



1-1-1961

Fellowship and the Disciples' Doctrine of the Church

Evelyn Faye Hale
Butler University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/grtheses>



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hale, Evelyn Faye, "Fellowship and the Disciples' Doctrine of the Church" (1961). *Graduate Thesis Collection*. 301.

<https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/grtheses/301>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Scholarship at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.

Name of candidate:

..... Evelyn Faye Hale

Oral examination:

Date July 19, 1961

Committee:

..... Prof. James Clague, Chairman

..... Prof. James Blair Miller

.....

.....

.....

Thesis title:

..... FELLOWSHIP AND THE DISCIPLES' DOCTRINE

..... OF THE CHURCH

.....

Thesis approved in final form:

Date July 19, 1961

Major Professor James G. Clague

FELLOWSHIP AND THE DISCIPLES' DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

BY

Evelyn Faye Hale

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Division of Graduate Instruction
Butler University
Indianapolis
1961

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP	5
	Jesus and His Church	
	New Testament Concepts	
	Modern Discussions	
III.	DISCIPLE TRADITION	43
	Campbell: Early Beginnings	
	Campbell: Later Developments	
	Developments in Disciple Thinking	
IV.	CONCLUSION	79

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On every side we are confronted nowadays in the religious world with questions concerning the nature of the church. we are asked, "What does it mean to belong to the church?" This is a question which is not only asked by persons who are not a part of the church as such, but also by those in the church. As one grows in his faith, it is likely that this searching will become a part of his life. It is necessary for us as Christians to ask these questions and then to study to find some answers. This, of course, will lead to a lifetime of study because they are those which are basic to the Christian life. We want to know what the church is and thus are led to inquire into its nature.

We realize that we are individuals in a community relationship and that this community comes from our sharing together in Christ. However, much depends upon the individual and how much of his life is drawn up into the life of the church. What makes this relationship any different from those relationships which we experience in our life outside the church.

It is these questions and concepts concerning the nature of the church with which I will be dealing in this thesis. My particular concern will be with the concept of fellowship in the doctrine of the

nature of the church. It is my belief that we need as Disciples of Christ to look into this matter and to evaluate our traditional thought in the light of the study which is going on today in ecumenical circles. It seems to me that we should be aware of any new light on old questions. This then is the purpose of my thesis.

Out of my background in a Disciple church, I have felt certain needs at this point in my own attempt to construct my thinking as a Christian. It has been one of my concerns that so much emphasis has been placed on the individual and his relationship to Christ. This sometimes overshadows and takes the place of the fact that this relationship has implications for us as we are members of a congregation. It is in this community that we are being redeemed, but how is this redemption taking place. Does it have meaning only for us as individuals? Or, does it have meaning for the church as a whole. Baptism and communion are communal acts with communal significance. What purpose have they for redemption and for the congregation as a whole?

Thus, it is necessary for me to do three things in this thesis: (1) Spell out the meaning of fellowship in relationship to an understanding of the nature of the church in its origin and in contemporary thinking. (2) Find out what our own traditions are regarding the nature of the church. (3) Evaluate our traditional understanding of the concept of the church as Disciples of Christ.

How shall I accomplish this threefold purpose? First, we must go to the real source of our thinking concerning the church which means a study of the Scriptures. In this study it will be necessary to consider the relationship of Jesus and his church as found in the Gospels and then to give attention to the other writings of the New Testament which will help us to formulate our thinking about the church. This together with a look at modern theological discussion on this topic composes the second chapter.

The third chapter will turn to the beginnings of our movement and will consider the basic principles upon which it was founded. Naturally, the writings of Alexander Campbell dominate this picture. Here we find the factors which have shaped and molded the beliefs of our particular denomination. This will not be an attempt to give a comprehensive and exhaustive review of Campbell's doctrine of the nature of the church, but particular attention is given to the concept of fellowship. An attempt will be made to trace the development of this concept through the years of Disciple history.

Our fourth and final chapter will be more or less in the form of a summation and conclusion to the first two. We must look at the contemporary situation and evaluate our traditional ideas about the nature of the church. We should, of course, want to preserve that which is right and good in our tradition, but it is necessary for us to understand what it means to belong to the Body of Christ today. We must be

able to state what we believe. Most certainly Disciples of Christ have something to offer as we participate in ecumenical conversations and we must be prepared to do so. In order to do this effectively, we must be able to look at ourselves and to criticize our own position so that growth may take place.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP

Jesus and His Church

In any discussion of the nature of the church it is necessary to think about the beginnings of the church and its source. It is inconceivable that we could talk about the church without having first grounded our thinking in the fundamental facts of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. What is the relationship of Jesus and the church? This seems like such a simple question, and we often assume that to ask such a question is preposterous. We are inclined to think that we know until our minds are surprised by the question.

Concerning this problem, we must come to terms with what is related to us in the Gospels and try to imagine what was in the mind of Jesus at this point. Of one thing we can be certain, the early church looked upon his life, his death, and his subsequent resurrection as events of greatest importance. These things were fresh in the memory of the early church. We know that the earliest accounts that were shared and finally written contained the main outline of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Glover tells us, "Two things stand out, when we study the character of the early church--its great complexity and variety, and its unity in the personality of Jesus of

Nazareth."¹

This conviction of the early church tells us something about Jesus' work here on earth. It tells us of the purpose and extent of his ministry as he sought to interpret his mission to his nation. From the Gospel accounts we know that Jesus gathered about him certain disciples. Some of these elected to remain with him throughout his earthly ministry, while others left him when they saw its probable outcome. The question is, just what did Jesus have in mind when he gathered together these disciples, lived with them, taught them, and had fellowship with them? Did he conceive of them as the nucleus of the church?

Let us turn our attention to the passages of Scripture in which Jesus actually used the term "church." We find in the New Testament only two such passages, both in the Gospel according to Matthew. One is in the 16th chapter and the other in the 18th chapter.

Matthew 18:17 appears to be the less important passage for our purpose. Dr. Clarence T. Craig, in an article in The Interpreter's Bible, is of the opinion that ". . . Matthew 18:17 clearly has in mind a later separate Christian community with machinery for the discipline of its members."² By this statement it seems he does not believe these to be Jesus' words. Dr. Hort takes exception to this view by writing,

¹T. R. Glover, The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 141.

²Clarence T. Craig, "The Teaching of Jesus," The Interpreter's Bible, 7, p. 151.

Here our Lord is speaking not of the future but the present, instructing His disciples how to deal with an offending brother. . . . The actual precept is hardly intelligible if the ἐκκλησία meant is not the Jewish community, apparently the Jewish local community, to which the injured person and the offender both belonged.¹

The word translated as church actually was meant by Jesus to refer to the Jewish synagogue. It seems that the discussion of this passage serves to point up the problem of both passages, that is, the meaning of the word which was translated into Greek as ecclesia and then into English as church.

A recent trend is seen which denies the earlier opinion that both passages are interpolations in the early manuscripts. However, in making this denial scholars take care to point out that it is necessary to try to understand what Jesus could have meant in using the word.

Nelson explains to us some of the background of this term.

It has long been shown that the men who translated the Old Testament into Greek, the Septuagint, usually, though not always, rendered the Hebrew qāhāl into the Greek ekklēsia. In the post-exilic literature of the Old Testament, qāhāl generally expressed the meaning of "the assembly of the congregation of Israel." In a similar way, the Greek ekklēsia carried the simple meaning of "the summoning of Greek citizens by means of the herald's trumpet to the assembly of the city." While agreeing that ekklēsia was just a secular word in Greek, many scholars interpreted qāhāl as having a distinctly religious connotation, meaning the assembly or people of God. The obvious deduction to be drawn, then, is that first Christians,

¹Fenton J. A. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1914), p. 9-10.

so far as they wrote and spoke Greek and used the Septuagint, appropriate the name ekklesiā for themselves because by that time it too had the meaning of "people called forth specially by God."¹

It is from such an explanation of the usage and translation of the term that we must continue our discussion. The term used then was of Jewish origin and not Christian, although it was taken over by the early church, was interpreted to mean the Christian community, and was, therefore, cut off from its origin in Judaism. This has made it difficult for persons to believe that Jesus used the term. However, as Cullmann says,

If one reads the words of Matthew 16:17 in the light of this essentially Jewish idea and takes account of the fact that in the time of Jesus gahal-ekklesia was a quite common concept, firmly rooted in Jewish thinking, one really cannot on that basis deny the genuineness of the saying. . . . For sound scientific method requires that we explain the concepts first of all according to the sense that they have in the environment to which the writing belongs whose text is to be explained. It is not right to start from a later concept of the ekklesia and then conclude that it cannot possibly be ascribed to Jesus. It must first of all be asked whether there is not an ekklesia concept that corresponds to the Jewish thinking whose categories Jesus took over.²

Cullmann, on this basis, works out a plan in which the saying is seen as authentic, although he thinks it is misplaced by Matthew and should be inserted instead in the passion narrative.

On the other side of the question, George Johnston, in his book The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament, is just as emphatic

¹J. Robert Nelson, The Realm of Redemption (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Co., 1951), pp. 6-7.

²Oscar Cullmann, Peter, trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1953), p. 191.

in claiming that it is an interpolation by Matthew and the early church. He cites, as one argument, the fact that neither Mark nor Luke includes this in his version of this incident.¹ His final conclusion is that ecclesia can refer only to that community which was formed after the resurrection of Christ. Matthew then inserted this into the narrative because it seemed to fit.

The alternatives are obvious: (1) The use of the term in this narrative is genuine, that is, Jesus used the word; or (2) it is interpolated into the text by Matthew. If we accept the former, we must surely ask the further question of meaning. If, on the other hand, we turn to the latter, we must assume that even though it is an interpolation there must have been some teaching in the tradition to which Matthew turned for his authority in attributing the saying to Jesus.

Let us consider this passage in reference to the whole of Jesus' ministry. Jesus has come to that time when his followers, having been narrowed to only twelve disciples, are being instructed as to the meaning of his life. He questions them about who he is and Peter makes his confession. Jesus declares that it is with such faithful persons that he will build his church. I could take this to be a prophetic allusion in which Jesus is definitely pointing to the

¹George Johnston, The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943), pp. 46-58.

future. Already his actions have pointed towards community, and immediately Christ speaks of his coming death and the role of the Messiah as a suffering servant. However, it is obvious that his disciples are mystified as to the meaning of this.

It is difficult for me to think that Jesus used ecclesia in this passage. However, it is possible that some saying was interpreted by Matthew to refer to the then historical ecclesia. It would be a matter of reading back into the text what they thought he must have meant regardless of the actual wording. Whether he used ecclesia or whether Matthew interpreted some other word as ecclesia, the meaning is the important thing. Jesus was definitely seeing himself in the role of Messiah which would lead to a community of persons who have in common their faith in him.

So it seems that Jesus, although he might not have been instituting the church as we now know it, was conscious of having a part in God's purposes for his people. As Flew points out:

Our first conclusion is that Jesus gathered together a band of disciples, as the Remnant, the little flock which was to be the nucleus of the new Israel, to live as God's children under His Kingly Rule, to serve Him in expectation of the final consummation.¹

Jesus was able to look to Israel and to realize what it meant for a people to be a people of God. He was well grounded in the law and in the prophets. However, he was not bound by the legalism that controlled the religious life of the Pharisee. Jesus was sure about

¹R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938), p. 58.

his mission and about the Kingdom of God and of the sovereignty of God in all areas of life. Jesus seemed always conscious of the purposes of God and of the relationship of God to his people. For him God was Creator of all, but he was able to speak of God also as a loving Father. This he shared with his disciples. He brought them into a relationship with God such as they had never known before.

The Kingly Rule of God brought with it a new relationship with their Father, an inward consciousness of sonship, a divinely wrought illumination. It was an individual relationship, inasmuch as each of His disciples might enter on it of his own free will, but it was no private possession. It was shared. The "Kingdom" was given to the disciples as a company, and the gift was based on the reconciliation wrought by the sacrifice of Jesus Himself.¹

It was in this way that we can say that Jesus meant to call into existence the church. It would appear that he was trying to demonstrate to his followers that God was close to them and that he was calling them together to be formed into a holy fellowship. Surely God was working in these events to bring about his purpose of a salvation which was to be for all peoples and not just for Israel. He was challenging them to be truly the people of God and to share this gift with any who would receive it. Thus, we might say with Flew that:

Jesus then envisaged a new Israel, to be formed through the little flock, and living beneath God's Kingly Ruly in a new era. His followers were committed to a new way of life and were promised the divine power to enable them for it. They

¹Ibid., 102.

owned allegiance to a Messiah who was treading the path of suffering. The message which they accepted and which the rest of Israel rejected was that of God's final salvation; to accept this message was to go into the Kingdom, while to reject it was to stay outside. Their mission was to deliver this message, in full reliance on the divine power manifested in the New Age; and in the delivery of it they were fully commissioned representatives of the Son of man, so that to reject them was to reject God Himself. A community which can thus be described is surely the Ecclesia, the People of God, Israel as God intended Israel to be.¹

Certainly we can only surmise that this is the way that Jesus thought of and actually envisaged this New Israel. However, in the light of the subsequent beginning and growth of the church, it seems likely that Jesus did have in mind that a community would be formed. He evidently intended that they should stay together after his death and assumed that they would. He told them of his coming death and also of his resurrection asking that they wait for his return. The important thing is that it did happen. That is, that the disciples were able to receive the Holy Spirit and to experience fellowship with one another and with the risen Christ. Looking back upon it, it appears inevitable that this should happen whether or not Jesus ever actually was concerned that the fellowship which had been formed should be extended as the church. The really important matter about the church is not whether it was authorized, so to speak, by Christ in detail, but whether it is fulfilling its purpose as "the organ or instrument of God's saving purpose for mankind."² This is its reason for being.

¹Ibid., 122.

²Ibid., 33.

It is this purpose that sustains the church through all generations. It is the instrument whereby God through Christ reconciles the world to himself. Christ becomes the head of the church and,

However much Christ may need the Church as the instrument of His redemptive work in the world, therefore, it remains subordinate to Him in nature, drawing whatever meaning and value it has from its relation to Him. The body lives only because it draws power from the Head, but it is not identical with the Head.¹

In speaking of the church as the instrument or organ, we must remember that Christ is still the saving power, but the church holds in its hands, as the fellowship, the key to this power.

What then must we reply when we ask the questions: What did Jesus have in mind when he gathered together these disciples? Did he conceive of them as the nucleus of the church? We must answer that Jesus was conscious of the relationship of God to His people and that he believed that God was seeking to reconcile man to Himself. Jesus evidently had something in mind as he gathered twelve disciples into a close fellowship. He believed that God was working in events to bring about the Kingdom of God. He preached that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and it is on this basis that Jesus gathered his flock about him.

Jesus Himself as the destined Messiah gathered this community in close companionship with Himself. In fellowship with Him now, they have their guarantee of fellowship with the Son of man hereafter. . . . This relationship is no individualistic relationship of the solitary soul with Christ, no "flight of the alone to the Alone." It belongs to those in the community. It is an integral part of the idea of the Ecclesia.²

¹Nelson, 95.

²Flew, 80.

It was this kind of relationship which was established during the earthly ministry of Jesus, and it was strengthened and bound with the resurrection of Christ. The disciples of Jesus realized this only after the death and resurrection of Christ, but it has been gradually unfolding before their very eyes. It was not something which could be analyzed and pinpointed to any definite time. This sense of fellowship and community could only arise out of their encounter with Jesus in his life on earth and later with the sense of the presence of Christ with them. So John Knox explains that:

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the event first occurred, and then the community came into existence. On the contrary, the occurrence of the event and the rise of the community proceeded together. As Jesus' ministry began, a group of disciples began to form about him; as the ministry continued, their community was presumably deepened and widened; his terrible death, while it shook their community to its foundations and tested it as with fire, also had the effect of bringing to poignant realization all he had meant to them; with his resurrection what we know as the early church came fully into being. But the church was obviously not a sudden emergent from an event already in the past. It has been gradually coming into being as the event developed, and indeed the event itself is inconceivable apart from it.¹

The church then we can say emerged out of the whole series of events which occurred during the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

New Testament Concepts

We have already seen how the community was gathered together and formed by the ministry of Jesus, but how would it be sustained? We read in Romans,

¹John Knox, The Early Church and the Coming Great Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 47.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.¹

This brings us to a discussion of the concept of the Holy Spirit and the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit.

As always it is good to consider the Jewish thought world out of which our Christian concepts emerged. In thinking about the Holy Spirit and the early church, we must first look to the Old Testament for hints and clues about the Spirit.

The earliest ideas about spirit were expressed in terms of wind or breath. In keeping with this there is the thought of the power and mysteriousness of the wind, especially the wind of the desert, and the idea of the creative breath of God. As we read in Genesis, "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."²

As is well known, the Hebrew word "ruah" signifies, in the first instance, "air-in-motion", either wind or breath--the mighty, mysterious and scorching wind of the desert, the pervasive atmosphere which seems to sustain Nature, or the gentle, no less mysterious, animating breath which indwells the living body, the secret of its vitality without which it ceases to exist. And so a secondary meaning of "ruah" is power-in-manifestation or energy, whether in the cosmos or in animate creation.

¹Rom. 8:14-17. (All Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.)

²Gen. 2:7.

Extraordinary phenomena of all kinds, both in physical Nature and in animate Nature, especially those marked by manifestations of unusual power, are attributed to the operation of Spirit.¹

This is the earliest concept of the Spirit which we find. All manifestations of power in nature and life were attributed to the work of the Spirit.

There was no consciousness of this Spirit being a moral agent. It was thought of in terms of energy and power and manifestations of this energy. Thus, the next step in the developing concept was to be more specific as to its nature.

The second stage of the pilgrimage is marked by an internal struggle within the soul of Hebrew faith between these primordial and amoral strains in thought of the Spirit and the ethical consciousness of the early prophets, striving to establish their loftier understanding of Jahweh. To say the same thing in other words, God as righteous Sovereign battles, in the mind of the faithful, to subdue the unworthy elements previously assigned to His Spirit.²

Van Dusen explains the difficulty here of the early prophet in reconciling their moral convictions about the nature of Yahweh with all the actions attributed to the Spirit.

As the religion of the Hebrews became more nationalistic, the people came more and more to think that the Spirit, as was Yahweh, was a peculiar possession of Israel not to be shared but to be kept for their own benefit. However, it seems this narrow view was but a prelude to an even higher idea which was developed by the later prophets. Here

¹Henry P. Van Dusen, Spirit, Son and Father (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 39.

again Van Dusen shows the progress of these ideas.

As we should expect, the pilgrimage of the Old Testament understanding of the Spirit climbs to its loftiest heights. . . in the consciousness of the greatest prophets and their contemporaries among the psalmists and seers. . . . And, in our effort to lay hold of the highest thought, we shall be compelled to make judgment between them: a. With some writers, and they are the most influential, the time perspective is radically altered from the present to the past and future. They speak, not of what the Spirit of God is doing, but of what He has done and it is hoped He will do. The actual functioning of the Spirit is no longer contemporary but retrospective or anticipatory. b. With some, a very few but they among the most profound, the Spirit's domain is again widened from human life, whether corporate or individual, to embrace the cosmos. c. With some writers, and they the noblest, the Spirit is no longer primarily a factor in national history, or in the cosmos, but rather a reality of most intimate individual experience. The personal reference triumphs over the corporate.¹

The latter statement (c) is a most important and significant development even though it seems not to have been the prevalent one. It provides us with the thought that God is with us.

The main point appears to be that the progression is from the vague sense of mysteriousness and power which was somehow there to a deeply personal experience of God in Spirit. We must remember that this kind of thinking was undoubtedly well known by Jesus and indeed we cannot but say that this is the answer to his deep sense of personal relationship to God as Father. Yet the Spirit was also present in Jesus in a peculiar way.

H. Wheeler Robinson in his book, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, helps us to grasp the meaning of the Holy Spirit and its function in the life of man. In the first place, he tells us that

¹Ibid., pp. 41-42.

we must recognize a special fact about the nature of spirit.

But, before we try to consider the content of this revelation of Spirit through the history of the natural world and of human life, there is a cardinal principle to be remembered, which we have found to belong to the nature of spirit as such. This is the principle of "kenosis", i.e. the self-emptying and humiliation of spirit when it expresses itself, as it always must, in "degrees of reality" lower than itself.¹

This, of course, has primary significance as we look at the life of Christ and what this life reveals about God and His Spirit. In order that we may recognize spirit at all it must be in terms which are sensible to us as human beings. The concept of self-emptying in thinking about Jesus' life is quite apparent, and Paul has expressed this for us by saying, "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."² This revelation of God through Christ is made in terms of the man Jesus. This earthly revealing was necessary because of the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of spirit. It is in the realm of spirit, in fact, that God and man encounter.

It is Jesus Christ who is the focal point here. Robinson can again be consulted and we find him writing, "Within the period covered by the New Testament the new fact of history--Jesus Christ--created a new order of experience of the Holy Spirit, viz. a personal relation to God through Christ."³ He goes on to suggest stages in which this

¹H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit (New York: Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1928), p. 87.

²Phil. 2:5-7.

³Robinson, p. 132.

revelation takes place. The most significant of these are: the visible presence of Jesus on earth; the experience of the disciples at Pentecost; and the church's experience of the Spirit, in which Christ is present in the community.¹

It becomes apparent that Jesus Christ is the new fact of history, and we know by him a new experience of the Holy Spirit. It is this immediate experience and apprehension of the Spirit that leads Paul to new insights into the Christian life in all areas of its living.

To know Christ truly, i.e., to know God in Christ, it is necessary to see him, so to speak, from God's point of view; and this is precisely the office of the Spirit, as Paul understands it. The Spirit constitutes the subjective condition which is necessary for the apprehension and recognition of the objective self-manifestation of God in Christ; for the Spirit is God knowing himself, and to receive the Spirit is to participate in that knowledge.²

Thus, we know Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit and also in turn know God in Christ. Since we know that man is at least partially a spiritual being and that God is Spirit, it is in the spiritual realm that contact is made.

For Paul, in his experience on the road to Damascus, Christ confronted him and through Christ he could see God. The presence of

¹Ibid., pp. 133-134.

²George S. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), p. 34.

Christ meant the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

These Pauline and Johannine experiences bring us at once face to face with the implicates of the deepest Christian experience of our own, or any, generation. The Spirit of God has become so blended with the person of Christ that there is no practical difference for Paul between the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling of Christ, and he can indeed speak of the Lord the Spirit. As for the Church, her highest claim upon men and the very condition of her ultimate triumph are in the real presence of her Lord in the midst, which means the real presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.¹

If this be so, that is, if we realize the presence of Christ in the presence of the indwelling Spirit, what does this mean for our lives as Christians. It means for one thing that the Spirit is active in our midst, and it is from the Spirit that we have our life. Robinson here reminds us of the difference between a historic memory and fellowship in the Spirit.

The Jesus of history might be superhuman, might be God manifest in the flesh, yet so long as He remained a remote figure of the past, the Church could not say "our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ". A historical memory is not a fellowship. Knowledge of the Gospels does not make the living experience of the Gospel, though it prepares for it. If the fellowship of Christians springs from their fellowship with God as known in Jesus Christ, then He must be as really present to them as they are one to another. There must be mutual activity in a fellowship, as distinct from the one-sided activity of a cherished memory. If, then, there is any truth in the Christian claim to have fellowship with God in Christ, He must be active through his real presence and present by His real activity. This is what the New Testament means primarily by the Holy Spirit. Spirit alone can have fellowship with Spirit; anything lower can be no more than a medium or channel of Spirit, even though it be historical record of Christ's life on earth.²

¹Robinson, p. 135.

²Ibid., pp. 146-147.

BUTLER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

It is Christ who gives his Spirit to his church, as he gave himself for his disciples when he lived among them. Thus, our knowledge of Christ is not simply a memory about a historic figure, but we know Christ in the Spirit as a present reality in our lives.

It was this knowledge of the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit that formed the fellowship of the early church. How did this knowledge contribute to and form the life of the early church? Let us move to the historical record of this fellowship as found in the Scriptures.

The author of Acts relates to us, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."¹ So from the earliest accounts we find that the Christians came together to worship, to break bread, and to learn.

The use of fellowship in this passage of Scripture can have many meanings as has been shown by various scholars. The Interpreter's Bible reminds us that here are four features of the early church: (1) Concern with apostles' teaching; (2) Fellowship; (3) Breaking of bread; (4) Prayer. In regard to the meaning of fellowship in these verses we find that it can mean fellowship with apostles, but also it may refer to a wider fellowship of all believers; or, it may be a reference to table fellowship which would tie it in with the breaking of

¹Acts 2:41-42.

bread; or, it may be in the sense of almsgiving or relief.¹

In other places in the New Testament this term is used to convey the idea of almsgiving (Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 8:4-9:13). These were in connection with Paul's appeal for a contribution for the "relief of the saints." On the other hand, in I Cor. 10:16, he uses it as "communion of the Body of Christ." It would appear that the term fellowship or communion or participation has a deeper meaning than just association.

Most scholars are agreed that the fundamental idea which Koinonia conveys is that of "participation in something in which others also participate." This definition is sharply distinguished from the generally held, but inaccurate, notion that the word means simply "fellowship", in the sense of association with other persons. Other English words which come close to being adequate renderings of the Greek, in its primary meaning, are "sharing", "joint possession", and "holding in common". But in New Testament usage there is nearly always the connotation of participation in something with someone else.²

The chief cause for confusion here is that the Greek word Koinonia has been translated into English as fellowship. It is my conviction that we must learn the deeper meaning of this word. Often it is used only in the sense of association or being together. It should indicate a different relationship for the Christian.

In a little booklet entitled Members One of Another: Aspects of Koinonia, J. G. Davies has presented some excellent thoughts about

¹The Interpreter's Bible, IX (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954), pp. 50-51.

²Nelson, p. 53.

this concept. He points to the Incarnation as the primary expression of Koinonia because it is in this event that,

The eternal Son of God has joined with, has shared in, participated in, partaken of our common human nature. There is thus a koinonia of man and God in Christ which is the direct outcome of God's condescending and creative love.¹

We see that because of God's love of man that in Christ there is the possibility of communion with God. Certainly this is at the very heart of the Christian community. God took the initiative on behalf of man for redemptive purposes. Our personal relationship with Christ allows us to partake of his death and resurrection. We are in Christ but he is also in us. From this fact of our life in Christ, we partake of his Holy Spirit and become conformed to the image of Christ. However, we partake of this Spirit only as we are members of the community.

Our relationship to Christ brings us also into communion with our fellow men; the vertical relationship makes possible the horizontal one. By the power of the Spirit, we are redeemed to walk in love with one another. This love is the highest gift of the Spirit.

Christ Himself was the love of God incarnate. His mission issued from the infinite love of God for erring mankind, and now, as partakers of Christ through the Spirit, Christians have entered into loving communion with God. They have been incorporated into the Sonship of Christ and so have become children of God, and, as children of the one Father, brothers one of another. Thus the coming down of the love of God issues in love which is or should be the dominating note of the koinonia.²

¹J. G. Davies, Members of One Another: Aspects of Koinonia (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1958), p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 19.

Because of this love we are able to participate and share with others.

Flew reminds us that this was so in the early church.

The author of the Acts clearly intends the word to point forward to the sharing of material goods and the mutual supply of material needs, as well as to the fellowship in Temple worship, in united prayers, and in the private ritual acts of community. Christian fellowship at its highest has always been of this quality, uniting the practice of common worship with care for the material needs of those who were poorer or in want. Such fellowship in the Spirit derives from Him who gave the Spirit, and who in His earthly life taught His followers to share with one another all that they had received from God.¹

If we accept this deeper significance of fellowship as it evidently was used in the early church and understand the primary meaning of Koinonia to be "joint sharing" or "participation." Then how was this realized in the continuing life of the community. The two obvious means are Baptism and the Lord's Supper which both declare the sharing in the gifts of the Spirit.

Baptism brings one into the fellowship. We may see it as a sign of something that has happened to and for the individual in his relationship to God and to a particular community of the faithful. It is a representation of a deeper change or renewal that has taken place in this individual's life, and it is the sign of the entry into the life of the Spirit on the part of the person. It is not an isolated event but serves as a sign which points toward new relationships with God and man. We can see the similarities and the differences in the

¹Flew, p. 153.

two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In this respect it would seem that, to the apostle, the meaning of the Lord's Supper is identical with that of Baptism (Rom. 6). Considered from this point of view, the sacramental effect is the same in both cases. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference in that in Baptism this effect is realized individually whereas in the Lord's Supper it is collective.¹

Cullmann comments further about this difference in a footnote.

It should be further noted that this difference is to be seen in the fact that Baptism is an unrepeatable act whereas the Lord's Supper is repeated. Baptism introduces the individual into the community, while the Lord's Supper secures and intensifies the unity of the faithful.²

The power of baptism comes from the fact of Jesus' institution of it and receives authority from his own baptism and resurrection. The power, of course, depends on Christ and not in the physical act itself. It is a pledge to man of divine grace, to which man responds with a pledge of allegiance for the grateful service which will be required of him as a child of God.³

The Lord's Supper is a means of renewing our life in Christ. It is the continuing participation and re-pledging of our allegiance. We meet together around the table and Christ is our host. Our food is the bread and wine. What is its meaning? Paul states it in this way to the Corinthians:

¹Oscar Cullmann and F. J. Leenhardt, Essays on the Lord's Supper, trans. J. G. Davies (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 20.

²Ibid.

³Karl Barth, The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, trans. Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 22.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the Body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf.¹

The taking of bread and wine brings to mind two ideas: the fact of the suffering and death of Christ and at the same time the reality of the presence of Christ and our oneness in him.

The blood of Christ does not refer simply to the fluid which coursed through his arteries, but as so often in Paul is a graphic way of referring to Christ's death. Body comes of course from the words of the tradition, "This is my body." We must not forget that for Hebraic thought body was not simply the physical part of a man but was a word for the whole person. As members of the community partake of the food and drink there is established the closest possible relationship with Christ. He is the host at the table. . . . So likewise at the Lord's table, there is a sharing by Christ and by members of his body. The bond between them is sealed in the common meal.²

It is simple enough as a rite of the church, but as we participate with others we know it to be the deepest experience by which we share with one another.

There are three facets revealed as we come to the Lord's Supper. (1) It is a commemoration of the Cross and resurrection, and surely this is shown clearly in the very elements which are used. (2) At the same time, we must see it not only in terms of a remembrance, but joyfully receive it as bringing to us the very presence of the living Lord. It is at the Lord's Supper that the koinonia of the Spirit is most clearly understood and experienced. (3) Because we experience the presence of Christ's Spirit then it represents to us the fact of

¹1 Cor. 10:16-17.

²The Interpreter's Bible, X, p. 115.

the final victory of Christ, and we can look forward with joy to this event. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."¹

We are bound by this partaking of the Lord's Supper and therefore must have concern for one another. Thus, there is a sharing with each other in our joys, sorrows, and love.

If the members of the church, by virtue of their being members, were joined to one another (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25), so that if one suffered, all suffered. There could be no escaping this corporeity, this togetherness, however the members might differ in individual gifts and graces. It was koinonia, the essential nature of the church, because it was the hidden structure of reality, which the church was to manifest in the world.²

Paul explains this relationship which the members of the church have with one another as resulting from their being members of the Body of Christ. He especially draws this out in his first letter to the Corinthians saying,

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, Slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the Body does not consist of one member but of many.³

We see that Paul means to say that we are all welded into one body--the Body of Christ. By this, it would appear, he does not mean to say that the church is like a body, but would have it convey to us that the church is the Body of Christ. "The church was in a real sense the

¹1 Cor. 11:26.

²William Robinson, The Biblical Doctrine of the Church (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), p. 74.

³1 Cor. 12:12-14.

mystical body of Christ."¹ This is indeed an overwhelming idea. He uses it here to impress upon the Corinthians the idea of the unity of all believers; how they were related to each other, and how the individual members were held together in one body.

If this be as Paul describes, that is, that we are all bound together into the Body of Christ and, in effect, that we become the Body of Christ, in what way does he explain this peculiar set of circumstances. He must go on to draw out the metaphor to its conclusion:

Continuing the discussion of the Christians' life together in the ekklesia, Paul takes up the problem of the meaning and value of the various gifts of the Spirit to individuals, and in this connexion he develops the meaning of the Body of Christ in detail. The human body has many separate parts, and yet all are one organic body--"so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). Paul then describes the essential interdependence of the parts of the Body, and concludes by reminding the Corinthians: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." The figure is graphic and illustrative, so that only the most uncomprehending could fail to understand the plea for social harmony and sympathetic co-operation.²

The members of this body are brought together into one organic body by the work of the Holy Spirit, but yet we are individuals and contribute in this way to the whole. We realize, as we become members of this body, that an individual is not self-sufficient, but, on the other hand, our distinct personalities are not lost. It is not a matter of mere conformity, but we see our responsibilities and obligations to other members of the body. Each contributes his own particular

¹The Interpreter's Bible, X, p. 156.

²Nelson, p. 74.

gift. Paul tries to demonstrate this so that no one think more, nor less, of himself than he ought in considering his share in the life of the church. The Holy Spirit is given to the individual members as they become members of the community that they might know Christ, and in knowing him they would be brought to each other in love.

This fellowship in Christ does not mean that we must all be alike but that the richest fellowship comes in overcoming the underlying conflicts and interruptions in our encounter with one another. We must remember that we are brought into this community because we are being saved.

The Ecclesia of the New Testament, the fellowship of Christian believers, is precisely not that which every "church" is at least in part--an institution, a something. The Body of Christ is nothing other than a fellowship of persons. It is "the fellowship of Jesus Christ" or "fellowship of the Holy Ghost," where fellowship or koinonia signifies a common participation, a togetherness, a community life. The faithful are bound to each other through their common sharing in Christ and in the Holy Ghost, but that which they have in common is precisely no "thing," or "it," but a "he," Christ and His Holy Spirit.¹

The participation then is the sharing in Christ and His Holy Spirit. This means that we are given the Spirit not as individuals as such, but as individuals in community. Baptism is the sign of entrance into the koinonia of the Spirit, and the Lord's Supper stands as a constant and continuing participation in the unity of the Spirit. We must always be reminded of the primacy of the community, for "The Spirit's presence is never an individual possession to be enjoyed in isolation

¹Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 10-11.

but the bond of unity of the Body of Christ through whom the faithful are united to one another and to Christ."¹

However, this community has little meaning unless it is always reaching out and taking to others the good news of salvation which Christ offers. After reaching out it accepts those who respond into the community. This is accomplished not in simply putting individuals together, but it must take place as the Spirit fills the community with unity and grafts new members into it.

Just as a body is not made by collecting a hand here, and an arm there, and a foot somewhere else, and then putting them together, so the church is not made up of a group of isolated individuals who decide to unite for their common religious welfare. Furthermore, just as a hand has no possible existence apart from the body of which it is a part, neither does an individual Christian have any existence apart from the total church, the body of Christ. The church is not "a bouquet of believers", a collection of individual Christians brought together by mutual agreement. The church is an organism from which each member draws his life. Christ is the church. And to be in him is to be in the Church.²

Modern Discussions

We have been speaking about fellowship in the early Christian Church in order to gain some insight into its nature. We have reviewed Jesus' relationship to this fellowship and then further discussed the role of the Holy Spirit in this community. With these thoughts in mind what shall we say about our situation today. Is there a place for this kind of community which is revealed in the New Testament? Does

¹Davies, p. 14.

²Donald G. Miller, The People of God (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1959), pp. 19-20.

modern man need this kind of fellowship?

The opposite of fellowship is isolation, and this is brought about by a sense of alienation from God and our fellow man. Leslie Newbigin in his book Sin and Salvation points out how sin is basically distrust of God, and the love which we should have for Him is distorted and turned to ourselves. Thus unbelief leads to self-love and anxiety about our security as individuals. This concern about self-security naturally alienates us from our neighbors. From this alienation comes idolatry, lust, envy, strife, and murder. These are all results of the basic distrust of God and the distortion which follows. He speaks especially of alienation in this way.

We have already seen some of the results of sin. We have seen that sin produces an alienation between man and God, between man and himself, between man and the natural world, and between man and his neighbour. The first and fundamental alienation is between man and God, cutting off of man from the source and centre of his being. The result of that is a division within man himself, so that he becomes a divided being--flesh against spirit, conscience against natural desire. At the same time he becomes alienated from the natural world about him. He is no longer one with it, but finds it to be his enemy. And his own brother becomes his enemy whom he envies or fears.¹

This is not news for us. It is an old story and one which can first be found in Genesis in the story of the Fall. Alienation is a primary factor when we speak of sin and from alienation comes anxiety.

In recent times we have heard our age referred to as the "Age of Anxiety." In the March 31, 1961, issue of Time magazine there is

¹Leslie Newbigin, Sin and Salvation (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1956), pp. 33-34.

an article about this very fact, and it speaks of our 20th century society in this way:

Whatever Freudian or other analysis might make of it, the dream could serve as a perfect allegory for an era that is almost universally regarded as the Age of Anxiety. It speaks of big city towers in which life is lived in compartments and cubicles. It speaks of the century's increasingly complex machines that no one man can control. It speaks of the swift ascents and descents not only in a competitive business existence but in an ever-fluid society. It speaks of man's dreaded loss of identity, of a desperate need to make contact with his fellow man, with the world and with whatever may be beyond the world.¹

It is certainly evident that we are in a period of history and development when there is a state of disorder and confusion. These factors mentioned in the above quotation demand much of the individual and the nation. The question is then posed, Are we equipped to face this challenge? The article answers:

And he is facing his demanding destiny in a state of psychological and religious confusion.

For centuries of Christian civilization (and not Christian alone), man assumed that anxiety and guilt were part of his nature and that as a finite and fallen being, he had plenty to be guilty about. The only remedies were grace and faith. When the age of reason repealed the Fall, man was thrust back onto himself and, for a time, reason seemed to be an adequate substitute for the certainties of faith. . . . But it was soon clear that reason alone could not answer all man's questions, could not provide what he desperately needs: order and purpose in the universe.²

In analyzing our age of anxiety, it seems that there is a lack of a sense of order and purpose. There is implicated in this article some of the roots of the problems of our age and much is said about

¹"The Anatomy of Angst," Time, March 31, 1961, p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 45.

the particular problem of anxiety. However, it is much better stated and evaluated in a book by Rollo May entitled "The Meaning of Anxiety." He very adequately brings together for us material about this problem from theologians, sociologists, psychologists, and historians.

Rollo May notes first that the common characteristics of our times are loneliness, the feeling of not being of value as persons, and the experience of not being able to love and be loved.¹ All of these factors help to produce anxiety. The root of this problem extends back in history to the time of the Renaissance which produced the thought world out of which we as Western man have come and which became the basis of our democracy and economy. He is especially concerned with the phenomenon of the importance of the individual.

The emergence of individuality at the Renaissance brought freedom from medieval authority and regulation--freedom from ecclesiastical, economic, social and political restraints. But simultaneously the freedom meant a severing of those ties which had afforded security and the sense of belonging.²

The individual then faced the problem of handling this new-found freedom. There is not space to trace step by step the historical background of our age. However, I would like to quote here from the summary which May gives and which yields the main outline of his thought.

Anxiety arises out of the interpersonal isolation and alienation from others that inheres in a pattern in which self-validation depends upon triumphing over others, which was already discernible in many of the powerful and successful individuals of the

¹Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 171.

Renaissance. Anxiety likewise arises out of the intrasocial hostility produced by competitive individualism. Finally, anxiety arises out of the self-alienation resulting from viewing one's self as an object of the market, or making one's feeling of self-strength dependent upon extrinsic wealth rather than intrinsic capacity and productivity. . . . Moreover, "vicious circle" mechanisms operate in the individual competitive pattern which tend to make anxiety self-increasing. . . . This vicious circle may be graphed as follows: competitive individual striving --- intrasocial hostility --- isolation --- anxiety --- increased competitive striving.¹

With our culture and economy the "success story" is held up as a standard, and we are encouraged to compete with one another in an effort to triumph as individuals. On the other hand, our fear and loneliness, in the face of our technological world, which seems almost uncontrollable, produces a psychological need for community. Our great need then is to overcome isolation produced in our competitiveness and to have a basis once again for communication without fear of loss of personal identity.

There are certain attempts to escape from this vicious circle. "The mechanism most frequently employed in our culture, Fromm submits, is that of automaton conformity."² The intent of the individual in conforming is to avoid isolation, but in renouncing his individualism he gives away his "autonomous strength" with the result that he feels more helpless, powerless, and insecure. Other attempts at escape are found in such things as traditionalism which provides security in thinking and acting in the old familiar patterns; in technological

¹Ibid., p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 175.

advance in which loss of meaning in one's self can be allayed by the belief that technology will provide the structure for order and purpose; and in collectivism in which the individual gives up any sense of self-purpose to the all-encompassing purpose dictated by the state. All of these forms of escape are inadequate in the last analysis.

It is implicit in this analysis that the basic assumptions threatened in our present culture are those connected with the pattern of competitive individualistic ambition which has been central in our society since the Renaissance. The individualistic assumptions are threatened because in the present phases of social development they destroy the individual's experience of community. Totalitarianism in this discussion has been viewed as a cultural neurotic symptom of the need for community--a symptom in the respect that it is grasped as a means of allaying anxiety resulting from the feelings of powerlessness, and helplessness of the isolated, alienated individuals produced in a society in which competitive individualism has been the dominant goal. In this sense totalitarianism is the substitution of collectivism for community, as Tillich points out. It is submitted in this analysis that one of the central requirements for the constructive overcoming of anxiety in our society is the development of adequate forms of community.¹

We know then that the overcoming of isolation is the establishment of community. It is at this point that we realize the task of the church in functioning as a redemptive force in our society. If the need is for adequate forms of community in overcoming guilt and anxiety which alienate us one from another, does the church provide this fellowship in which the healing power of God's love in Christ Jesus is made evident in the lives of its members?

¹Ibid., p. 189.

The church is a community which is able to provide a meeting ground for the individual to establish communication, and finally a sense of fellowship, with others without losing his own sense of being an individual. It is the overcoming of alienation not through conformity or totalitarianism, but in the knowledge of ourselves as sons and daughters of God.

The idea of the Church as the Body of Christ gives Christianity one of the most profound conceptions of society ever expressed. . . . It can be said at once that in this New testament conception, the Church as the Body of Christ is a society within whose relationships the divine pledge of redemption from guilt is meant to be realized. Thus the New Testament conception of redemption is kept within the area of relationships.¹

Redemption is taking place as one finds right relationships with God, self, and fellow man. It is the declaration of the Gospel that we can be free from the burden of guilt and anxiety and that power is given to us, as we ask for it, to overcome. However, there is also the realization that life continues to hold tensions for us.

On one hand the New Testament writers insist that God through Christ or through the Spirit can go down to the very roots of a human being and transform the self completely. But on the other hand these same writers recognize with entire frankness that, as a matter of fact, a Christian believer is not completely transformed. On the contrary, he continues to be a scene of conflict.²

Thus, the Gospel also declares to us fellowship in which these conflicts may be worked out. "Because in His death sin had been both judged and forgiven, there was possible a fellowship among men in which it could

¹Lewis J. Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1942), pp. 215-216.

²Ibid., p. 222.

be dealt with neither by evasion nor by self-righteous condemnation, but by mutual forgiveness."¹

Surely we know that community does not come from simply the feelings of good will which men might entertain toward others, but it involves the giving up of ourselves that others might know the meaning of forgiveness and love. As one is a part of the Body of Christ he gives up his life and it is returned--only to be given again. We can only come to this when we are aware of the redeeming love which Christ first had for us. Therefore, we find that in the church the individual's relationship to Jesus Christ is basic. We are bound together because of the personal faith of each in the one Centre.

If this be true, then it is necessary for the individual members of the church to remember that it is their responsibility to maintain the relation with the source of strength in order to come together in fellowship such as this.

When Agape love exists between persons, they are in what the New Testament knows as koinonia, which is a communion, a fellowship, a sharing. It exists between believers and God, so much so that in the triune benediction the peculiar gift of the Spirit is fellowship. It exists between believers, and characterizes their relationships as being between persons who are equals before God, and who build each other up ("edify") in any needed way whether by bread when bread is needed, or by a mutual sharing of strength, courage, spiritual insight, or spiritual triumph.²

In this way we can see how the members of the Body can share with one another in building up the fellowship. But we must understand at the same time that, while we may be contributing to this fellowship, it was

¹Newbigin, p. 95.

²Sherrill, p. 215.

given to us as we came to participate with the community. Even though, from our point of view, we might say that we joined the church, we know a more correct view would be to say that we were added to the church. This we know to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

To be the object of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, to be called by Him into the relationship of faith in Christ, to receive power from Him and to enjoy the fruit of His benefaction, and so to be drawn into true community with other persons--all this means to participate in the koinonia of the Church. This is not an abstract principle nor a poetic speculation about human relations, but the fact of experience which is attested to by multitudes of Christians from the apostolic generation onward.¹

It is by the Holy Spirit that we are drawn into faith in Christ, and it is by him that we are bound to this community. With this in mind, we must remember also that the community as a whole is led by him.

For the connotation of koinonia is that the Spirit of God is forthgoing into, and present in every relationship within the community. Thus, it signifies that every relationship in the Christian community participates in God and God in it, whether it be the relationship of person to person, or of each to all, or all to each; while the whole community as a whole participates in God and God in it. Thus koinonia is by its nature a community intimately indwelt by the Spirit.²

If we are drawn into this community by the Holy Spirit and also bound with one another by the indwelling of the Spirit, then we realize that this type of community was deemed necessary in which the processes of redemption could be realized. We recognize the validity

¹Nelson, p. 66.

²Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 50.

of the fact that salvation takes place in the midst of the interaction of human personalities. However, we also realize that this would not be possible if we consider the human element only. We know here the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. We know too the reason for the redemptive community.

There is about all truth which is worthwhile a certain incommunicable character. It can be "caught" only by those who are en rapport with the teacher. All such truth is destroyed by codification and legal structure. It can be preserved only in societies of choice souls through a visible fellowship. The truth which is in Jesus Christ needs for its full understanding and application to life a society living together in a love relationship. Thus it comes about that the church in history becomes the sure witness to the fact that fellowship is the hidden structure of reality.¹

Therefore, fellowship is "the hidden structure of reality," and it is because of this that by Christ we are drawn into this community of love and find there that the true meaning of life itself is found to be in this redemptive relationship with others and with God.

The individual personality is not lost in this fellowship. With the modern tendency to conformity in our society, it is possible that this conformity could wrongly be interpreted as fellowship. But in conformity we do not find that which we think we will find. Instead we lose our self-identity. However, as William Robinson points out, "The Church is the true koinonia, in which there is interpenetration of personality without loss of personal distinctiveness."² The church should be the one place in our society where the individual does not

¹William Robinson, The Biblical Doctrine of the Church (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), pp. 140-141.

²Ibid., p. 89.

merely conform, but where he has a chance to reach the heights of human personality. Nelson reminds us at this point of the balance which should obtain in the community of the church:

Let this emphasis upon the corporate expression of the Spirit be neglected, and the way is clear for a strictly sociological concept of the Church. On the other hand, the emphasis should not be so extreme that the single member becomes excluded from all consideration. The individual is contained within the community, but his value is not less on that account; on the contrary, his whole life is enhanced. As Wedel makes the distinction here, the individual does receive the Spirit, but only as he shares in the life of the community.¹

Anything less than this balance does not reflect the true nature of koinonia. In the face of reality, we must admit that often we simply fluctuate between the two extremes.

We have seen how we are brought into the community of the church by our relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit, and thus how we are bound together. It is the bringing together of the vertical and the horizontal relationships which we have as Christians. We have come to see the need in our society for a sense of community and how the church is used by God as a redemptive force in society.

This chapter has been entitled "The Meaning of Fellowship," and it is essential to put down in the closing pages what has been implicated throughout this chapter. The meaning of fellowship we have found to be threefold: (1) The community is where we learn to give ourselves in love and forgiveness. We recognize that we are still involved in conflict, but also that we must allow the Spirit to so influence our

¹Nelson, pp. 47-48.

lives that we might exhibit to others the meaning of God's love for them and for us. We love and forgive because we were first loved and forgiven.

We can put the whole matter most simply in this way: God's nature is love, and salvation means being restored to life in the love of God and in love with His children. But love only exists in actual concrete human relationships. Love in general is nothing at all; true love means care for real people--my brother, fellow-worker, my neighbour. We have to give and receive love in dealing with actual men and women--not just those whom we choose, but those whom God gives to us. So it is that the centre of God's plan for salvation is an actual community of men and women called by God for this purpose. They are not called because God wants to save them only. They are called in order that through them God's love may reach others, and all men be drawn together into one reconciled fellowship.¹

(2) Not only is it a community in which we can learn God's love, but it would only die if the imperative to "Go therefore and make disciples. . ." were not followed. If we are not willing to share this good news of salvation, then we are not living but dead. This new found life will be distorted to selfish ends unless we are constantly reaching out to others and including them in this community of love. So, the meaning of fellowship is found in going out into the world.

Therefore, the Church is not to be thought of as a finished product, but as a continuing, living fellowship, extending into each new generation the ministry which Jesus Christ began, and looking forward to its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. This "new creation" has a life, but not a life of its own. Neither is it the sum of the lives of all persons who belong to it, but the life which the living God keeps giving to it.²

¹Newbigin, pp. 45-46.

²Nelson, pp. 176-177.

(3) The third meaning of fellowship is to be found in looking forward to the time of fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. The purpose of the fellowship is in the fact that we can prepare for that day when that which we know in part here and now will be completed in eternity. In other words, there must be more meaning in this fellowship than we can discern at this moment in history. The meaning is partially fulfilled here, but there is still that which is mystery.

But if we understood His love, if we have tasted His grace, that foretaste will make us eager to share with Him in the pain and sorrow of the world's redemption, in eager and confident hope of the day when we and all His people shall enter into His joy together, and He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.¹

¹Newbigin, p. 125.

CHAPTER III

DISCIPLE TRADITION

Campbell: Early Beginnings

A survey of Disciple thought must begin with Alexander Campbell, for it is he who systematized and developed the ideas initiated by his father, Thomas Campbell, into a consistent theological position.

As Lindley points out:

Seldom has a religious communion more thoroughly adopted the personality of its chief religious leader than have Disciples of Christ. Disciples of Christ today bear the stamp of Campbell's personality, including his strength, his weaknesses, and his contradictions. Even at the level of the specific techniques of organization which he espoused, the best Christian statesmanship among Disciples is as marked for its inability to devise an adequate principle of conventional representation and a satisfactory philosophy of ministerial ordination as it is for its ability to share in the development of an ecumenical Christianity and to achieve the reality of individual religious organization which is both creative and dynamic.¹

There are three primary sources of information: (1) The Christian Baptist; (2) The Millennial Harbinger; and (3) The Christian System. The Christian Baptist represents a very early period in the life of Alexander Campbell as far as his religious thought is concerned. This journal was begun in the year 1823 as a monthly magazine and continued as such until 1829. It surveys the period of his violent

¹D. Ray Lindley, Apostle of Freedom (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1957), p. 245.

reaction against the existing conditions of the church which is broken into "sects," as he calls them.

In 1830, he began the publication of The Millennial Harbinger, another religious journal, of which he was the editor until 1865. During this time, the new movement began to develop rapidly and Campbell's journal was there to record and guide its rise.

The Christian System was written by Campbell in an attempt to systematize his thinking about Christianity and the church.

In none of these sources is it too easy to come to any certain conclusion concerning Campbell's thinking in regard to the church as fellowship or community. One thing, however, is quite apparent and that is that Campbell, in looking over the religious situation of his day, decided to take for the ground of his authority in religious matters the Holy Scriptures. He regarded creeds as divisive because of their use as tests of fellowship. It seemed to him that we must accept the Bible, and especially the New Testament, as our authority and guide in the Christian life. If this were done, then a restoration of the ancient order of things would take place and divisions among Christians would disappear. This, of course, assumes that (a) there was unity of beliefs and practices in the early church, and (b) it was desirable for the church of his day.

In 1831 he wrote:

None can go back farther than the apostolic age--none can adopt a purer creed than the New Testament, nor recommend more wholesome practices than the Apostles endorsed. . . . It must be by placing the Apostles upon the thrones which

Jesus promised them by making them the infallible arbiters of every question of faith and morals, by regarding them as competent and faithful instructors of mankind upon the whole of religion and morality, and by submitting to their teaching, their recommendations, their entire system, without an admixture of humanism, however venerable, ancient, commendable, popular, or reasonable it may seem.¹

This, then, was the authority. Tradition, creeds, etc., were human developments and did not necessarily express the Will of God. Campbell was a serious student of the Bible because he was confident that Christians could gain from this book all that was needful as far as ethical practice or church doctrine was concerned.

Further, in 1837, Campbell wrote an article which stated its purpose as follows: "For the healing of divisions among Christians and the better understanding of the Christian Institution, the following objects and principles have been proposed and discussed." There is then found a discussion about the "reformation" and its principles. In the first section dealing with the authority of the Scriptures, Campbell lists five principles:

1. The restoration of a pure speech, or the calling of Bible things by Bible names.
2. The Bible must be proposed as a book of facts, not of doctrines, nor opinions; it must be understood and regarded as arranged upon the principle of cause and effect, or that action is to produce corresponding action.
3. The Bible alone, instead of any human creed, as the only rational and solid foundation of Christian union and communion.

¹Alexander Campbell, "Address to Reformers," The Millennial Harbinger, II (September, 1831), p. 418.

4. The reading and expounding of the sacred scriptures in public assemblies instead of text preaching, sermonizing, or philosophising.
5. The right of private opinion in all matters not revealed in contradistinction from the common faith, without the forfeiture of Christian character or Christian privilege.¹

This is a concrete summarization of the place of the Scriptures in Campbell's thought, and the principles reveal the amount and kind of authority that Campbell posited in the Bible. The Scriptures reveal the will of God for His church. Further, this summary tells us of another basic principle of Campbell's, and this is his belief in freedom for the individual to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself so long as the common core of the Gospel were kept intact.

Thus, it is apparent that Campbell had always to keep the balance between his belief in the authority of the Scriptures and at the same time allow for some kind of free decision and reasonable acceptance. It was very difficult for him to maintain this course, and naturally not every person was able to see it in quite the light he did. Sometimes, he would not allow the liberty to others which he took for himself.

Because of this view of the New Testament, he believed the only way for the divisions among Christians to cease was for them to go to the source of their faith and to study these accounts of the early church. Christ, of course, was the Head of the church, but a person

¹Alexander Campbell, "Synopsis of Reformation Principles and Objects," ibid., 1 (December, 1837), pp. 530-533.

could not know what Christ expected of the church unless he had first studied the revelation to be found in the New Testament with reference to Christ's commandments.

Such a study would bring us to the point at which we would not depend upon tradition or creeds, but upon God's word to guide us in our building up of Christ's church.

Hence, Campbell begins to edit a new religious journal entitled The Christian Baptist in which he has, among other things, a series of articles concerning "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." This is the abiding theme of his new venture in religious thought. In fact, this is the avowed purpose of the journal. In the first article of this series, he makes this clear:

A restoration of the ancient order of things is all that is necessary to the happiness and usefulness of Christians. . . . We are glad to see, in the above extract, that the thing proposed, is to bring Christianity and the church of the present day up to the standard of the New Testament. This is in substance, though in other terms, what we contend for. To bring the societies of Christians up to the New Testament, is just to bring the disciples, individually and collectively, to walk in the faith, and in the commandments of the Lord and Saviour, as presented in that blessed volume; and this is to restore the ancient order of things.¹

It is his aim that the "present day" church should correspond as much as possible to the early church. As far as he could observe the situation at that time, the church had forsaken its early heritage. To remedy this, he proposes that we should ignore the intervening

¹Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 1," The Christian Baptist, II (January, 1825), p. 126.

creeds and traditions of men and get to the heart of our Christian religion, that is, to the record of the ancient church, and to re-establish these practices. In the succeeding pages of this journal, he makes more explicit what he finds in the New Testament for the attention of the church of his day.

He considered the government of the church to be a constitutional monarchy with the Lord Jesus Christ as the monarch. We know the will of this monarch by reading the New Testament. Therefore, he attempts to come to terms with the New Testament picture of the church by saying,

I find, therefore, that the Lord Jesus is the governor, and the twelve apostles under him, sitting upon twelve thrones, constitute the government of the church of Jesus Christ. I know that synods and advisory councils have a right to govern voluntary associations, which owe their origin to the will of men; but in the church of Jesus the twelve apostles reign. Jesus, the king, the glorious and mighty Lord, gave them their authority. The church is a congregation of disciples meeting in one place, an assembly of regenerated persons who have agreed to walk together under the guidance of Jesus Christ.¹

The church is made up of these persons who have assembled themselves in one place and who have agreed to walk together. They have taken Jesus Christ as their Savior and have accepted him as their governor instead of the rule of Bishops or synods or conferences. The inference is that the individual has the right of interpretation as to practice and doctrine. He continues:

¹Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 24," *ibid.*, V (May, 1828), p. 441.

When the ancient order of things is restored, neither more or less will be demanded of any applicant for admission into the kingdom than was asked by Philip. And every man who solicits admission in this way--who solemnly declares that, upon the testimony and authority of the holy apostles and prophets, he believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, should forthwith be baptized without respect to any questions or dogmas derived either from written creeds or church covenants.¹

This new member would have to make the simple confession of Jesus as Messiah and be baptized in order to be admitted to the congregation. This was thought to be the ancient order. The persons who held belief in Jesus as the Messiah who were in one area or place would congregate themselves and become the church in that place. They would, taking the New Testament into consideration, provide their own officers to administer the constitution and laws. There was no need for authority to come from outside the local congregation through a Bishop or a Synod, but these affairs were administered by elected officers of the congregation. In this regard, he writes:

All the churches on earth that Christ has ever acknowledged as his, are so many communities constituting one kingdom, of which he is the head and sovereign. . . . In every congregation or community of Christians the persons that are appointed by the Great King to rule, act pretty much in the capacity of our civil magistrates; or, in other words, they have only to see that the laws are obeyed, but have no power nor right to legislate in any one instance, or for any one purpose. The constitution and laws of this kingdom are all of divine origin and authority, having emanated from the bosom, and having been promulgated in the name of the Universal Lord.²

¹Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 3," Ibid., VI (April, 1825), p. 177.

²Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 23," Ibid., V (March, 1828), pp. 428-429.

BUTLER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

In this manner he deposited all authority in the local congregation, denying that any Bishop or officer outside of this congregation could have any word in the matter. The elected officers, however, did not make the laws but merely acted as magistrates to see that the constitution was upheld. Campbell at this point did not believe that a bishop in the New Testament had any authority outside of his own community. "Such a thing as a bishop, over two, three, or four congregations, was as unknown, unheard of, and unthought of in the primitive and ancient order of things in the Christian communities, as a husband with two, three, or four living wives."¹

Because Campbell believed that all that was necessary for the life of the church could be found in the New Testament, he goes to great lengths to search out the Scriptures to find just what the order was in the ancient church. He never doubted that it was there to be found and utilized.

As a result of his investigations the following titles and definition of duties were listed by Campbell as the true orders of the church. (1) Elders were the older men of the congregation and were the spiritual leaders. He thought it ridiculous for a congregation to elect a young man as Elder. (2) The Bishops or Overseers were those who held the presidency of the congregation. (3) Deacons were the public servants of the congregation. (4) There were deaconesses who officiated "among the females." (5) Lastly, there were the teachers

¹Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 32," Ibid., VII (September, 1829), p. 586.

who acted as public instructors.

He deals with all phases of church life; baptism, the Lord's Supper, offerings, etc. He finds a divinely authorized order of Christian worship in the early Christian assemblies. The evidence for this he takes from Acts 2:42 where we read, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." This would include preaching, the bringing of offerings, the Lord's Supper, and prayers. He is quite sure that the central reason for the meeting of the Apostles on the first day of the week was primarily for the "breaking of bread" so he takes this as the central part of the church's worship, insisting that the Lord's Supper be observed each week.

From the 2nd of Acts, then, we learn that the breaking of bread was a stated part of the worship of the disciples in their meetings; and from the 20th we learn that the first day of the week was the stated time for those meetings; and, above all, we ought to notice that the most prominent object of their meeting was to break bread.¹

Consequently, Campbell attempts to find from the New Testament just what was done in the early church so that it could be imitated by present day Christians. This seemed to him to be the only way in which unity among the many denominations could come about. All would see the truth of the situation.

. . . Every regenerated man must be devoted to the ancient order of things in the church of God--Provided it be granted

¹Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 7," Ibid., III (September, 1825), p. 33.

as a postulatam, that the ancient order of things was consonant to the will of the most High. A mind not devoted to the whole will of God, revealed in the New Book, is unregenerate.¹

Campbell was very serious in his conviction that, to bring about unity in the church, we must take as the authority the Scriptures for they certainly reveal the will of God. If we were devoted to finding these truths, then naturally one could only want to restore this ancient order. It should be the highest goal toward which we work.

A Christian congregation established upon the New Testament exhibits the most perfect society of which human imagination can conceive. Every perfection and advantage that belongs to society is a constituent of it. When we have put every faculty into the most active requisition, when we have aroused all our powers to discover or to exhibit the nature, properties, excellencies, and benefits of the most finished, polished, and sentimental society, we have only been seeking after or exhibiting that peculiar character of society which the New Testament gives birth to, and to constitute which is its highest object, as respects the present world.²

The vision of the restored church, the form of which he sees in the New Testament, is a glorious one and this we ought to desire. It is the most perfect society about which one can think and for which one can plan.

In all of this Campbell is saying that the church is made up of those persons who have declared Jesus Christ as Messiah and who have taken upon themselves the vow of obedience to His every command.

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 20," Ibid., V (August, 1827), p. 362.

²Alexander Campbell, "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 15," Ibid., IV (November, 1826), p. 73.

They come together in one congregation because of their common loyalty to the King. This association comes about as a result of their desire to establish the church of Christ on earth. Their constitution is the New Testament and surely they cannot want anything more.

Each such association or congregation is quite capable of settling its own affairs, and officers are elected so that the social and spiritual life of the church may be carried on decently and in order.

This presents Campbell's earliest thoughts about the church, and it was guiding the movement which was growing up around these principles of freedom and of the right of self-determination and separating itself from other churches. Campbell was sounding the call for the restoration of the ancient order.

Campbell: Later Developments

Campbell discontinued publishing The Christian Baptist in 1829, but this did not end his literary efforts. In 1830, he resumed publishing a religious journal which he entitled The Millennial Harbinger and retained editorship over it until 1865. It is in this journal that his concept of the church really takes form and develops.

With the changing of the name of his publication, Campbell also displays a change in the tone of his writings. He continues to hold many of the basic principles expressed in the earlier journal,

but his attitude is a more constructive one. In the pages of The Christian Baptist he was reacting to the existing situation with a very critical frame of mind, but later finds he has a "movement" on his hands and therefore must rise to the occasion.

In these writings he has settled down considerably and is faced with the results of the chaos brought about by the extremists who have picked up his own insistence on freedom for individual interpretation of the Scriptures but without his concern and capacity for careful study and judgment in dealing with the Scriptures. Still, he holds to this basic principle but tries to implement and organize the resulting movement so that conditions may be stabilized.

In the early pages of this journal, he states:

If the christians in all sects could be drawn together, then would the only real, desirable, and permanent union, worthy of the name of the union of christians, be achieved. How to affect this has long been a question with us and many others. To us, it appears, the only practicable way to accomplish this desirable object, is to propound the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things in the words and sentences found in the apostolic writings--to abandon all traditions and usages not found in the Record, and to make no human terms of communion.¹

This is apparently a re-stating of earlier views as expressed in The Christian Baptist and ones with which we are quite familiar. However, at the same time, and even earlier, Campbell was projecting a series of articles concerning the co-operation of the churches.

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Union," The Millennial Harbinger, III (May, 1832), p. 195.

From this series, and from others like it, we may partially re-construct Campbell's concept of the church. In his earlier writings, he has built a framework and now he begins to fill it in.

In 1831, Campbell begins this series on co-operation and writes:

This contemplates the placing of every Christian congregation directly and exclusively under the tuition of the apostles, and recognizes every disciple as one of the Lord's freedmen and priests. . . . This respects them as having full power or privilege to attend upon every part of the Christian institution without any distinct class of priests, Levites, and ministers, or clergy. It only provides for the reformation of those without, or for the gathering of disciples out of the world into such a relation and institution as will place them also distinctly under the government of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. In achieving this, it will require the co-operation of the brotherhood not only of one congregation, but sometimes of more than one congregation; nay, of all the congregations in a given district.¹

In this manner, Campbell begins to come to a point in his thinking which realizes that this movement requires organization and that this can only come about if there is a spirit of co-operation among the churches as well as among the individual Christians. It is worth noting that he is careful to designate in just what areas co-operation would be necessary. The individual and the particular congregations are reassured that each person will continue as one of the "Lord's freedmen" and that the private affairs of the congregation are to be untouched. Co-operation is needed for the reformation of those outside the fold. Cautiously, he advises that this will mean the necessity of co-operation not only of the brethren in one congregation but further the co-operation

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Co-operation of Churches, No. 1," *ibid.*, II (May, 1831), p. 237.

of all the congregations in a given district.

Co-operation comes to have primary significance for Campbell, and it is by means of this theme that he is able to explicate his concept of the church. This is done particularly well in his book The Christian System. He is concerned that we conceive of the church as the Body of Christ. Thus, he describes this Body in these words:

That institution which separates from the world, and consociates the people of God into a peculiar community, having laws, ordinances, manners and customs of its own, immediately derived from the Savior of the world, is called the congregation or church of the Lord. The church is sometimes called . . . the mystical body of Christ (as) distinguished from his literal and natural body.¹

and further,

The true Christian Church, or House of God, is composed of all those in every place that do publicly acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, and the only Savior of men; and, building themselves upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, associate under the constitution which he himself has granted and authorized in the New Testament, and are walking in his ordinances and commandments--and of none else.²

It is significant that these persons who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah come together and become the Body of Christ. At this point, it is not too clear whether he is talking about the local congregation or all these groups combined. However, he goes on and seemingly clears up this puzzle in a statement made in regard to the need for cooperation.

But, in order to this, Christians must regard the Church, or body of Christ, as one community, though composed of many small communities, each of which is an organized member of this great

¹Alexander Campbell, The Christian System (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1890), p. 77.

²Ibid.

national organization; which, under Christ, as the supreme and sole Head, King, Lord, and Lawgiver, has the conquest of the whole world in its prayers, aims, plans, and efforts. Hence there must be such an understanding and agreement between these particular congregations as will suffice to a recognition and approval of their several acts; so that the members or the measures of one community shall be treated with respect due to them at home, in whatever community they may happen to be presented. On this principle only can any number of independent and distinct communities of any sort--political, commercial, literary, moral, or religious--act in concert with mutual advantage to themselves, and with a proper reference to the general good.¹

Hence, these local communities together as one community make up the Body of Christ. Just as individuals who have acknowledged Jesus as Messiah associate with each other to make up the particular congregation, then these congregations or communities come together to become the Body of Christ. It continues to be an association of like-minded individuals and finally like-minded congregations.

Essentially, they are "equally independent of one another as to the management of their own peculiar affairs," but "are, by virtue of one common Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one common salvation, but one kingdom or church of God." We are under obligation to cooperate with one another "in all measures promotive of the great ends of Christ's death and resurrection."²

It now becomes a case of necessity. Co-operation in the work of conversion of the world is not a matter for discussion but rather a

¹Ibid., p. 81.

²Ibid., pp. 77-78.

matter of responsibility and obligation.

The church, viewed in this light, is not one congregation, or assembly, but the congregation of Christ, composed of all the individual congregations on earth. In this work of conversion the whole church, by natural necessity, as well as by the authority of the great king, must co-operate.¹

Campbell emphasizes the necessity for co-operation in bringing about the conversion of persons outside its fellowship, which is the primary function of the church. The rationale he develops for this necessity of co-operation is based on his concept that the church consists not in one local congregation but in these communities which together form the church. It is only natural then that they should work with one another to carry out the commission which the church has laid upon her by her Lord.

He is careful to designate the purpose of co-operation. The churches must cooperate in order to make a witness to the surrounding territory, but there are still private affairs which each community must settle for itself. However, it is interesting to note that the measures and members of any one congregation will be treated with respect no matter in what community they happen to be. This calls for a great deal of understanding and co-operation to say the least.

Again we note Campbell's insistence on democratic procedures and processes. Congregations must have respect and concern for one another in order to work together for the conversion of the world.

¹Alexander Campbell, "Reply to Timothy," The Millennial Harbinger, V (July, 1834), p. 315.

For this reason Campbell is able to make the following statement in reference to church government.

There are the extremes of congregationalism and monarchical despotism. There is popery and a fierce democracy. Neither of these are the Christian Institution. Mobocracy may become as tyrannical as unlimited monarchy. Both are to be eschewed for the same reasons. Louis XIV, though a persecuting tyrant, was no more to be feared than the organs of the popular assemblies in the "age of reason" and "the reign of terror."¹

The error in both of these forms of government is pointed out. Campbell is afraid of both and hopes to avoid the errors therein. This is why he himself moved from his earlier extreme congregationalism to a more moderate position.

The principle of freedom for the individual, or for the local congregation, can only be kept intact if, at the same time, the principle of co-operation is also kept in mind. "Fierce democracy" and "popery" are both to be deplored, but, if we are willing to have a spirit of helpfulness and concern, then the tyranny of both can be avoided. Hence, co-operation is to be desired.

We want co-operation. Some of our brethren are afraid of its power; others complain of its inefficiency. Still we go for co-operation; but it is the co-operation of Christians; not the co-operation of Sceptics, Deists, Jews, and Christians, but the co-operation of Christians--practical whole-hearted Christians; not even a co-operation of Churches; for in this sense of co-operation Christ has but one church. We go for the co-operation of all the members of that one church in

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Senatorial Government of the Church," ibid., II (March, 1838), p. 128.

in whatever communities they may happen to be dispersed, and for their co-operation in heart and soul, in prayers, in contributions, in efforts, in toils, in struggles for the salvation of their fellowmen at home and abroad.¹

Campbell clearly takes his stand in reference to this issue. In fact, he is quite convinced that co-operation and some kind of organization must come about if the mission of the church is to be carried out. He does not believe that the churches were considering it seriously enough, for he says in 1841,

From my spiritual observatory, and by means of the telescope of faith in history sacred, ecclesiastic, and political, and biblical developments, I am so deeply penetrated with the necessity of a more intimate organization, union, and co-operation than at present existing among us, that I feel myself duty bound again to invite the attention of the brotherhood, especially of those who are in heart and life devoted to the honor, dignity, and influence of Christianity in the world, to a more thorough and profound consideration of the subject than they have ever yet given it.²

All this talk of co-operation would naturally lead to some kind of organization. Campbell's method of attacking the problem was first to point out the need for co-operation in carrying out the primary mission of the church and from here to proceed to an organization wherein it would be possible for the church to cooperate effectively. This presupposes his idea of the communities as composing the Body of Christ. He goes on to say,

Christ's institution is a kingdom--not a mob, not a fierce lawless democracy, led by every aspirant and demagogue, who

¹Alexander Campbell, "Co-operation," *ibid.*, II (June, 1838), p. 269.

²Alexander Campbell, "The Nature of the Christian Organization No. 1," *ibid.*, V (November, 1841), p. 533.

has byends and selfish impulses urging him forward in the career of personal honor, fortune, or aggrandizement. Neither is it on one or two families, or a few little coterie of neighborhood association in a county, a state, a province, that fill up the idea of the church and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Nor do all the congregations in all the corners of this continent, either in their present dislocation, or in any new form which they might of their own free accord assume to themselves, constitute Christ's kingdom on earth. Christ's kingdom, were it to assume its true divine, and ancient character, would throw its arms around every one in every place that calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus out of a pure heart, and it would hold and keep him responsible to the Head, and Monarch, and Theocrat of all.

Here is a picture drawn before his readers which would help them to realize the extent of the church. Campbell wanted them to feel a part of this divine kingdom, even though they knew only the local church.

He further points out the proper place of the local congregation in regard to all of Christ's kingdom. Each community has responsibility for its share of the task of the church. But always there must be kept in mind the community which is beyond this local group of Christians who come together for worship.

Now that there are individual, domestic, and social duties, needs no demonstration. And that the family and the particular congregation have each their special and appropriate duties, obligation, and jurisdiction is equally evident; but that there is a community beyond the family, beyond the particular congregation, is equally evident and undeniable and that it is competent only to that community to select and appoint its own public functionaries, as much as it is to the congregation in any given place, is a proposition which I am prepared to demonstrate, if so be there any sceptical on that in this our day and generation.²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 534-535.

This community is made real only as the local churches consult and cooperate with one another in the task of winning the world to Christ.

This kind of cooperation cannot be done in any haphazard or erratic fashion. It must be done in a systematic and proper way. Thus, organization becomes essential to the churches in their cooperative efforts. Since Campbell has already shown that the churches have the obligation, as members of the Body of Christ, to cooperate then it is obvious that systematic organization is necessary.

Campbell turns to the Scriptures for support for his declarations. The Bible suggests this system to him:

Christianity, introduced by the Lord in person, by Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets, was, as has been often demonstrated, placed under the supervision and administration of elders or bishops. These bishops, though raised up and ordained by certain churches, possess in some way a supervision over cities and districts of country beyond a single congregation. Bishops were ordained in every city so soon as congregations were formed, and these bishops by consultation, either by the way of occasional or periodical meetings, or by internuncios, messengers, or epistles, consulted, advised, and directed the whole communities of Christians in reference to all matters of public interest to the kingdom. They were not lords over God's heritage, over their faith or their conscience, or their estates; but they watched for their souls, and executed the laws of the kingdom. They ruled or administered the affairs of the Christian nation, and directed the energies of the brotherhood in all matters of common interest.¹

These Bishops consulted then in all "matters of public interest to the kingdom." These persons were, of course, responsible to the congregations from which they came. In some ways, however, they were also accepted

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Nature of the Christian Organization No. 2," ibid., VI (February, 1842), p. 60.

throughout the district as having some kind of supervisory power. Campbell himself does not seem to know just how this came about. He assumes the community beyond the local congregation, but it is difficult to see what meaning it has.

This word from the Scriptures is then applied to the situation of the church in Campbell's day. He reminds his readers that this kind of leadership has a grave responsibility.

In reference to the questions above stated, we need then only add, that the Christian ministry are responsible to the Lord and his people for the faithful discharge of their duties as the presiding rulers of the church, and as having the ministry of the word committed to their hands for those districts of country in which the Lord has placed them. For example, the elders of all the churches in Kentucky, besides their several special charges of the respective flocks committed into their hands, have also the ministry of the word throughout the whole state committed to them, both by the Lord and by the brethren. Hence if they fail, in the use of all lawful means, to have the gospel preached in all that country, they must give an account to the Chief Shepherd when he come.¹

This type of organization would mean that the community beyond the local church must of necessity appoint certain officers in order to carry on its mission. These officers would function in the proper sphere of responsibility and in the name of the whole community just as the officers of the local congregation act in the name of the group of persons who elected them.

The officers or servants of the church are therefore of two classes;--Those who belong to a particular community; and those that belong to the whole kingdom of Jesus Christ. Each

¹Alexander Campbell, "The Nature of the Christian Organization No. 6," *ibid.*, VI (August, 1842), pp. 328-329.

community has its own bishops and deacons, its own presbytery and diaconate. . . . But besides these, there were also officers that belonged to the whole Christian community.-- Such were the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and public messengers of the Apostolic age, and such still are the missionaries and messengers belonging to the communities of any one state, nation or province.¹

It is not at all clear how these officers who belonged to the whole Christian community and not just to the local congregation were elected, or appointed. He is making clear that we must recognize this community beyond the local church as the Body of Christ.

Campbell has made the move from his earlier position in which the church is described as that association of Christians in one location who have banded together for purposes of worship and service. At that time, he denied the need of anything beyond this simple organization. Now we find him explaining that the Body of Christ is all these congregations taken together.

From the classification of scriptures exhibited in our last, certain important doctrines are logically and rationally apparent to every sound mind, viz.: 1st. That a church of Jesus Christ is an organized body, or company of disciples of Christ, meeting stately in some one place to worship God through Jesus Christ, and to edify and comfort one another; and in the second place, that the church of Christ, in the aggregate, is the same as the kingdom of Jesus Christ--or the whole Christian community on earth composed of all them in every place that are baptized into Christ.²

In the above quotation, he has said that this community of congregations is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Further, in the Christian System he says "So far the phrases Kingdom of Heaven and the congregation or Body of Christ are equivalent in signification."³ Thus, the Kingdom

¹Alexander Campbell, "Church Organization No. III," ibid., VI (May, 1849), p. 269.

²Ibid.

³Campbell, p. 184.

of Heaven and the Body of Christ are equivalent in meaning. The Body of Christ is then this community beyond the local congregation.

At the same time, he seemingly does not want to deny the importance and right of the local congregation to handle its private affairs. He has made this clear all along, but he still maintains that there are certain matters of common and public interest which must be handled by an organization of the churches. For example, missions, evangelism, and education are of such a nature that it takes the planning and effort of all the churches to present the Gospel to the world. This presupposes an organization and officers to promote these causes. The questions remaining are: (a) Where does this organization find its authority, and (b) Is this organization the church, or Body of Christ, about which he talks so much?

In 1853, Campbell makes the following statement in trying to explain what he meant by the church:

Christ loved the church, and gave himself for the church, and is the head of the church. He placed "in the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers," &c., &c. Therefore, every individual church on earth stands to the whole church of Christ as one individual man to one particular church, and the churches on earth are severally as much bound to co-operate with the whole body of Christ, in all matters of public interest, as one individual member, in any particular church, is bound to co-operate with it in any or in all public acts and duties.¹

It is made clear that the beginning point for Campbell is the individual and from here he moves toward community. For him it is the proper

¹Alexander Campbell, "Church Organization No. IV," *ibid.*, III (June, 1853), p. 303.

procedure. He does want to maintain the freedom of the individual church in the fear of the dreaded hierarchy of priests. On the other hand, expediency and economy demand co-operation and organization. There is no idea of the community as given and guided by the Holy Spirit.

It is difficult to really ascertain Campbell's position. Is the church to be found in the local congregation only? Or, is the church to be interpreted as all the communities considered as one. He has moved toward the latter but really does not give up the former. The key point for Campbell is in the word co-operation, for this is the only way the community beyond the local church can become meaningful.

Developments in Disciple Thinking

It is difficult to find material in the later writings which are actually concerned with the doctrine of the church from a Disciple point of view. In the latter half of the 19th Century, there were many journals being published and many tracts written which attempted to state "our position" or present "our plea." However, it is evident from merely checking over titles that very little thought was given to the nature of the church.

Much had already been written by Campbell, and I suppose this was accepted. Another reason could lie in the fact that the Disciples of Christ were growing so fast that there was little time to develop

thinking of this type. Of course, a primary reason was in the traditional prejudice against theology as such and against creeds as tests of fellowship. In this context it would be difficult to form or make statements of a theological nature.

From a survey of material in the period 1850 to 1910, it becomes apparent that our religious neighbors--the "sects"-- considered our set of beliefs to be puzzling and a little odd. This accounts for the number of men writing in relationship to our position on certain matters. Since we had no creed to display, it became imperative that statements of a general nature be made. This was done usually in outline form, with much care being taken that this listing of "articles" not be interpreted as a creed.

Moses Lard writing in the earlier part of this period had taken the former position of Campbell that the church is to be found in the voluntary association of Christians meeting in one place. In 1867, he says,

The Church of God is the sum of all Christians; and he only is a member thereof who is a Christian. . . . Hence the Church of God is not an aggregation of denominations. Indeed denominations, as such, make no part of the Church. . . . Moreover, the Church of God is not an organization, except in a qualified sense of the term. Metaphorically it is called a body. In this view Christ is its head, while each individual saint is a member in it. This may imply organization, but not organization in the sense in which we apply the term to those great combinations of men we call governments, or even less assemblages we call societies. The Church of God is an aggregation, not an organization.¹

¹Moses E. Lard, "Our Position and Future Duties," Lard's Quarterly, IV (October, 1867), p. 338.

It is quite significant that he defines the church as "an aggregation," that is, it is defined in terms of individual members and not as, in any sense, a community of believers or all these communities taken together. Any co-operation on missionary work, education, etc., would have to come through individuals who band together for these purposes.

16. That individual Christians may, in their discretion, form voluntary associations, such as colleges, Sunday Schools, and missionary societies, provided nothing therein is allowed inconsistent with the teachings of Holy Writ.¹

This thinking does represent Campbell at an earlier point in his thought; however, this would not provide for the much hoped for co-operation of the churches which Campbell championed in later years.

Isaac Errett, in a little pamphlet entitled Our Position, had this to say about the meaning of the church:

9. The Church of Christ--not sects--is a Divine institution. We do not recognize sects, with sectarian names and symbols and terms of fellowship, as branches of the Church of Christ, but as unscriptural and anti-scriptural, and therefore to be abandoned for the one Church of God which the New Testament reveals. That God has a people among these sects, we believe; we call on them to come out from all party organizations, to renounce all party names and party tests, and seek only for Christian union and fellowship according to apostolic teaching.²

Again we have recurring the idea that we can have Christian union without regard to community or church as a sociological entity. Christian union would be achieved by renouncing "party names and tests." It is assumed that such persons would read the New Testament

¹ ibid., p. 345.

² Isaac Errett, Our Position (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Foundation, n.d.), p. 9.

and find there the church government and organization which the Disciples were at that time displaying. The approach again is made on the basis of the individual. This again is basically Campbell's early outline from which he later moved.

As can be seen, much material was also concerned with restoration and the methods and procedures to be followed in restoring the ancient order. This became idealized and men were thoroughly convinced that this was the road to Christian union. At the same time, they meant by this that the New Testament contained the true guide to such restoration and unity. It was thought that this was easily discerned and apparent to all who cared to study it. A different approach was presented in J. H. Garrison's book "A Modern Plea for Ancient Truths" when he notes:

It is now becoming apparent, except to the most superficial thinkers, that there is no conflict whatever between our aim to restore what ought to be restored of the New Testament Church--namely, its unchanging facts and principles and its divine ideals--and true progress, which is the practical embodiment or realization of such principles and ideals. No religious body on earth, either in apostolic days or at the present time, has ever realized fully the ideals of Christ and His apostles as to the Church. It is far ahead of us yet. Towards its realization we are all struggling. We go back to the recorded utterances of the historic Christ and his apostles for our ideals of the Church and of Christian living; but we go forward under the leadership of the living Christ to the realization of these divine ideals.¹

He was pleading for progress and was making an attempt to re-evaluate the traditional plea for restoration. He puts it in terms of principles

¹J. H. Garrison, A Modern Plea for Ancient Truths (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1902), pp. 73-74.

and ideals and not organization or church government. However, even though he speaks of the "leadership of the living Christ," it is obvious that there is here no attempt to actually describe, define, or make any statement about the nature of the church as found in the New Testament. He does, however, plead for liberty in thought which would leave the way open for development of ideas in this area. This kind of openness is essential for theological inquiry.

In 1905, T. W. Phillips published a book, The Church of Christ, and here is an example of how the ideas about the church were hardened as persons still expected to find the perfect organization in the New Testament. He says,

The Church of Christ was so ordained and established, and its simple form of government was such that it could be planted in every nation and grow under any form of government. Hence the general form of cooperation among the various churches or congregations for its spread seemed wisely to have been left to the good judgment of Christians under their various circumstances and surroundings in different nations and among divers peoples.

Christianity is a historical religion. The Church of Christ was complete, and so passed into history with the close of the New Testament. So far as revealed to us there has been no changes made since, by any authority in heaven or upon the earth.

This closes the issue as far as he is concerned. The church of Christ was complete at the end of the New Testament and so remains. Nothing new has been added. The problem now is to restore this complete church of Christ which is so clearly to be found in the Scriptures.

¹T. W. Phillips, The Church of Christ (New York: Funk Wagnalls Co., 1905), pp. 273-274.

This does not recognize the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the apostolic period.

These are but examples of the type of thinking which was current among certain leaders of the Disciples of Christ. There is very little that is in any sense creative in looking at the church. This is not to say that there is no other material which could be examined, but in this instance it was necessary to limit research to the specific purpose which was in mind.

It is difficult to ascertain just how the Disciples were viewing their own growth and development. However, in this one area there appears not to be much really constructive theological thought in understanding the nature of the church from a study of the New Testament. The legalistic tendency and literalistic interpretation became too prevalent. Then again because of the nature of our organization and our belief in the liberty of opinions it is almost impossible to know completely the mainstream of thought without going into exhaustive research in periodicals, tracts, etc., which are found in this period of our history.

It is at this point that there is a gap in the list of available materials concerning Disciple interpretation of the church, and it is not until the late thirties that we again can pick up information about our central theme.

It was in 1935 that a Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ was appointed by the International Convention. This was

the time when Disciples as a whole were awakening to the fact that we must begin to know what we mean by the church. The old problem of restorationism and our plea for its use as the basis of unity seems to have been the focal point. In a report of the Commission presented to the Convention held in 1946, it is clearly stated that there exists two views:

Some among us find in the New Testament the divinely authoritative pattern for the form and organization of the local church, and affirm that, historically, we set out to restore this New Testament pattern and that our local churches essentially represent its restoration.

Others among us recognize in the New Testament certain principles which inherently belong to any local church that calls itself Christian, but they do not find any evidence that the particular forms of organization or procedure prevailing in the primitive church, were authoritatively prescribed as a pattern which the Christian church is obligated to reproduce in detail, everywhere and throughout all time.¹

Although it may be stated in terms of restorationism, it is apparent that the problem is one of authority for organization. Do we as Disciples see the church only in the local congregation or do we also recognize that it is not entirely fulfilled in the local community. It is again a matter of co-operation of the churches and what this co-operation means in terms of the nature of the church.

The recognition of this problem represented much soul-searching by Disciples in restating their views. In this regard, W. E. Garrison declares:

¹Program Booklet, International Convention of Disciples of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 6-11, 1946, p. 125.

Christianity is not a religion of separate individuals. It is a religion with a church. The church is an institution peculiar to Christianity. No other religion ever had a church.

"Church" in the New Testament has two meanings: (1) a spiritual creation, the body of Christ, the ideal unity of all believers; (2) a local congregation of Christians, united in fellowship and worship, and having such ministers or officers as were needed. Most scholars find no evidence of a uniform pattern of organization in the churches of the first century. Certainly there were no lawmaking bodies or general officers exercising authority over local congregations. The local churches were independent of one another, but they were conscious of their unity in the one Church, and they cultivated and expressed that unity by every means at their disposal.¹

Definitely then we must think of Christianity in terms of community and not solely in terms of the individual. However, Garrison finds two concepts in the New Testament in reference to the meaning of the church; one which is the ideal unity of believers; the other in the fellowship and worship of the local congregation. This thinking follows closely Campbell's ideas about the "community" beyond the local congregation, and how a co-operation of the churches is necessary in order to make real the Body of Christ.

Another significant item is the use he makes of the findings of the scholars who have studied the New Testament. This acceptance of a new approach to Biblical studies was essential to Disciples in light of their traditions regarding the Scriptures.

This is clearly applied with the publication of a series of lectures given at the School of Religion by William Robinson. They

¹W. E. Garrison, Whence and Whither The Disciples of Christ (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), pp. 93-94.

were published in book form in 1948 under the title of The Biblical Doctrine of the Church. Here we see a Disciple looking at the New Testament to discover there what is known about the nature of the church. It is significant that he should seek to form a "Biblical Doctrine" and this stands well in the tradition of the Disciples. This was not simply an attempt to find in the New Testament an organization, but it was an effort to make a theological statement about the nature of the church in view of what we find in the Scriptures.

In speaking of the nature of the church, he writes:

Like Christ, the church is temporal and eternal--the church militant and the church triumphant. It is never just the church at any single time point in history. It includes the apostles, prophets, martyrs, saints of all ages, and presumably our Lord himself as the Head. Like him, it is local and yet universal. It is never just the community in a single locality. When a body of people, say twenty, are gathered together as a church to offer to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, they are joined to the whole church in time and space.¹

He does not find that the church can be interpreted wholly in terms of the local congregation without having regard for the whole church. Instead of beginning with a community of Christians in one place and working from there to a concept of the church. He assumes the church as the Body of Christ and interprets the local congregation in light of this assumption. As he says elsewhere,

The one church is not the collection of separate churches, but the separate churches are the expression of the one church in different localities. This usage is so striking

¹William Robinson, The Biblical Doctrine of the Church (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), pp. 103-104.

in Acts that it cannot be ignored. Let it be said at once that it tells heavily against a certain type of congregationalism or independency.¹

The meaning of the church is to be found in the fellowship which exists in the community. This is an important contribution to Disciple thought. He says, "For Jesus, God was personal--our Father-- and the whole business of producing an ordered world was the business of creating fellowship, which is the highest destiny of personality and its only hope of salvation."² The creation of fellowship was primary in Jesus' work on earth, and it is in the koinonia that salvation is made possible. Fellowship is possible only as love is made the basis of it, and this provides the motivation for our obedience to God in Christ.

Dr. Robinson is presupposing that the church is both human and divine, and we must recognize it as such. God has given us the church, the community, in which we find salvation through Christ.

The World Convention of Churches of Christ has for the past several years maintained study committees which reported to the Convention in 1955 and 1961. They published their findings in booklet form under the title of Doctrines of the Christian Faith. In the one published after the Toronto Convention in 1955, we find the following statements regarding the nature of the church.

1. We begin this study with a basic assumption: the church is not merely a convenient form of organization by which men associate themselves for purposes of group action, but is rather

¹Ibid., p. 61

²Ibid., pp. 27-28.

the creation of God, Called into existence by the redemptive action of God toward man, its character can be known only as God reveals it. Our task is not to devise, but to discover what God has revealed.

.....
 32. The church is the community by which and in which God acts in the world. Yet here is a duality which we must not oversimplify. The church is neither merely a voluntary association of the followers of Jesus, nor is the church really Christ himself. Christ is the Lord OVER the church; the church is PEOPLE under the Lordship of Christ, and in its humanity is the witness to Christ.

33. The church is the fellowship, that rich totality of personal interrelationships between Christ and Christians and among all Christians. Christ is in his people and they are in him, and his people belong to each other as members one of another.¹

It is again declared that the church is not a voluntary association but the creation of God and called into being for a definite purpose. On the other hand, it is not really Christ himself. Christ is Lord over his people. Lastly, the importance of the fellowship is declared. We discern an effort here to depart from the "voluntary association" idea which had been so central to Campbell's thought. It is again emphasized that the church is given and revealed by God, and we seek to know what He has revealed.

In 1961, the church was described by the Study Committees as a spiritual community.

The Church is a spiritual community. It is more than a group of people who bind themselves together under a social contract and unchanging forms of procedure. It is the continuing

¹"The Nature of the Church," Doctrines of the Christian Faith Six Reports by Study Committees of the World Convention of Churches of Christ (Disciples), 1955, pp. 4-9.

activity of a redemptive God through Christ, whose love is sustained and made recognizable to us and in us by the Holy Spirit.¹

It is reiterated that the church is more than the people who bind themselves together--more than just an association. The emphasis is placed on the activity of God in redemption and the use He makes of the community. They speak of the relationship of the local congregation to other communities.

The local congregation is a free and autonomous congregation but its freedom is the paradoxical freedom of which Paul speaks--bondage to the will of Christ. It is the relinquishing of libertinism and self-seeking individuals or groups. It is the essential acceptance of the true reality of Christian freedom, which exists, not for itself but for God. The local congregation is a colony of heaven and its freedom is the covenantal freedom of the people of God, the circumscribed freedom of responsibility. As free, it has the responsibility to seek a spirit of worship and work which enables the members to come to a fuller awareness of their relationship to God and to one another, and to listen to the Church as a whole, i.e., the Church throughout the world, the Church of the past and the present; to listen to and acknowledge gratitude for all Christian tradition but bound to none in strict adherence.²

This points up Campbell's basic principle of freedom and his further thought that with freedom you must have responsibility. With this thinking it is possible to have a greater appreciation for the church of the past and the present. It is significant that they speak of listening to "the Church as a whole." This would mean that other denominations and communions are recognized as expressions of the church also. This is a vast departure from the old "plea" that the

¹"The Congregation and the Body of Christ," Doctrines of the Christian Faith (Edinburgh Study Pamphlets) Six Reports by the Study Committee of the World Convention of Churches of Christ (Disciples), 1961, p. 12.

²Ibid., pp. 11-12.

church be restored in accordance with the ancient order of things as interpreted by us.

Of course, we are speaking out of the context of ecumenical thinking and the modern search for unity among churches. Herndon Wagers in an article for Encounter has this to say in that respect:

One of the most significant aspects of this form of ecumenical perspective is that it does not have as its goal the sacrifice of all that is distinctive in the various traditions. Such a sacrifice could well mean an irreparable loss to the church universal. What it does involve is a call to all traditions to look to that which is the unifying core of all true Christian witness, and in doing this in community to seek thereby to grow together in grace toward a more penetrating self-knowledge of what may well be the workings of the Holy Spirit in others. If out of this come mergers, God be praised! But what is more important is that koinonia may become a growing reality in our midst, and that "creative reconstruction" may become the perennial spirit in which all Christian bodies face their several futures.¹

This represents the kind of theological statements which are necessary to a Brotherhood such as ours. But it has been only in the last decade or so that we have been doing this. Our ecumenical involvements have pointed out to us that we cannot talk of unity without first coming to terms with our own traditions about the nature of the Church.

In this brief survey we have noted the gradual change in emphasis. We began with Campbell's individualistic interpretation in which the church is thought of in terms of a voluntary association of individual believers. Gradually we see more and more emphasis on the church as community, and we see the individual in terms of his participation in the fellowship given of God.

¹Herndon Wagers, "Tradition and Christian Unity," Encounter, 20 (Summer, 1959), p. 318.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

A study of the normative picture of the church in the New Testament shows its essential nature to be that of fellowship in a living community, the life of which is derived from the living Christ who is continually present within it. This Spirit is received by and active in the members both in their individual and communal life by faith. The institutional forms are, therefore, secondary and historically conditioned by the needs for relevant witness and effective action.

On the other hand, we have seen that the Disciples, from their origin as a body through Campbell's work and consistently through the writings of later representative leaders, have founded their concept of the nature of the church on three propositions. These are (1) the authority of the New Testament for all Christians as a basis of unity; (2) the fixation on the organized institutionalized church as it was thought to be found in the New Testament; and (3) the necessity of restoring intact this form of the New Testament church within the contemporary world.

Two questions are seen immediately to be raised: the necessity, indeed, even the possibility of restoration; and, the significance of the living fellowship formed by the work of the Holy Spirit within

a developing history if a past historical situation is enforced unchanged upon the present.

Because of ecumenical involvements of the last two decades, Disciples have begun to question seriously the validity of the concept of restorationism. In the summer of 1959, there was published an issue of Encounter which dealt with "Apostolicity, Tradition, and Restoration." Various Disciples took up the problem of the principle of restoration and the place of Biblical studies. Ralph Wilburn in one article has this to say about the Disciples and Biblical criticism.

In the light of biblical criticism, serious and highly significant revisions are called for in traditional Disciple theology about the Bible.

First, it must be frankly admitted that the fathers were building on a fallacy, when they construed the apostolic testimony as an absolute truth-datum. There is no such datum in historical thought-forms. Disciples must banish the illusion of an unhistorical Scripture and face up to the relativity which characterizes the historical aspect of the givenness of the biblical writings in general, and of the kerygma in particular.

Secondly, Disciples must face up to the similar historical conditioning in our own act of faith, which appropriates the meaning of Scripture. Both the apostolic givenness and our faith-reception of Scripture are historically conditioned. This relativity and variability in our response to the call of God in Christ is quite proper when it is due to the finite, historical character of the human mind, and not to willful caprice. There is no presuppositionless study of the Bible. Yet a sincere study of the Bible, in faith, will modify one's presuppositions.¹

Dr. Wilburn has pointed the direction for a revision of Disciple thinking about the Bible. There is a need to recognize the value of modern

¹Ralph G. Wilburn, "A Critique of the Restoration Principle," Encounter, 20 (Summer, 1959), pp. 355-356.

Biblical study and the revised view of history since the time of Campbell. If we do accept such a proposition, then we will be freed from the notion that there is present in the New Testament a pattern which can and ought to be lifted out of the first century and grafted into the twentieth century. Campbell himself was quite selective in choosing between essentials and non-essentials. We are no longer able to use this restoration plea as a basis for unity because we realize the relativity at work in the interpretation of Scripture.

The question is did Campbell really have in mind a living church. We have seen from the development of the theme of restoration through our history that restoration in itself could be just as deadening as the acceptance of tradition which Campbell had so rebelled against.

This leads us to a review of Campbell's concept of the church which so influenced Disciple thought and which we are just now struggling to re-interpret.

Harold Linger has shown in his book The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell how much Campbell was indebted to John Locke in thinking about government and society. Man has certain natural rights but gives up some of these rights in order to gain other things such as preservation of life and freedom from fears and dangers. Thus, government arose from the need of man to mutually protect and aid one another. Hence, they make a compact which arises by the consent of the individual. This is known as the Social Compact theory of

of society and government. Eventually, a constitutional monarchy is declared to be the best form of government. Linger shows how Locke's thought influenced Campbell's thinking, and we can see certain strains of this in his concept of the church.¹

Campbell explicitly states that the church is a voluntary association of those persons who have confessed Jesus as their Messiah. The purpose of such an association is found in its desire to proclaim the Gospel. Thus, it is expedient that an association be organized, just as it is expedient for "natural" man to band together for mutual protection and aid.

This is an attempt to approach a doctrine of the church from the point of view of the individual. It is really a matter of the relationship of the individual to Christ that is real, important, and meaningful. We were not created for each other nor does fellowship have meaning except in the sense of association with one another. Neither do we have a sense that we are dependent upon one another in this fellowship.

After defining the church in terms of individuals, it later became apparent that local churches should associate in a similar way. Campbell then moves to a discussion of the co-operation of the churches which is a natural implication of the voluntary association idea. Such co-operation depends on the churches associating themselves so that evangelism and other joint projects may be carried out. The

¹Harold L. Linger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954) pp. 66-69.

churches cooperate in order to witness to the world. Campbell was very vocal and definite about this idea of co-operation.

This organization of churches is the Body of Christ, and we are to cooperate because we are members of the Body of Christ. However, if you say that the local congregation is autonomous you have created the possibility that it may choose not to cooperate. In view of this principle of autonomy, it is difficult to see how the concept of the Body of Christ can be taken very seriously. Can the voluntary association become the Body of Christ?

It is at this point that we see that Campbell does not really consider the nature of the church. He did not at all see it as a continuing force from the time of the Apostles until the present age. To do so would have meant a concept of Christ's living presence and guidance in the work of the Holy Spirit. What is the meaning of the Holy Spirit if a complete revelation has been made regarding the church in the Scriptures? If you have a concept of the Holy Spirit which reveals the living presence of Christ in building up the church, then you necessarily have to admit some meaning and value in tradition and creeds. Campbell never really came to terms with a concept of the Holy Spirit because of his determination to do away with creeds and traditions of men. If he had formed a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, then he would need also to take another look at the history of the church from apostolic times on through the centuries. The tradition

would have to be given some authority because of the very fact that the church in some form did survive through the centuries, even if at times its meaning was obscured. Campbell tried to ignore history.

If you do not have an adequate doctrine of the living presence of Christ, it is difficult to place emphasis and meaning in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Campbell's "system" leaves one wondering how we are to recognize and realize the Body of Christ. He talks about the community beyond the local church, but we cannot know this community under the presupposition of the voluntary association idea.

Later Disciple leaders such as Lard, Errett, Garrison (J.H.), etc., built as a rule on these same presuppositions, and, although they might talk about the leadership of the "living Christ" or of the church as a "spiritual creation," it is not apparent at all that they developed a concept of the church along these lines. In speaking of the church as a spiritual creation, it is essential that one take a second look at the voluntary association idea.

It was not until Dr. Robinson wrote his book on the Biblical doctrine of the church that it is clearly declared that the church is an entity which is created by the Holy Spirit and is given by God. This is the meaning of the Body of Christ, that we are as individuals drawn into the existing community and become members of one another by our inclusion in the koinonia of the Spirit.

The paradox of the one and the many is ever with the church. Paul was ever aware of it. He refers to it in connection with the Lord's Supper: "Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17). It is as individuals that we accept Christ and become members of the church, but immediately we are more than individuals; we are members of his body and, because of that, members of one another. We are not solitary individuals. There is a togetherness which we ignore at our peril.¹

We have noted in surveying Disciple writings how a change was made from the nineteenth century individualistic approach to a contemporary note of personalism. This resulted because of the changing times and in the attempt of modern Disciples to re-interpret and make relevant the message of the church. Our modern insight into the meaning of personality and the interaction of personalities coupled with the new insight into Biblical thought which points to the drama of personal encounter between God and man has brought about a greater emphasis on community as over against individualism. Campbell read the New Testament from the viewpoint of individualism because this prevailed in the thought world of his time. However, as Robinson indicates:

The day is past when Paul could be interpreted, as was common in many interpretations a generation ago, as the champion of that kind of Protestant individualism which knows Christianity without the church. That this was a common type of Protestant Christianity in the nineteenth century and the early years of the present century, cannot be denied.²

In describing the church as the *koinonia* of God with man, Robinson shows how this fellowship is the hidden structure of reality, and how we participate without loss of distinctive personality.

¹William Robinson, p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 55.

Individualism implies independence and a sense of self-sufficiency, while all our modern understanding of man goes to demonstrate that we are dependent on others at almost all points and that development of personality arises from interaction and fellowship with other persons.

We can see many problems which Campbell presents to us as Disciples of the mid-twentieth century. It seems imperative that we once more turn to the Scriptures in an attempt to find there the nature of the church and the meaning of personality in order to implement this in the life and thinking of Disciples. It will have little meaning if it is simply stated in theoretical terms; it must become the foundation principle for the building up of the fellowship.

There is no doubt that Campbell performed an important service for us in many respects. It is good that we have been directed to the Scriptures as the source and authority for the church; on the other hand, it will also be necessary for us to recognize the value of tradition, creeds, statements of faith, etc., and to accept the results of the investigations of the best of Biblical scholarship so that we will not grow legalistic in our interpretation of Scripture nor regarding a particular period of history. In ecumenical involvements, we are committed to conversations about Christian doctrine and unity with other denominations, and in the face of these conversations it is untenable to claim that we have restored the pure Gospel and that unity depends upon our interpretation. Such conversations

should indicate a willingness not only to witness but also to listen.

We should also accept Campbell's emphasis upon the Lordship of Christ as our basic belief. However, he faced a real dilemma here. His insistence on personal faith in Christ led him to believer's Baptism and away from the impersonal faith of creedalism. But, in order to safeguard the individual's faith, he moved toward an impersonal theory of the church founded on the restoration principle. Unity is to be found in the living Christ and not in restoring a historical situation.

Many questions arise here to be faced by Disciples. Can the church, interpreted in terms of a living fellowship, have any form? What is our doctrine of the ministry? Or, shall we simply continue to view it as a historical necessity? In connection with this, what is now the place of the lay ministry--Elders and Deacons? How shall we ordain a ministry for the whole church? What about local church autonomy--can this be justified from Scripture. What is the relationship between Word and Sacrament? These are questions which Disciples are now discussing and which must continue to be raised.

In many respects, we must take up where Campbell left off. In his plea for freedom in matters of opinion there is an open door for us in our century to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is in our "brotherhood" a spirit of broadness and inclusiveness

which offers a golden opportunity. Surely Campbell would not deny for us what he claimed for himself.

We are now ready to accept our rightful place and heritage and to regard the tradition of the church throughout the centuries since Christ as part of it. We cripple ourselves when we cut out eighteen centuries of history as far as the church is concerned. I want to be able to accept this as my heritage along with the hundred years or so of history of the Disciples of Christ. We are called upon to realize the continuity of the fellowship of the Spirit in whatever form it may be found and accept this with gratitude for the blessing which it brings to us.

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.¹

¹Eph. 2:19-22.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Barth, Karl. The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism. Translated by Ernest A. Payne. London: SCM Press, 1948.
- Brunner, Emil. The Misunderstanding of the Church. Translated by Harold Knight. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953.
- Buber, Martin. I and Thou. Translated by Ronald G. Smith. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1953.
- Bultmann, Rudolph. Primitive Christian in its Contemporary Setting. Translated by R. H. Fuller. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- Campbell, Alexander. The Christian System. St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1890.
- Cullmann, Oscar. Peter. Translated by Floyd V. Wilson. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1953.
- Cullmann, Oscar and Leenhardt, F. J. Essays on the Lord's Supper. Translated by J. G. Davies. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1958.
- Davies, J. G. Members of One Another: Aspects of Koinonia. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1958.
- England, Stephen J. We Disciples: A Brief View of History and Doctrine. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946.
- Flew, R. Newton. Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938.
- Foakes-Jackson, F. J. Peter: Prince of Apostles. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927.
- Fortune, A. W. Adventuring with Disciple Pioneers. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1942.
- Garrison, J. H. Christian Union: A Historical Study. St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1906.
- Garrison, J. H. A Modern Plea for Ancient Truths. St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1902.

- Garrison, W. E. Whence and Whither Disciples of Christ. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948.
- Glover, T. R. The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1909.
- Gray, James. Discipleship in the Church. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, 1935.
- Harkness, Georgia. The Dark Night of the Soul. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1945.
- Hendry, George S. The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.
- Higgins, A. J. B. The Lord's Supper in the New Testament. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1952.
- Hort, Fenton J. A. The Christian Ecclesia. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1914.
- Howe, Reuel L. Man's Need and God's Action. Greenwich, Conn.: The Seabury Press, Inc., 1957.
- Jenkins, Daniel. The Strangeness of the Church. Garden City: Doubleday, 1955.
- Johnston, George. The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament. Cambridge: The University Press, 1943.
- Jung, C. G. The Undiscovered Self. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1960.
- Knox, John. The Early Church and the Coming Great Church. New York: Abingdon Press, 1955.
- Lindley, D. Ray. Apostle of Freedom. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1957.
- Lunger, Harold L. The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954.
- Lyons, Benjamin (ed.). The Millennial Harbinger Abridged. II, Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1902.
- May, Rollo. The Meaning of Anxiety. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950.

- Miller, Donald G. The People of God. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1959.
- Morrison, Charles Clayton. What is Christianity?. Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1940.
- Nelson, J. Robert. The Realm of Redemption. Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Co., 1951.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. Sin and Salvation. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1956.
- Oulton, J. E. L. Holy Communion and Holy Spirit. London: S.P.C.K., 1954.
- Phillips, T. W. The Church of Christ. New York: Funk Wagnalls Co., 1905.
- Raven, Charles E. The Gospel and the Church: A Study of Distortion and Its Remedy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.
- Robinson, H. Wheeler, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit. New York: Harper and Bros. Publishers, 1928.
- Robinson, William. The Biblical Doctrine of the Church. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948.
- Schmidt, Karl L. The Church. "Kittel Bible Key Words." Translated by J. R. Coates. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1950.
- Sherrill, Lewis J. The Gift of Power. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955.
- Sherrill, Lewis J. Guilt and Redemption. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1942.
- Van Dusen, Henry P. Spirit, Son and Father. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.
- Whitley, Oliver Read. Trumpet Call of Reformation. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1959.

Booklets and Pamphlets

- Ames, Edward Scribner. Whither Disciples?. Chicago: 1939.
- Clague, J. G. The Position and Plea of Churches of Christ. Birmingham, England: The Berean Press, n.d.
- Errett, Isaac. Our Position. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Foundation, n.d.

- Everts, Arthur A. and Myron. Why Not Get Back to Christ's Church of the New Testament?. Dallas, Texas, n.d.
- Jones, J. Ira. How I Got Out of the Maze of Sectarianism. Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, n.d.
- Lappin, S. S. The Spirit of the Times: How Should It Affect our Message? Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1900.
- Power, Frederick D. The Disciples of Christ--Their Plea as a Religious People. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1909.
- Program Booklet. International Convention of Disciples of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 6-11, 1946.
- Robinson, William. Churches of Christ: Their Place in the Christian World. Birmingham: The Berean Press, n.d.
- Robinson, William. New Testament Christianity. Birmingham: The Berean Press, n.d.
- Spayd, L. W. That Form of Doctrine. Roodhouse, Ill.: Record Printing Co., 1907.
- Spencer, I. J. The Divine Plea. Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1900.
- Tyler, B. B. An Open Letter Concerning the Disciples of Christ. Buffalo, N. Y.: The Church Voice Co., n.d.
- Walker, W. R. Facts Concerning the Church. Kimberlin Heights, Tenn.: Tennessee Valley Printing Co., n.d.
- Welshimer, P. H. Facts Concerning the New Testament Church. Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., n.d.
- Welshimer, P. H. The New Testament Church Pattern. Canton, Ohio, 1946.
- Wetzel, D. N. The Right Emphasis in our Plea. Pittsfield, Ill., 1917.

Articles and Periodicals

"The Anatomy of Angst," Time, March 31, 1961.

Bowen, T. H. "As a Disciple Looks at Theology," The College of the Bible Quarterly, 25 (October, 1948), 3-18.

The Christian Baptist, 1823-1829.

Clague, J. G. "Current Thinking of Disciples of Christ," Shane Quarterly, XVI (October, 1955), 177-184.

Humbert, Royal. "After Utopia--What," Encounter, 20 (Summer, 1959), 297-306.

Lard, Moses E. "Our Position and Future Duties," Lard's Quarterly, IV (October, 1867), 338-348.

The Millennial Harbinger, 1830-1864.

Osborn, Ronald E. "Disciples of Christ and Union Among Denominations," Shane Quarterly, XVI (April, 1955), 108-119.

Short, Howard E. "The Discipleship of the Disciples of Christ," The College of the Bible Quarterly, 26 (July, 1949), 11-17.

Wagers, Herndon. "Tradition and Christian Unity," Encounter, 20 (Summer, 1959), 307-318.

West, William G. "A Brief Survey of the Origin, Nature and Mission of the Disciples of Christ," Shane Quarterly, XVI (January, 1955), 19-39.

Wilburn, Ralph G. "A Critique of the Restoration Principle," Encounter, 20 (Summer, 1959), 333-361.

Other Sources

Interpreter's Bible, VII-X.

Study Committee, World Convention of Churches of Christ, 1955. Doctrines of the Christian Faith. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1956.

Study Committee, World Convention of Churches of Christ, 1961. Doctrines of the Christian Faith. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1961.