



1793 – James O’Kelly (58 yrs) left the Methodist Episcopal Church, forming the Republican Methodist Church.

1794 – The Republican Methodists adopted their “Five Cardinal Principles of the Christian Church”:

1803 – Elias Smith (33 yrs) established a “church of Christ” in Portsmouth, NH.

“When our number was some short of twenty, we agreed to consider ourselves a church of Christ, owning him as our only Master, Lord, and Lawgiver, and we agreed to consider ourselves christians, without the addition of any unscriptural name. One evening we agreed to write to the baptist churches in Brentwood, Madbury, Berwick, and some other towns, to send their elders and chosen brethren to meet with us the third Wednesday in March, to see if they could give us fellowship as a church of Christ, according to the new-testament.

“They came, and proposed to form a council, in order to constitute us a church according to the order of the baptists. I told Dr. Shepard there was no need of that; for we were already a church, whether they acknowledged us so or not. They all agreed to consider us a church of Christ in fellowship with them. They thought we were baptists, though we were called by another name. The ministers and brethren had a good meeting with us, and rejoiced in the work of the Lord. Our number that day was twenty-two, and an happier company, I believe, were never seen on earth since the days of the apostles.”

----- Barton W. Stone (30 yrs) left the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, forming the Springfield Presbytery.

----- Smith was visited by Abner Jones, an itinerate minister from Vermont, ordained by the free-will Baptists, but who considered himself simply a “Christian.” Jones wanted to encourage Smith in his independent pursuits but would not join his association since they had written rules beyond the New Testament.

1804 – The Springfield (KY) Presbytery (Barton W. Stone, *et al*) issued its “Last Will & Testament.”

The Presbytery of Springfield sitting at Caneridge, in the county of Bourbon, being, through a gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; but knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die; and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following, viz.:

Imprimis. We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We will that our name of distinction, with its Reverend title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and his name one.

Item. We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Item. We will, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Item. We will, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government,—try her candidates for the ministry, as to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look up to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest; and that she resume her primitive right of trying those who say they are apostles, and are not.

Item. We will, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a free-will offering, without a written call or subscription—admit members—remove offenses; and never henceforth delegate her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.

Item. We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Item. We will, that preachers and people cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We will, that our weak brethren, who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and wot not what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of Ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We will, the Synod of Kentucky examine every member who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately, in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.

Item. We will, that Ja-----, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy partyism. We will, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil of things which they know not.

Item. Finally we will, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

1804 Elias Smith (34 yrs) withdrew his membership from the Woburn (MA) Baptist Church before it had opportunity to dis-fellowship him for not adhering to Baptist practices in his itinerant preaching.

"I wish you to understand, that I do not consider myself a member with you, nor have I for about two years. As I was voluntary in joining with you, having fellowship with you, so I let you know by this, that I am as voluntary in withdrawing from you for the want of fellowship. My reasons for withdrawing from you, are these:

1. The unchristian treatment I have received from several of your members.
2. The unchristian treatment I have received from the church.
3. Because I do not believe the doctrines contained in your articles, or confession of faith.
4. Because I do not believe the name you are called by is scriptural; not your holding to the association of churches, which is an anti-christian combination.

"These are the principal reasons for my withdrawing from you. I wish you not to give yourselves any further trouble concerning your dealing with me, for I am not a member with you. From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I am determined through the Lord's help, to oppose every thing which I believe is wrong, and to contend for what I believe is right. If you wish to know what denomination I belong to, I tell you, as a professor of religion, I am a christian; as a preacher, a minister of Christ; calling no man father or mother; holding as abominable in the sight of God, every thing highly esteemed among men; such as calvinism, arminianism, freewillism, universalism, reverend, parsons, chaplains, doctors of divinity, clergy, bands, surplices, notes, creeds, covenants, platforms, with the spirit of slander, which those who hold to these things, are too often in possession of."

In a later pamphlet, Mr. Smith identified the following aspects of his preaching which had aroused the Baptists ire against him: "1. Their name baptists, which is unscriptural. One man was called a baptist, but no churches. 2. Articles, which are an addition to the perfect law of liberty; these they held and I disowned them. 3. Association of churches, which is contrary to the new-testament, and anti-christian. 4. Holding to the necessity of a college education to be ministers of the gospel. This is contrary to the new-testament. 5. The baptists held to missionary societies, which is nothing more or less than the old Jesuit's plan, invented first by a monk. 6. The baptists hold to councils to ordain ministers, and settle disputes. These are unscriptural. 7. They hold to installing, or re-installing ministers, a practice not once intimated in any part of the bible."

1805 – Elias Smith (34 yrs) began publishing "The Christian's Magazine," a quarterly publication.

1807 - Thomas Campbell (44 yrs), a Presbyterian minister, emigrated from Ireland to western Pennsylvania.

1808 – Elias Smith (37 yrs) began publishing the "Herald of Gospel Liberty," supposedly the world's very first Christian newspaper. The premiere edition referenced the recent Kentucky revivalism & reproduced "The Last Will & Testament of the Springfield Presbytery."

"In November of 1808, I first heard of a people in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, and other places at the South and West, who considered themselves christians, without the addition of any sectarian name. This greatly revived my mind, as before that I did not know that there were any such people on earth, excepting in the New-England states. The herald, by different means, was carried into different parts of the United States, and in consequence of this, in a few years, I became acquainted with christians in almost every state in the union. At this time, God raised up several young men to preach the gospel, and some from the free-will baptists, and other denominations, came and united with us, to spread the name of Christ only."

1809 – Alexander Campbell (21 yrs), having withdrawn his fellowship from the Presbyterian Church due to concerns over some of their non-Scriptural practices, nervously joined his father in western Pennsylvania. Both he & his father were relieved to discover they shared these concerns.

----- Thomas Campbell (46 yrs), having withdrawn his fellowship from the local Presbyterian synod that had condemned his attempts to unify various Christian sects, published his "Declaration & Address," which established the "Christian Association of Washington" (County, PA).

Excerpts from Thomas Campbell's "Declaration & Address"

"Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men, as of any authority, or as having any place in the church of God, we might forever cease from farther contentions about such things ; returning to, and holding fast by the original standard ; taking the divine word alone for our rule ; The Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth ; and Christ alone as exhibited in the word, for our salvation that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. —

"Impressed with these sentiments, we have resolved as follows :

"I. That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington — for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.

"II. That each member, according to ability, cheerfully and liberally subscribe a certain specified sum, to be paid half yearly, for the purpose of raising a fund to support a pure Gospel Ministry, that shall reduce to practice that whole form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. And also for supplying the poor with the Holy Scriptures.

"III. That this society consider it a duty, and shall use all proper means in its power, to encourage the formation of similar associations; and shall for this purpose hold itself in readiness, upon application, to correspond with, and render all possible assistance to, such as may desire to associate for the same desirable and important purposes.

"IV. That this society, by no means considers itself a church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of church association; — but merely as voluntary advocates for church reformation; and, as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose: namely, the disposal of their time, counsel and property, as they may see cause.

"V. That this society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; — only such as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the christian church — or any thing, as matter of christian faith, or duty, for which there can not be expressly produced a thus saith the Lord either in express terms, or by approved precedent.

"VI. That a standing committee of twenty-one members of unexceptionable moral character, inclusive of the secretary and treasurer, be chosen annually to superintend the interests, and transact the business, of the society. And that said committee be invested with full powers to act and do, in the name and behalf of their constituents, whatever the society had previously determined, for the purpose of carrying into effect the entire object of its institution — and that in case of any emergency, unprovided for in the existing determinations of the society, said committee be empowered to call a pro re nota meeting for that purpose.

"VII. That this society meet at least twice a year, viz. On the first Thursday of May and of November, and that the collectors appointed to receive the half-yearly quotas of the promised subscriptions, be in readiness, at or before each meeting, to make their returns to the treasurer, that he may be able to report upon the state of the funds. The next meeting to be held at Washington on the first Thursday of November next.

"VIII. That each meeting of the society be opened with a sermon, the constitution and address read, and a collection lifted for the benefit of the society — and that all communications of a public nature be laid before the society at its half-yearly meetings.

"IX. That this society, relying upon the all-sufficiency of the Church's Head ; and, through His grace, looking with an eye of confidence to the generous liberality of the sincere friends of genuine Christianity ; holds itself engaged to afford a competent support to such ministers, as the Lord may graciously dispose to assist, at the request, and by invitation, of the society, in promoting a pure evangelical reformation, by the simple reaching of the everlasting gospel, and the administration of its ordinances in an exact conformity to the Divine Standard as aforesaid — and, that therefore, whatever the friends of the institution shall please to contribute toward the support of ministers in connexion with this society who may be sent forth to preach at considerable distances, the same shall be gratefully received and acknowledged a donation to its funds."

Excerpts from Thomas Campbell's "Declaration & Address" (continued)

“Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture towards a new creed, or standard, for the church, or, as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion ; — nothing can be farther from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original grounds upon clear and certain premises : and take up things just as the Apostles left them. — That thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the church stood at the beginning — Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistake, we submit as follows:

“Prop. i. THAT the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one ; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else as none else can be truly and properly called christians.

“2. That although the church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another ; yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them to the glory of God. And for this purpose, they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing ; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment.

“3. That in order to this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon christians as articles of faith ; nor required of them as terms of communion ; but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the word of God. Nor ought any thing be admitted, as of divine obligation, in their church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles upon the New Testament church ; either in expressed terms, or by approved precedent.

“4. That although the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the church ', and therefore in that respect cannot be separated ; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline and government of the New Testament church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members ; as the Old Testament was for the worship discipline and government of the Old Testament church, and the particular duties of its members.

“5. That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the scriptures are silent, as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be ; no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency, by making laws for the church ; nor can any thing more be required of christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances, as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church ; or be made a term of communion amongst christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

“6. That although inferences and deductions from scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word : yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so ; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men ; but in the power and veracity of God — therefore no such deduction can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church's confession.

“7. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient ; and the more full and explicit they be, for those purposes, the better ; yet as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of christian communion : unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment ; or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information ; whereas the church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

Excerpts from Thomas Campbell's "Declaration & Address" (continued)

"8. That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all divinely revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the church ; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge : but that on the contrary their having a due measure of scriptural self-knowledge respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice ; and of the way of salvation thro' Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in, and obedience to him, in all things according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his church.

"9. That all that are enabled, thro' grace, to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and father, temples of the same spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same divine love, bought with the same price, and joint heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

"10. That division among christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is anti-christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority ; a direct violation of his express command. It is anti-natural, as it excites christians to contemn, to hate and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion, and of every evil work.

"11. That, (in some instances,) a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God ; and, (in others,) an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions, and human inventions, a term of communion by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship, of the church : are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally acknowledged causes, of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the church of God.

"12. That all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members, but such as having that due measure of scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures ; nor, 2ndly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their tempers and conduct. 3dly, that her ministers, duly and scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. Lastly, that in all their administration they keep close by the observance of all divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive church, exhibited in the New Testament ; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men.

"13. Lastly. That if any circumstantial indispensably necessary to the observance of divine ordinances be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose, should be adopted, under the tide of human expedients, without any pretence to a more sacred origin — so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the church.