or 4 days meeting in a place, so that the public mind may be disabused of wrong impressions, and be taught the Ancient Gospel in its purity.”36

The influence of the Stone and Campbell movements on Ontario is recognized by Ash in his letter to Stone and Johnson. “The majority of the christian [sic] body in Canada, are decidedly (at least the preachers) in favor of the sentiments and doctrine advocated by you, brother Campbell, Scott, etc., etc. consequently are not backward to teach them.”37 Almost a decade later, Ash sent a short letter to the *Messenger*, from “Oshawa, West Canada,” dated November 22, 1843. It said: “Dear Bro. Stone:—The cause for which we labor and toil and pray night and day, is on the advance in this fine and flourishing province. Our prospects are brightening constantly, while there is a steady increase of numbers, and., best of all, true devotion and holiness appear in every member. If we had a few more Faithful laborers, we would do much better. Your brother in the Lord, Joseph Ash, jun’r.”38 The letter was published a few months before Stone’s death.

In the summer of 1855, Alexander Campbell made a tour of lower Ontario that tells a lot about the church in the province at the time. He, along with his wife and daughter Decima, made the tour that he described in “Notes on a Tour of Canada West.” Campbell was about 67 at the time and suffering the ravages of age. The Campbells left Bethany, Virginia, July 26 and went by train from Wellsburg to Buffalo. They spent two days at Niagara Falls and attended a Baptist church on the Lord’s day. On Monday, they went to the “medicinal springs” at St. Catherines. “During our sojourn [at St. Catherines], on finding a Christian Church at Jordan, some nine miles distant, and becoming acquainted with some excellent brethren, we made them a visit on Saturday evening, and addressed an auditory in their very neat and comfortable meetinghouse.”39 The family stayed in Jordan with Brother Jacob Snure, who conveyed them back to St. Catherines.

While in St. Catherines, the Campbells tested the “medicinal powers” of its waters. They took hot and cold baths and drank the water, which Campbell described as “any thing but palatable.” However, after a week, he “found a relaxation of the rigors of our rheumatic ailments” and experienced a welcomed “increase of appetite ... but with all this there was a diminution of strength, occasioned, perhaps by too free use of the warm bath.” Here also Campbell became acquainted with several preachers of the province who apparently came to St. Cathrines to meet him for the first time. Those who made the journey included “Elder James Black and Bro. Jackson, of Eramosa, Bro. [Charles L.] Lister, of Bowmansville, Bro. Elliot, of Toronto, Bros. [Joseph A.] Ash and [Abram] Farewell, of Oshawa, and Bro. [Edmund] Shepherd, of Aylmer.”40

On August 6, the Campbells left in company of James Black for Eramosa, Black’s home and the immediate field of his labors. Campbell said, “We safely arrived at his hospitable mansion that same evening, via railroad to Galt, thence to Guelph by stage, and thence by private conveyance to his residence. We found not only at Eramosa, but everywhere in Canada West, the same generous Christian hospitality experienced amongst the Disciples of Christ in the United States. Next morning at 11 o’clock, we met a large concourse of brethren and friends, assembled in Bro. John Stewart’s spacious barn; and although it was in the midst of harvesting the crops, we engaged the attention of a large concourse for some two hours, which resulted in several confessions of the faith.”41

Campbell preached in Eramosa again the next morning before leaving for Esquesing conducted by “brother Butchart.” There he “formed an interesting acquainttance” with James Menzie who had been leader of the church in Esquesing since 1840 and was now almost eighty. Campbell referred to him as “a veteran disciple and laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.” “Next morning at 5 o’clock, we took our departure for Toronto, in company with the son of Bro. Menzie and Bro. Laird, who conducted us eighteen miles in their carriages through a beautiful and fertile country, in a high state of cultivation.” The Campbells then sailed to Toronto “on board of a first rate Lake Ontario steamer.” They were met at the landing by “Bro. Thomas C. Scott and Bro. Elliot, with a carriage in waiting to carry us to Bro. Scott’s, whose Christian hospitalities we richly enjoyed during our sojourn in that city. Bro. Scott is now presiding elder of the church of our brethren in the city, and occasionally proclaims the gospel in the surrounding country.” 42

Referring to the church in Toronto, Campbell said: “Our brethren are not as prosperous and as co-operative as they might be, or as they should be, and, as we hope, they will be. They have talents, learning, and the means of being eminently useful, provided only, that mere order, or mere discipline, or church etiquette, should not usurp the place or province of faith, hope, and love. ‘These three,’ as Paul calls them, are paramount to every thing in the Christian profession. Paul would have contracted with any church in his day, never to eat flesh nor to drink wine while the world stood, rather than to wound, or cause to stumble, a weak brother. The vital principle of church order is brotherly love. Let that abound and all is peace, health, and prosperity.”43

Campbell, the consummate preacher, could not even write a travelogue without inserting lessons for the brethren. But in so doing here, he may indicate something of the condition of the church in Toronto in 1855. Campbell preached twice in the Baptist church in Toronto, once on “the great principles embraced in the commission which the Lord Jesus gave to his apostles, relative to the founding of the Christian kingdom. The second discourse was upon the proper foundation of church union, communion, and cooperation.” “During our sojourn in Toronto,” Campbell wrote “we breakfasted with our brother J. Lesslie, the able editor of the *Toronto Examiner*, who furnished his readers with a detailed report of our discourses in Toronto ...”44

From Toronto, the Campbells went by boat to meet an appointment in Bowmanville, accompanied by “our excellent brother Leister [Lister].” In Bowmanville, they stayed with “brother Vancamp and family, and had the pleasure of addressing a large and attentive audience on the Lord’s day morning, in the meeting house of our brethren, from 1 Cor. 3d chapter. In the afternoon we met for communion, and we are pleased to say that we had a very happy season and were much refreshed in spirit.” Campbell preached again the next morning from Acts 2:14, “on the elementary principles of the gospel as set forth in that connection.”45

Upon returning to Toronto, the Campbells again stayed with the Scott family and met with “our most estimable brother [David] Oliphant,” a former student at Bethany, and the editor of the *Christian Banner*. Campbell said Oliphant was “held in much Christian esteem by all the brethren in Canada who know him.” In London, Campbell preached once in Methodist church on “the mystery of godliness.” Here he also met “some old acquaintances amongst whom was brother Edmund Shepherd, formerly of Bethany College.” Shepherd implored Campbell to speak to the church at Dorchester or Aylmer about twenty miles from London, but by this time the aging preacher said “my health and strength were so much under par, that with great reluctance I had to decline the pleasure of the visit.”46 Accompanied by John Stewart of Eramosa and David Oliphant, the Campbells soon left London by train for Detroit, ending his Canadian visit.

The effects of Campbell’s visit to Ontario were felt for years to come. “Through his dynamic preaching he convinced a number of ‘Christian Connection’ preachers of the truth of his position. Among those who took their stand with the Disciples and became proclaimers of the ancient order were: Elijah Gleason, Marshall B. Stone, Solomon B. Rose, G.W. Colston, and Robert Berry. They were all men of considerable capability and became a great asset to the restoration movement. Colston, Stone and Coryell were among the most active evangelists through 1875.”47

Another interesting side light to the work in Ontario is the sojourn of Moses E. Lard at Oshawa during the American Civil War. Lard was living in Missouri at the outbreak of the war. There was such a strong Confederate sentiment in the state that the pro-Unionists and abolitionists appealed for Federal assistance to prevent the state from joining the Confederacy. As a result, Missouri came under military occupation during the war as severe as any experienced by the defeated southern states after the war. All public gatherings were forbidden, churches were closed, and preachers were not allowed to preach, conduct weddings or funerals, or to hold communion services in a private home. All public gatherings were prohibited. Free passage of preachers was impossible. This was decidedly against the itinerate preaching style of Lard who traveled over a wide area. Many gospel preachers were pacifists, which created enemies on both sides. The cutting of support among his brethren because of his stand caused J.W. McGarvey to move his family to Lexington, Kentucky during the war. In his travels, Lard was closely watched by the Union forces. He was often stopped and placed under intense questioning and treated as if he were a spy or traitor.

About this time, Augustus H.F. Payne, a fellow Missouri preacher, was taken from his home by a military unit and shot in some woods nearby. Lard realized the increased danger he was under and saw that if he were to continue preaching he would have to leave Missouri. With encouragement from McGarvey, he moved his young family to Georgetown, Kentucky, which was also a border state with problems similar to those in Missouri. Lard found that he was little better off in Kentucky than in Missouri. His book, *Review of Campbellism Examined*, published in 1857, had made him well known in other countries. He received invitations to preach in Australia, Great Britain, and Canada. He decided to accept an invitation to move to Oshawa, Ontario. The man most responsible for persuading him to move to Canada was Joseph Ash, Jr. of Bowmanville. Lard began publishing *Lard’s Quarterly*, one of the best religious journals ever produced by a disciple of Christ, after moving to Kentucky. He arranged to continue having it printed in Kentucky following his move to Canada. He moved his family to Oshawa in the summer of 1864 and remained there until the summer of 1865, after the war ended. Thus part of the volumes of the *Quarterly* for 1864 and 1865 were written and edited in Canada.

Lard was one of the greatest Restoration preachers of his day and the brethren in Canada were elated to have such a man in the midst. He probably was closer to Alexander Campbell and the American Restoration Movement than any man who had preached in Canada before then. His preaching was mostly in Oshawa, Bowmanville, and Pickering. More than a hundred souls were added to the church in Oshawa during his short stay there. He also started churches in Butterfield, Clarkstownline, and Charlesville. Lard was soon as popular with the brethren in Canada as he had been in Missouri and Kentucky. He was highly respected by the Canadians and he respected them. He said: “In Canada we have a noble band in Christ—brethren of ready perceptions, sound hearts and an intense solicitude for the triumph of the truth.”48 When he moved to Canada, Lard thought the war might last several more years. But with its end in April 1856, he faced an important decision. The Canadian brethren encouraged him to make Canada his permanent home. He loved these brethren and could have been content to live the rest of his life among them, but Missouri and Kentucky were the heart of the great brotherhood. He felt he was needed there to help bind up the wounds and ravages of the war that had left the most of the churches in shambles. So in August 1865, the Lard family said farewell to their Canadian brethren and returned to Kentucky.

James Beaty, a Toronto preacher, was the leader of an “anti-society” group that became definite in about 1883. The non-cooperative “Churches of Christ” began to take a stand for congregational independence about the time the missionary societies were becoming fully organized and influential in Canada. He edited what A.T. DeGroot calls a “somewhat famous noncoopertive paper” the *Bible Index,* in Toronto for twenty years, 1873-1893. Alexander Campbell visited with Beaty on his Canadian tour in 1855. He wrote: “we found all our brethren, so far as we conversed with them on the subject, greatly interested in the progress and prosperity of the New Version cause. Bro. James Beaty, of Toronto, greatly devoted to the cause became a life director of the American Bible Union while I was there, by the payment of $100…. Bro. Beaty is editor of the *Daily Leader*, the only double sheet published every day (Sunday excepted) in the province”49

An interesting sidelight here concerns the small *Christian Hymnal* that was commonly used by brethren before the Civil War. It was compiled by Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone, and John T. Johnson in about 1835, but Campbell was its sole proprietor. About 1863, when it was suggested that a new hymnbook was needed, some brethren feared this might result in the publishing of several hymnbooks and that this would destroy the unity and harmony in worship that then characterized the churches of Christ. To prevent this, it was suggested to Campbell that he turn the copyright of the hymnbook over to the American Christian Missionary Society. Before his death, he arranged to deed the copyright to a group of trustees, not connected with the Society, who would give the Society only that amount of the profits the trustees agreed to. The Society announced in 1866 that it would publish a new *Christian Hymnal* with the proceeds going to the Society.

David Lipscomb was a leading opponent of the society and he strongly opposed anything that contributed to its work. He thought a new hymnal would strengthen the society and lead to federation and control of independent churches. Lipscomb’s dilemma was solved when James Beaty of Toronto published a Canadian Hymn Book in 1882. Lipscomb recommended and encouraged the use of the Canadian songbook instead of the Society’s book. For many years the Canadian book was used by conservative, anti-society churches of Christ.

**The Pioneer Preacher Joseph Ash, Jr.**

Joseph Ash, Jr. of Bowmanville, Ontario, was one of the greatest pioneer preachers of Canada. Because of his importance to the church in Ontario, we choose to treat him separately. Ash was of English descent. His grandfather Ash came to Canada from the town of Leek, Staffordshire, England. Information about his life is partly drawn from his own account published in the *Christian Worker* in 1882. In describing his conversion, Ash said: “In 1820 I gave my whole heart to the Lord and obeyed Him as far as I knew. One whole year of deep anxiety and struggle after the Sectarian fashion to get religion, and the evidence of sins forgiven, [was spent)] expecting the Lord to work a miracle to give me that evidence A little evidence from my blessed mother and much Bible reading, showed me that the form of baptism, as they called it, administered to me by an Episcopal Clergyman, was not baptism. So in September 1830, I was baptized (immersed) by a minister of the New Lights, or as they called themselves, Christians, and as a body, ‘The Christian Connection.’ I had at this time never heard of the reformation, inaugurated by Thos. and A. Campbell.”50 The “Christian Connection.” was the branch of the Restoration Movement that began among Baptists in New England by Elias Smith and Abner Jones. Their churches were aware of the Stone and Campbell movements, but there was no unity between them as such. The “Christian Connection” opposed titles for preachers, practiced immersion, and refused to use instrumental music in worship.

Ash was anxious to gain more divine light. He said: “Eld. Thos. McIntyre called at my father’s while on a preaching tour. I asked him if there were any religious publications I could get. Yes, said he, there are two that I know of, most excellent ones, one is called the *Millennial Harbinger*, published by Alex. Campbell, at Bethany, Brook Co., Va. The other is the *Christian Messenger*, published by Barton W. Stone of K’y, .an excellent paper. Very well, said I, I will take both of them. On November 1, he received the first eleven numbers of the current volume of both journals. He said: “How eagerly I read them. This was the first intimation I had that there was such a people on earth as the Disciples of Christ or Christians.” He recognized that there were some differences between Campbell and Stone, but he also saw the efforts being made toward the union of the Disciples and Christians, as they were called. Ash said, “I became enthusiastic over the bright prospect of union supposing the union would embrace all America. “At about the same time, Ash subscribed to the *Christian Palladium*, published in Rochester, N.Y. by Joseph Badger and David Millard of the “Christian Connection.” “As time advanced and my knowledge increased, I had a deal of controversy with the editors, especially Joseph Badger.” When Ash questioned some of Badger’s views, he was branded a “Campbellite” by Badger.51

In 1833, Ash attended a “Christian Conference at New Market, north of Toronto, and was made assistant clerk. This had an influence on him the rest of his life. He recognized that the conference was a body separate from the church. It was independent of the churches it represented and the membership even included some denominational preachers. Yet, it attempted to legislate for the churches by a majority vote arrangement. It judged disciplinary matters and issued by-laws for churches. “Its word became final and was not subject to question” Describing his relation with the conference, Ash said: “This was my first experience in Conference and (I) was much disappointed. I learned their body was composed of Ministers and delegates from churches, that they had a membership independent of the church and one could be a member of (the) conference and not a member of any church, and that they claimed legislative powers, though not having any written creed they made by-laws and altered and amended them by a majority vote, they tried all hard cases of discipline or dispute between parties in any Church and their discussion was final.”52

He said: “I had learned a lesson through the *Harbinger* that I have not yet forgotten. It was this that the Church or Congregation of Christ, is the highest tribunal on earth, that every individual congregation or church is entirely independent of any other in the management of its own affairs of church order and discipline. That the Church of Christ properly set in order ‘is the pillar and support of the truth,’ that it is all that Christian men and women need or can lawfully desire. It is a Missionary Society, a Bible Society, a Benevolent Society, a Benefit Society, a Protective Society, etc. Seeing all this I could see no place for a conference, or any appendage to the church and spoke out boldly against it. Some were pleased with me and some were not. I had the Great Kentucky union in mind and (was) working to extend it to Canada.”53

It was not long after this when Alexander Campbell began to change his views about missionary societies and began to advocate them. Although, he retained his views on congregational independence and may not have understood the nature of the society his brethren created in 1849. When brethren urged him to give the copyright of his hymnbook to the society, “Campbell agreed with one exception: he wanted the ownership kept free of the missionary society and modified the plan by making the deed of the copyright to five trustees, not officially connected with the Society. The Missionary Society was to get only that amount of the profits that the trustees assessed.”54 The songbook was apparently profitable. Robert Richardson says that from the hymnbook Campbell (had long derived a considerable portion of his income.” Also in his will, “carefully written by himself and signed on the 11th of March, 1862,” he left five thousand dollars to the elders of the Bethany church “to maintain the preaching of the gospel,” but left nothing to the missionary society.55

Ash’s letter to Barton W. Stone and John T. Johnson in 1834, referred to earlier, shows his deep concern over the developing of the missionary society in Ontario. He asked for their views on the subject of conferences and wanted them to explain their practice in this regard. There is no indication of a direct reply to Ash. Stone was then making plans to move to Illinois and Johnson was about to become co-editor of the *Gospel Advocate* (1834-1835). But the conferences among them at this time were little more than mass meetings of brethren, with little organization in evidence.

In his letter to Stone and Johnson, Ash shows his disinterest in speculation and opinions. He said: “We have dropped that old injurious question of the trinity. We think that it is enough for us to know that there is a *Jehovah*, and that he has spoken to man, and given them a law, and that this *Jehovah* has a *Son*, and that he sent him into the world to open a new and living way for men to be saved; that in order to effect this it was necessary for him to offer himself a sacrifice; and that his blood cleanses from all sin through faith, repentance, and immersion. We know that Christ exists; but how we do not how. Neither do we care, only that we may live so on earth, that we may receive glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life after death”56

In a letter to Alexander Campbell, written from Cobourg, Ontario, July 6, 1833, Ash gives some insight to the condition of the church in that part of Canada at that time. It shows the independence of Ash and men like him in that country. He writes: “The cause of liberal or ancient Christianity, has just got a little start in Canada. It has, thus far, been a hard struggle; but I am happy to say that now public opinion generally is in its favor. There are no churches nor preachers who particularly call themselves Reformers, or Disciples; they all take the name Christian, which I believe you acknowledge yourself. Most of the Christian preachers of my acquaintance are decidedly in favor of the principles you write upon, and have ever since their conversion…. The preachers among us who are most capable of this task [traveling through the province to advocate the principles of ancient Christianity] are worn out already; and, as you yourself know that people generally are fond of new things, many would flock out to hear a stranger when they would not any one else”57

Not all of those who advocated the ancient order were sound men. As the cause of Christ began to make some progress in Ontario, some unscrupulous men “eyed the Canadian work and attempted to move in.” One man Ash warned about was “a very gifted orator’ named Benjamin Howard who is mentioned by W.H. Harding as starting a church at West Gore, N.S. in 1837. Ash was suspicious of him when he came to Ontario and his suspicion was confirmed when he learned from the *Christian Palladium* that Howard had been expelled from a “Christian Connection” church in New York for bad and immoral conduct and that he now “sometimes claimed to be a Reformer, Disciple, New Light, Christian, etc.” Ash also learned that Howard had been earlier turned out of the Methodist church for the same reasons. Ash said: “I was not slow in my opposition to Mr. Howard, showing to many people the printed documents in the *Palladium*. I had other reasons for my opposition. His preaching was almost entirely on baptism for the remission of sins. That was all right if he had given the antecedents and consequents of real baptism. He was noticeably silent on the responsibilities of living the Christian life.”58

After he was exposed, Howard returned to New York and enlisted Z.F. Green, another renegade preacher, who had been expelled from the “Christian Connection” church for drunkenness and other bad conduct, to help him in Canada. Green is also described as an outstanding orator and with that ability could lead many people astray. Ash said: “So then I had the two to fight. It was a hard fight, but the result was, that I held the ground and Howard left Canada never to return and Green went east to Prince Edward County. Before leaving they baptized several in Baltimore and Brighton, got them together as churches, but knowing but baptism, they soon vanished.”59

Ash tells about trouble in Oshawa when they received a preacher of whom they knew nothing. The man claimed to have come from Kentucky and Missouri and to have also preached in St. John, New Brunswick. By the time the brethren stopped him from preaching, he had already gained a following and split the church, leading his followers “right into the Baptist church at Oshawa.” The man, J.S. Patterson, later admitted that he had been a Baptist. He was received into the Baptist church and ordained by them. The Baptists then circulated the report that all the Christians in Oshawa had come over to the Baptists, which was untrue. But Ash’s watchfulness and effective leadership probably saved the Lord’s church in Oshawa. The church learned that in the future they would learn more about a preacher before allowing him to get a foothold among them.

“The Oshawa church recovered from the problem as a much wiser and far more mature organization, while the Patterson church was of little benefit to the Baptists and finally died out during Moses Lard’s residency in the area. Several years later the influence of Churches of Christ was seen in the following places: St. Catherines, Bradford, London, Whitby, Oakville, Strathray, Chatham, Windsor, Sarnia, Berlin, Port Dover, Blenheim, Wardsville, and Orangeville”60 In the 1860s, there were sound churches in Coburgh, Port Hope, Bowmanville, Beamsville, Oshawa, Toronto, York, Aurora, Collingwood, Meaford, Stratford, Owen Sound, Guelph, St. Thomas, Pirkering, Stoweville, Jordan, Smithville, Walkerton, Stainer, Erin, Hagden, Hamilton, Welland-port, Selkirk, Princeville, Richtown, Rodney and an number of other places.

Ash tells about attending another “Christian Conference” at Whitby in 1834. It was after this meeting when he wrote the letter to Stone and Johnson referred to earlier. “In 1834 I attended another Christian Conference in Whitby, I was then elected clerk. At this season of Conference I expected the matter of union or that the question would be finally settled, whether the whole body in Canada would come into the reformation, it was a full session. The whole body then in Canada numbered 20 churches, 20 ordained Elders, and 1200 members on their Church records. Those Elders were not pastors in the popular sense. Most of them traveled on horseback from Burford in the west to Consecon in the east. After quite a good deal of Conference business was done one of my friends framed and moved a resolution which was very promptly seconded, the purport of which was the disannulling of the Conference, and the adopting of yearly meetings as then was being held in Ohio, and giving the church all power over its own affairs. If this resolution had carried, others would have followed, until the whole change desired should have been completed. The resolution was put to a vote (majority vote) and when noses were counted there was a tie, many breathed long and hearts beat high. After a good deal of stir the chairman gave the casting vote against the resolution. There was great confusion for some time and the Conference broke up quite abruptly for that year. There was no division of churches following. The after consequences were individual conquests from their ranks.”61

Joseph Ash, Jr. was probably the strongest and most influential voice against the organizing of the missionary society in Canada in later years. He did not waver from his stand even in old age and even when many of the leading preachers, especially in American came out in favor of the society. In this matter, he must rank with men like Jacob Creath, Jr., Benjamin Franklin, Tolbert Fanning, and David Lipscomb.

The aftermath of the Conference in 1834, in Ash’s words, “threw matters back to their original position.” He was not a preacher at the time. The churches of the conference were apparently associated with the “Christian Connection” and never became part of the main body of the Restoration brotherhood associated with Stone and Campbell. When Ash had stood against Benjamin Howard and Howard challenged him to debate, he said: “I paid no attention to his challenge for I could not stand up and speak on any subject then.” In view of this, his stand for the truth is all the more remarkable. One of the most thrilling stories of the Canadian Restoration concerns what Ash did at that point, which led to the establishing of the church in Cobourg. For all practical purposes, he was alone in the world religiously. He resigned membership in the church at Bradley Hallow, which was reluctantly accepted. “I was dismissed with honor and so recorded on their church book,” he said. “I was then as a christian [sic] out in the world alone. Most of those who sympathized with me in the reformation lived in Darlington and Whitby ... I cannot describe my feelings; but the Lord always helps his children when help is needed and He threw into my company an excellent young man by the name of John Ford, from Dungannon, Ireland.”62

Before long Ford fully embraced the Restoration. Ash tells about an interesting episode that attended the beginning of the church at Cobourg. Of himself and Ford, he said, “We met on Lord’s days, walked through fields and forests in lonely sadness, talked, prayed, and sang together. At length Ford proposed that we should commence holding meetings in the town ... neither of us had ever attempted to preach, or even hold a social or prayer meeting ...” But their zeal overcame their difficulties. They obtained a small school room and announced an appointment for the Lord’s Day. When they reached the place, they found a congregation of about fifteen, all men. “We sang, Bro. Ford prayed and I was to read. I read about half a chapter in the new testament [sic], and commented on each verse; I trembled in every limb and when I had finished, Bro. Ford read some and we sang and prayed and dismissed our first meeting, after announcing another next Lord’s day.” The next service saw an increased number of men and “two women.”63

After the fourth meeting, a young man wanted to be baptized. He said they had taught him how all penitent persons should be immersed and he wanted to obey that command. Ash said: “We were in a fix…. Bro. Ford said, well Bro. Ash it must be done, and I cannot do it. Well, said I, I have never performed the act, but I have seen it done. I think I can do it, and I will. It was a critical moment, two young men following our daily avocations neither of us preachers, we knew the prejudices of all men about there would be against us.” So they arranged to perform the baptism privately in case they made a mistake and brought the act into derision. “We appointed to meet on the sandy beach of the beautiful lake Ontario the next Wednesday evening. We met 6 or 8 in number; there we grouped together a little praying anxious band under the All Seeing Eye and the heavenly host rejoicing over the scene. O! I shall never forget, my heart swells and the big tears flow when I get back to that eventful hour.”64

Describing the baptismal scene, Ash says: “It was a beautiful evening, the sky was a little hazy, the waters were calm; a slight ripple splashed on the shore, the pale moon about half full, cast her silvery light over the waters. All nature seemed hushed into silence, while we in the silence of that hour sang a hymn and all kneeled, and with tears of rejoicing, poured out our souls to the God who knew our hearts. My trembling left me in full possession of my strength and nerves. I took his confession and led the tall, heavy man into the water to a proper depth, and then in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I baptized him for the remission of all his past sins, and raised him up to walk in newness of life. That man was a Methodist local preacher. That was my first baptism. Our meetings went on as we began, but much enlivened by the help of our newly made brother, John Hancock.”65

After this, someone in almost every meeting requested baptism and the church grew. A little later, they set a church in order at Port Hope. Ash converted the editor of the local paper, *The Cobourg Reformer* with help from Alexander Campbell through the *Millennial Harbinger*. About this time, he also baptized a young woman who died in 1882. Writing of her, Ash said: “Sister Pomeroy has gone to her eternal rest and her children need not mourn her departure. She has played her part well, and oh, when I think back to the time of her baptism and the founding of that little church, now about 48 years ago, of which she and her father and mother were charter members, I become almost enthusiastically wild with joy over the cause as it was then, and in tracing it till now.” Her obituary said: “She lived to see the church opened over all the Province.”66

**Some General Observations about the Churches in Canada**

The missionary society concept of church organization in Canada was slow in developing, but once it gained a foothold among the churches, it rapidly carried most of them into digression. This was due, at least in part, to the rise of a loose interpretation of the Bible and the Restoration ideal, which made the missionary society acceptable to a majority of brethren. It also made many other changes from the apostolic order acceptable. Even though the conservatism of the Canadian movement retarded the development of the society, there seems to have been less restraining influences against it, once it was firmly established.

The Scotch Baptist influence in the development of the Restoration seems to have been greater in Canada than in the United States. Whereas the Stone and Campbell movements were largely shaped by forces in America, Canada had more direct influence from earlier movements in Great Britain. “Thus the Scotch Baptist culture made an early and lasting impression upon Canada far beyond such influences in the United States. There are serious students who believe it is this fact that has stunted Disciples growth in Canada”67

A shortage of preachers took a toll on the progress of the Restoration in Canada. Alexander Campbell, on his 1855 tour of Canada said: “Indeed, in almost every region the demand for good evangelists is considerably in advance of the supply.” But he spoke highly of those men who were in the field in the regions he visited. Of them, he said: “The gravity and manifest sincerity of each of the Canadian preachers I became acquainted with, will very favorably compare with the first class of their fellow-laborers in the United States.”68

W.H. Harding, in his brief but informative history of the churches of Christ in the Maritime Provinces writes from the viewpoint of the liberal branch of the movement. Harding, who preached in the Maritimes in the years 1889-1939 and wrote the history shortly before his death in 1939, is a credible historian and a source for other histories of the early days of the Restoration in Canada. His comments on the movement, while allowing for his “progressive” bias, shows that the churches were mainly conservative in the beginning. Harding writes: “We are asking the question, ‘Why have we not grown in Canada like they have grown in the U.S.?’ Here is the answer: The Church in the provinces came to the cross roads, and took the wrong turn, under the influence of the weekly visits of the old [*American Christian*] *Review*; the non-progressive policy crushed all the life; and the Reformation and the Plea for New Testament Christianity was turned into a hard and fast legality, about methods of work, rather than the work itself. Perhaps, nowhere in the history of the work could a more faithful and loyal people be found, than were those in the early days of the churches in the Maritime Provinces. There was a willing spirit and an earnest heart. Many sacrifices were made…. If we had had progressive teaching for these people instead of so much anti-ism, we would have had some great churches in the Maritime Provinces.”69

By “progressive teaching,” Harding meant the kind of teaching that promoted such things as the missionary society in the work of the church and the use of instrumental music in the worship of the church. And by “non-progressive” and “anti” he meant to belittle those conservative brethren who opposed these innovations. The “crossroads” Harding refers to is the crisis over these innovations that arose in the later years of the nineteenth century. He thought most of the churches made the wrong turn at the crossroads when they rejected these things. There is no doubt that brethren can be too negative in their approach to apostolic Christianity. They can also be unnecessarily divisive over “methods of work.” Furthermore, these traits may very well hinder the growth of churches and may so sap the life of a church as to destroy it. We are not in position to say whether this actually contributed to the demise of churches or the stunting of the cause in some places. But this is something that we today should be conscious of and make an earnest effort to avoid in trying to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. However, some observations may be noted.

Whether a church a killed by negativism or by “progressing” beyond the word of God so as to create a denomination (as the modern Disciples of Christ have done) seems to make little difference for both are detrimental to the cause of Christ. It is the old story of the pot and the kettle. The “hard and fast legality” of which Harding speaks may be nothing more that a determination of faithful brethren to hold fast to the pattern of sound words and to not go beyond the teaching of Christ. To charge brethren with legality for upholding the authority of Christ in the teaching, faith, and practice of the church is a common ploy of those who would discredit the conservative churches of Christ who adhere more closely to the Restoration ideal of the Stone and Campbell movements and to the Bible. The issues over the missionary society, instrumental music in worship, and such like are not disagreements over “methods of work.” The society is not a method, it is an organization that supplants the congregation as the only organization Christ provided for the collective work and worship of the church. Instrumental music is not a method of singing; it is an unauthorized addition to singing. It is another kind of music than that which was used by the apostles in the first century.

The fact that a church ceases to grow, or even ceases to exist, may be determined by factors other than what Harding calls “hard and fast legality.” A church may fail to grow because in opposing the society it also neglects to evangelize. But it also may not grow for the same reason Paul never established a church in Athens: the people did not receive the truth. Shifting population, bitter opposition, and many other things can hinder a church. It is possible that a church may fail to attract people because it does not have an organ or women preachers, but if it has to compromise the truth to attract people, what has it gained? “And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”70 There were a number of progressive churches in the Maritime Provinces. What was it that hindered them from growing? Remember Harding’s question was: “Why have *we* not grown in Canada like they have in the U.S.?” Why did the missionary society, which they had from 1886 not plant churches and convert large numbers of sinners during the fifty years that Harding himself was working in these provinces?

Aside from his criticism of the conservative brethren in Canada, Harding speaks well of them as a whole. He writes: “The hospitality of the people in these early days was remarkable. Everybody’s home was the preacher’s home, and it did not matter if it was a day or a week, and there was no thought about paying for such entertainment. Many homes had the ‘Prophet’s Chamber,’ and the very best and most hearty welcome was given. And it was well that it was so, for few preachers received much salary for their work. The church at River John had a rule that they would pay one dollar a day to the preacher who held meetings, and some preachers did not get that much.”71

Religious journals almost from the beginning have played an important part in the Restoration Movement in Canada. While America papers were circulated in the provinces, there were also several Canadian publications in circulation. “Since 1830 eighteen journals of more than local character were started under private or corporate management. Following American styles, the first were of the essay type: the *Gleaner*, Halifax (1834?); the *Gospel Vindicator*, Cobourg, Ontario (1837); *Witness of Truth* (1845, continuing until 1880 under different names), published by David Oliphant. There was also the St. John *Christian* (1839, continuing with varying fortunes to 1922); the *Christian Worker*, Meaford, Ontario (1881-86); the *Canadian Evangelist* (1890-96), large semimonthly journal, published by George Munro, who was a vigorous son of Bethany, *The Christian Messenger* of Toronto (1897-1822), founded by Charles T. Paul and Reuben Butchart, led into modern methods…. A somewhat famous noncooperative paper was the *Bible Index* of James Beaty, of Toronto, from 1873 to 1893.”72

We mentioned the conservative nature of the Canadian work in the early years. Harding attributes some of this to the influence of Benjamin Franklin, the gospel preacher and editor of the influential *American Christian Review*. In discussing what he saw as the reason the churches had not grown in Canada as they had in the United States, Harding wrote: “At the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century a paper called *The American Christian Review* was published, and it obtained wide circulation in the maritime Provinces. Preachers did without their salary so that the people might have this paper; it was published by Benjamin Franklin, and when in 1869, Franklin visited the provinces, he was given a great ovation. No preacher before or since has aroused so much enthusiasm. Churches would not hold the people, and services were held in groves. The trouble with the *American Christian Review* was not that it proclaimed a wrong doctrine, but it circumscribed the methods of work used in the promulgation of the gospel. Women must keep silence in the church; young people were to be seen and not heard; Sunday schools were not Scriptural; missionary societies were contrary to the Bible; preachers had to trust the Lord and the people for their support, etc. This non-progressive policy was hammered into the people every week. Sectarian churches were harlots, an organ was unscriptural, and until fifty years ago, the Cobourg St. Church in St John was the only church in the Maritime provinces that used an organ. The *Christian Standard* came along, but it was tabooed; Errett [its editor] was an anti-Christ, and to have a copy of the Chr*istian Standard* in the house was a sign of heresy.”73

**Summary**

Ties between American and Canadian preachers, churches, and periodicals were strong in the early days of the movement. However, the Restoration in Canada began independently of the movement in America and actually arose from several sources. It was influenced more by the earlier movements in Great Britain, including the Scotch Baptists, the movement of the Haldane brothers, and the “Christian Connection” than by the Stone and Campbell movements in America. But it was the refining influence of men like Stone, Campbell, Lard, and Franklin that corrected errors of the earlier movements and contributed to the presence of sound churches throughout the Maritime Provinces and Ontario in the nineteenth century. For whatever reason, either because the churches were too conservative or reactionary, as some claim, or because they became too progressive, eventually adopting the missionary society and instrumental music, or for some other reasons, most of the churches in time lost their zeal for the ancient order and either drifted into denominationalism or ceased to exist. But that is another story that largely involves the twentieth century.

**Notes**

1 Jeremiah 6:16.

2 Garrison, W.E., and A.T. DeGroot. *The Disciples of Christ—A History.*

3 Daniel 2:44, and Ephesians 3:20-21.

4 *Christian Worker*, Nov. 1882.

5 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

6 Baxter, William. *The Life of Elder Walter Scott*.

7 Butchart, Reuben. *The Disciples of Christ in Canada*.

8 Harding, W.W. *Beginning of the Churches of Christ in the Maritimes*.

9 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

10 Harding. *Beginning*.

11 Ibid.

12 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples.*

13 Harding. *Beginning.*

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 *Millennial Harbinger*, Nov. 1832.

20 Harding. *Beginning.*

21 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

22 Harding. *Beginning.*

23 Ibid.

24 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

25 Harding. *Beginning*.

26 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 *Millennial Harbinger*, Dec. 1834.

30 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples.*

31 Ibid.

32 Kenneth Van Deusen. *Moses Lard, Prince of Preachers*.

33 Ibid.

34 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples.*

35 *Christian Messenger*, Aug. 1834.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 *Millennial Harbinger*, Sept.1855.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Van Deusen, *Moses Lard*.

48.Ibid.

49 *Millennial Harbinger*, Oct. 1855.

50 *Christian Worker*, Nov. 1882.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 West, Earl. *The Life and Times of David Lipscomb*.

55 Richardson, Robert. *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell.*

56 *Christian Messenger,* Aug. 1834.

57 *Millennial Harbinger*, Sept. 1833.

58 Van Deusen. *Moses Lard.*

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 *Christian Worker*, Nov. 1882.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples*.

68 *Millennial Harbinger*, Oct. 1855.

69 Harding. *Beginning*.

70 Matthew 15:14.

71 Harding. *Beginning.*

72 Garrison and DeGroot. *The Disciples.*

73 Butchart. *The Disciples.*

Earl Kimbrough

A Series of Lectures

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 1998.