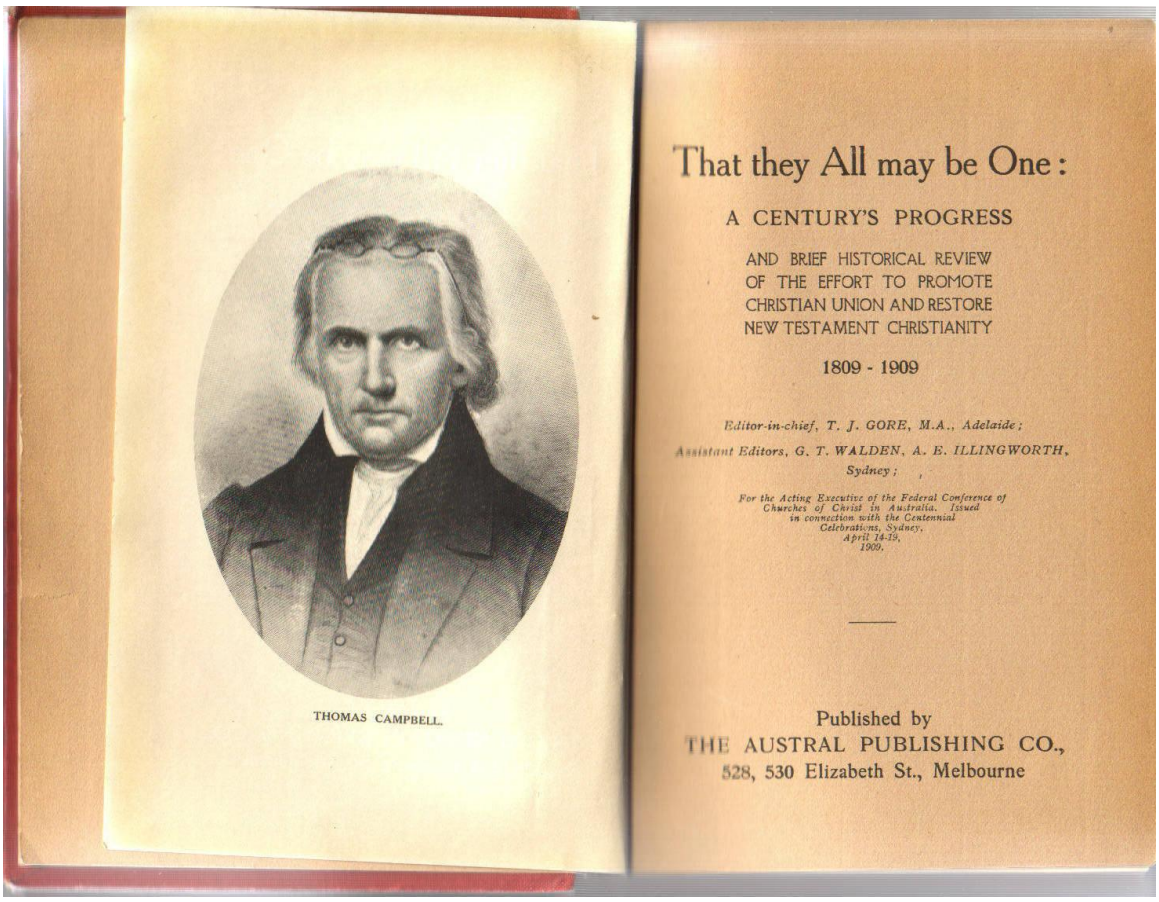
Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society's

Historical *Digest*



THOMAS CAMPBELL.

That they All may be One:

A CENTURY'S PROGRESS

AND BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW
OF THE EFFORT TO PROMOTE
CHRISTIAN UNION AND RESTORE
NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

1809 - 1909

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Value of Links to the Past

Communion with Alexander Campbell

Ahead of the 2009 Great Communion, Jeff Weston reflects on his experience of celebrating communion in Churches of Christ's pioneer territory

During my time with the World Convention of Churches of Christ I have been afforded many unique and treasured experiences. I have stood in the pulpit at the Cane Ridge Meeting House and at Alexander Campbell's desk in his study at Bethany, I have been privileged to share in communion services using a table which Alexander Campbell and the great evangelist Walter Scott used on the Western frontier. I have felt something of the presence of Barton Warren Stone and the great Cane Ridge Revival as I have stood on the revival grounds at Cane Ridge. But by far the most emotional and moving experience was the privilege to lead the Communion celebration at the closing service of the 17th World Convention. To stand before such a large crowd of people representing members of the church from around the world in itself is a moving experience, but this was added to by the opportunity to handle some of the sacred historical artifacts of our movement. Knowing something of their history of use and what they represented to the early pioneers of our movement added to the emotional experience

Above: Selina and Alexander Campbell c. 1860

Below: James Barclay 1807-1874

Source: Restoration Movement website's Portrait Gallery

The silver chalice used once belonged to Alexander Campbell. This silver cup stands about seven inches high and is decorated with a bas-relief pattern of children playing in the snow and floral motifs. In 1847, the chalice was given to Mr. Campbell for use as a communion cup while he was falsely imprisoned in Glasgow, Scotland, on charges of slavery. Apparently his days in prison were not all that bad. Sisters in the church were allowed to wait on him and to spruce up his cell. And the jailer placed no limitation on the number of visitors, with as many as eleven in his cell at a time when the law allowed but two! One can easily imagine Mr Campbell calling this group of visitors together to celebrate the communion in his cell and the comfort it would bring him in a difficult period of his life.

After Mr Campbell's return to America, the cup was regularly used for worship services at the family mansion. As was the custom, all visitors to the home joined in the family worship time. It can be speculated that notable visitors such as Presidents James A Garfield and Jefferson Davis, and early leaders of the American Restoration Movement such as Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, JW McGarvey, and Robert Milligan may have partaken of the Lord's Supper from this cup.

The cup now resides in the Restoration Movement Archives at Emmanuel School of Religion in East Tennessee. It was given as a personal gift by Decima Campbell Barclay, one of Mr Campbell's daughters, to Dr Dean E Walker, founding President of Emmanuel when he was a young man studying as an undergraduate at Bethany College. After 70 years in the Walker family it was given to Emmanuel School of Religion.

The plate used for the communion bread came from the collection at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee. It was given to Alexander and Selina Campbell by Dr James and Julia Barclay who were the first international missionaries of the Stone-Campbell movement. A Presbyterian layman as well as a physician, James Barclay had initially proposed to undertake missionary work for the Presbyterian Board of Mission but was prevented by family concerns. He affiliated with the Disciples and with his wife and family served as a missionary to Jews in Palestine from 1851 to 1854 and from 1858 to 1862. His youngest son John Judson Barclay married Alexander and Selina Campbell's daughter Decima in 1863. The plate is one which the Barclays used for communion in their pioneer mission work in Palestine. The original origins of the plate are unclear it could have been taken to the mission field by the Barclays. As a former missionary it was a wonderful experience to use this plate which has been dedicated to the central act of our faith for all these years.

The table used was the one at what is believed to be possibly the largest communion service observed in America, the communion service of the Centennial Convention of 1909 in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. The Centennial Convention communion service was conducted at Forbes Field, home of the Pittsburg Pirates baseball team. The table is made of oak and is very plain so as to not distract focus from the communion elements. Our use of this table was very deliberate in that the World Convention communion service was the first in a year of celebration marking the bicentennial of the writing of the *Declaration and Address*. It is planned that there will be at least one thousand communion services around the world leading up to October 2009.

While it was a wonderful experience to use these special relics of our movement the most important item was the communion elements themselves and what they represent. It was for this that our pioneers dedicated their lives. To share in an act instituted by our Lord himself is in itself the most wonderful experience. The relics and way they were used by our early pioneers to share the message of salvation only adds to the experience. I am sure Mr Campbell and Dr Barclay would have been excited that as we gathered we used their processions for the purpose to which they had been dedicated, but more importantly they would have rejoiced at the fact that despite our divisions and disunity on this day we gathered as one body from around the world at the table of our Lord.

Jeff Weston is General Secretary/Executive Director of World Convention of Churches of Christ, based in Tennessee, USA. He previously headed the Overseas Mission Board in Australia.

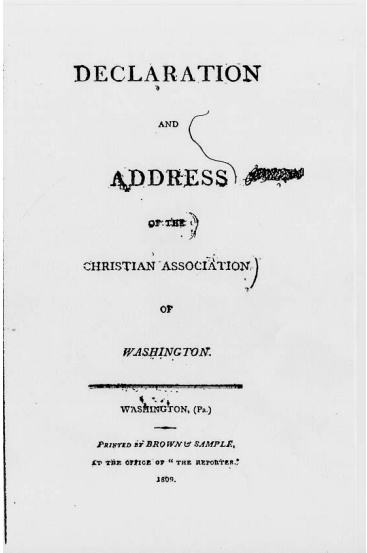
(Essay sources: material by Dr. Leroy Garrett and Clinton Holloway and articles from the *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.)

Declaration and Address

Churches of Christ's 'ever-contemporary' foundation document turns 200

At the bicentenary of the Declaration and Address, Stephen Curkpatrick reads Thomas Campbell's 'ever-contemporary' words and considers their importance for today

The overwhelming impetus of Thomas Campbell's *thirteen propositions* in *Declaration and Address* (1809) is toward faithfulness to biblical testimony with its vocative call to be a people of grace in the world. As the author of one family through grace in Jesus Christ, God calls people to distinctive life and witness through the Spirit indwelling the Church of Christ.



DECLARATION

AND

ADDRESS

OF THE

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

OF

WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON, (Pa.)

PRINTED BY BROWN & SAMPLE,

AT THE OFFICE OF "THE REPORTER."

1809.

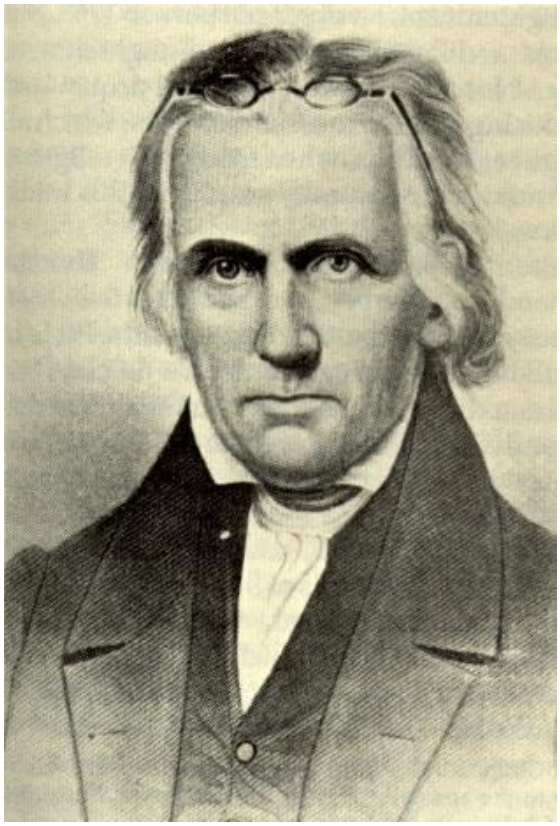
These affirmations are the dynamic source of Christian unity in community and integrity in witness within the world. Scripture is our primary source of testimony to the vocative word by which God *calls to be things that are not* through grace, which is given definitively for human response in Jesus Christ.

First, the Church of Christ is "one" because God is one. This is the central impetus for Paul's argument that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. God cannot be divided. In Jesus Christ, the oneness of God is given for all people, for oneness can only be established through mutual relinquishment in grace, which as Scripture testifies, is demonstrated in Christ. This leads to a second proposition.

The central impetus for unity is Christological: "receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them" after Paul's response to divisions among Roman Christians. This imperative is pitched in terms of the self-giving passion of Christ for all. The rejection or diminution of another, whatever differences arise through regional or temporal customs, has no validity in Christ.

New Testament witness is the only criterion for faith and practice. This third proposition identifies the specific shape of Christian life for those who "profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures" (prop. 1).

The vocative textures of Scripture are eventful; they give testimony to God calling a people to distinctive witness by word and deed in the world. The New Testament impetus for faith and practice accords with its central focus of grace, which is given definitively in Jesus



Above: Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), sketch from a photograph c.1834. Source: That They All May Be One by TJ Gore (Austral, 1909).

Opposite: Frontis page from Mrs Decima Campbell Barclay's copy of the Declaration and Address, the only surviving from the original 1809 printing. It features annotations by her father Alexander and grandfather Thomas Campbell. It was copied and reproduced in a facsimile edition in 1909. The original is now kept at Bethany College in USA.

Below: Brush Run Church where the Washington Christian Association met and which became the first 'meeting-house of the Disciples' (Christian Standard, Ohio, Dec 18, 1897).

What is the Declaration and Address? The Declaration and Address is a document containing 13 propositions which outline how division might be eradicated from the church and unity proclaimed.

It was written by Thomas Campbell who had been a minister in the Presbyterian church in Ireland and later in Washington, Pennsylvania, USA. But by 1809 he had left the church, dismayed at its disunity. With a group of people who believed in Christian unity despite denominational affiliation, he formed the Washington Christian Association and composed the principles for that group: the thirteen propositions of the Declaration and Address. It was published in December 1809.

Thomas' son Alexander arrived in Washington just before the document's publication. Upon reading he devoted his life to espousing its principles in Christian ministry, resulting in the movement we know in Australia as Churches of Christ. The Declaration and Address was thus foundational in our history. Its bicentenary deserves our recognition and reconsideration of its message.

- Editor

Recommended further reading:

Thirteen Propositions of Address in *Declaration and Address* www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.HTM

One Church: A Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address by Carson, Foster and Holloway (Abilene, 2008).

Christ. This focus, as the word speaking into human existence toward personal transformation, constitutes appropriate Christian response and formation of church life.

The fifth proposition gives the fourth its important context. Although Scripture articulates appropriate Christian response, there is nevertheless the reality of contractual and institutional observances among Christians. Yet contrary to deference being given to either tradition or novelty, New Testament testimony gives the prevailing and adjudicating point of reference for contingent observances and their practice within the spirit of Scripture.

The word that speaks into human existence is paramount. While expressions of tradition may be of value, the critical issue is their misuse as tests of communion in determining the scope of church community. It is not the ability of tradition to edify but its propensity to exclude that is contested in the sixth proposition.

Theology has a role in testing the integrity of Christian life. Theological aptitude is of value but not as a determinative factor for Christian fellowship. A forensic sense of theological truth as the basis for acceptance is elitist in contrast to acceptance of all– after the gospel portrayal of little children being accepted. In the absence of uninhibited openness there are only various forms of elitism. The seventh proposition advocates responsibility in regard to theology and openness to all concerning fellowship and communion in faith.

Theological understanding must be commensurate with people's capacity for engagement not beyond it. Ultimately, it is Scripture that depicts the essential condition of human life and its need of grace. Focused in Christ, confessed and practised according to the vocative word, the basis of call and belonging is as a people of testimony to God's loving-kindness or grace, as it was from the beginning. The eighth proposition also counters elitism according to theological understanding, so that the church may be known for its faithful response to the word of life not for its acumen with knowledge. Christological focus is redemptive as the locale of demonstrative grace, calling forth a response of self-deferential love toward one another. There is no scope for distinctions according to knowledge when all are one as recipients of grace.

The tenth follows this admonition in the ninth by indicating that *division is the root of all evil*. Alternatively, the *body of Christ* as the community of the risen Christ is where the very presence of God for humanity in grace is made evident.

The eleventh proposition reminds us that it is possible to commit sins of omission and commission in theological assertions. Theological responsibility exists inasmuch as "neglect" must be avoided, while reticence to "inventions" is necessary. Both neglect and novelty can generate "divisions" through "corruptions" in the "Church of God." It is not the church of humans to neglect the gospel's vocative word by conniving at conventions or constructing novelties as a substitute for this word.

The church is to be true to its call, expressing the unity of grace and testimony to the reality of God as the source of all life. Appropriate profession of faith is an integral response to the vocative word as "due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge."

In this, each discovers the life and reality of God and lives in primary allegiance to Christ before all else. First, faith must be expressed in practice not just profession. Second, the life of the community is finally determined by remembrance of the inaugural communities of response to Jesus Christ (New Testament) and their call to faith and testimony in the world through another word that continually ruptures the word of "human opinions" or "inventions." This is a liberating and redemptive hermeneutic that prevails over all other adjudicating criteria, whether expedient, political or religious.

Thomas Campbell's twelfth proposition demarcates scriptural profession of faith from opinion. The impetus of Scripture toward hearing and tangible response to the word suggests that volitional response to faith exceeds any impulse of modern reason toward rational speculation and divisive partisan opinions.

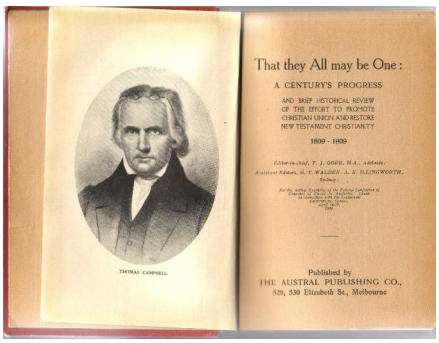
Finally, response to the vocative word of grace that speaks otherwise than human voices remains a hermeneutic that surpasses temporal and regional expressions of human life. In the latter, adaptations and contingent expressions of method, procedure and attitude will be necessary but these are always under critique by the word. Methods and their expressions can never be exalted to equal status with the word of God by its assimilation to the adjudicating word of humans. No claim to correct attitude or procedure can be made incumbent on others– generating factions, hubris and enmity in such incumbency. This final statement has a radical and perennial tone of critique that can be heard from Romans or Galatians in particular.

The thirteen propositions of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* contest and reject exclusive, elitist, tradition-bound, partisan-opinionated and novelty-obsessed expressions of Christian church. The propositions retain and affirm a vision of being the Church of Christ. This church gives central focus to Christ as the cohering impetus of New Testament testimony and the community of witness to grace and truth called into being through the gospel.

While the propositions are couched in language that reflects the discursive style of Thomas Campbell's time, their hermeneutical impetus draws on the intrinsic dynamic of Scripture's vocative word and call to response in grace and truth– supremely in Jesus Christ. This dynamic remains ever-contemporary.

Dr Stephen Curkpatrick lectures at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave and has studied the Campbells 'writings extensively

From the archives this issue



Frontis page: That They All May Be One *by Thomas Jefferson Gore (Austral, 1909)*
Scanned image
Australian collection, ACCHS Archives

A hundred years ago the centenary of the Declaration and Address was celebrated in Australia with a number of special events and the publication of this book. *That They All May Be One* contains essays on the movement's history in Australia and abroad, an equal number of chapters on 'doctrinal' matters, photographs of American and Australian pioneers and places, statistics from around the world and two poems by Joseph Pittman. The editor, TJ Gore, was an American evangelist who ministered at Grote Street in Adelaide for many years; the Declaration and Address holding more significance among American churches than in Britain and the colonies.

The Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society collects, preserves, makes available and writes about the history and heritage of Churches of Christ in Australia. The Historical Society has extensive archives which are kept at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave. If you have items relating to the social, organisational or religious life of Churches of Christ which you would like to donate to the Archives please contact our archivist.

Historical Digest is the quarterly publication of the Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society. Membership of the Society is $7 per annum which includes the *Historical Digest* provided by post or email. To become a member and receive the *Historical Digest* please contact the secretary or editor.

Articles for publication are sought. Send submissions, including biographies and church histories, to the editor. Obituaries and anniversary news are also welcome. Contact: history@handasyde.com

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