

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2017

JORDAN KELLICUT & BARTON W. STONE

Edited by John C. Nugent



Great Lakes
Christian College

Pamphlet #2

Restoration Appreciation
Week 2017

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with excerpts from Barton W. Stone
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Preface

GREAT LAKES CHRISTIAN COLLEGE proudly embraces our heritage in the Restoration Movement and celebrates that heritage with our constituent churches. Toward that end, in November of 2016, we launched GLCC's first annual "Restoration Appreciation Week." Our purpose was to foster awareness and appreciation for the Restoration Movement among our students, staff, alumni, and affiliated churches.

Our inaugural program was a great success. So we were pleased to host our second Restoration Appreciation Week, October 10-13, 2017. Like the previous year, our program had two major components. The first focused on our students. Though all GLCC graduates take our Restoration History class, we strive to raise awareness among those who may not be with us all four years. So during Tuesday chapel, on October 10, alumnus Jordan Kellicut (Senior Minister at Oakland Drive Christian Church in Portage, MI) introduced our students to the important work of one of the Restoration Movement's key founders, Barton W. Stone. He opened our eyes to Stone's apocalyptic conviction that Jesus inaugurated a new age in world history and will indeed return to consummate his reign. Jesus turned the world upside down and calls us to a life of fervent worship and evangelistic zeal. Jordan called us to imagine with Stone what it might mean for us to be "a united, unwaveringly devoted Christian Church whose eyes are only for Jesus and whose passion is single-mindedly focused on His renown."

Preface

We then hosted an evening celebration in which students played an interactive game that introduced them to the three branches of the Restoration Movement. They then enjoyed some good food and interacted with three GLCC alumni who shared insights from their own experiences within the Movement. Those who joined us include Jared Gates (Charlotte Church of Christ), Pam St. Louis (Rock Lake Christian Assembly), and Regan Clem (Riverside Christian Church).

The second component of our program, which also included students, focused on alumni and all interested affiliated congregations. On Friday, at 11 AM, alumnus Dr. Paul Kissling (Professor of Old Testament at Lincoln Christian University) discussed the role of Scripture in the Restoration Movement. He reminded us that the task of restoration is not done and that a movement founded in Scripture must ever reform its understanding of Scripture. He highlighted our struggles to do so, our unique potential to do so, and four concrete proposals for doing so faithfully today. Paul concluded with this challenge: “If we are embracing the movement, this continuing reformation, we must become people soaked in Scripture and use the Scripture-based energy to tell the story and live the story.”

Following Dr. Kissling’s presentation, we gathered in Woodward Hall in the Administration building with both of our main speakers for lunch and extended discussion about the future of our Movement. The conversation was lively, engaging, and encouraging.

We live streamed and recorded both of our main presentations and made them available to watch on GLCC’s website at <https://www.glcc.edu/advancement/restoration-appreciation-week/>. Also available on that website is a downloadable PDF of the first Restoration Appreciation Week pamphlet. This year’s pamphlet focuses on the legacy of Barton W. Stone. Toward that end, we have included the presentation from Jordan Kellicut as well as three original writings from Barton W. Stone himself. We appreciate Jordan’s work in selecting pieces that dovetail nicely with the theme of his presentation and for helping to edit these pieces into

a form that is easier to read for today's readers. Though our edits were quite minor, in footnotes below we provide links where readers can access reprints of Stone's original articles.

Finally, GLCC is glad to announce that we will be hosting next year's Restoration Appreciation Week on October 9-12, 2018. Once again we invite all churches to join us for our two chapel sessions on October 9 and 12. In addition, we encourage all constituent churches to consider making October 14, 2018 Restoration Appreciation Sunday. Our hope is that on that Sunday we might all find a concrete way to recognize and appreciate our Restoration heritage during our corporate gatherings. GLCC will be providing resources, in addition to this pamphlet series, to help churches in that effort. For more information, visit us online at <https://www.glcc.edu/advancement/restoration-appreciation-week/>.

Mystery and Unity

Insight from Barton W. Stone

JORDAN KELLICUT

I HAVE TAKEN UP the difficult task of helping you appreciate a person who has been largely forgotten. This is despite the fact that his name comes first in one of the most common ways people refer to our Movement, namely the *Stone–Campbell* Movement. I am speaking, of course, about Barton W. Stone. In some ways, his neglect is to be expected. Stone was less prolific than Alexander Campbell, and more controversial. Personally, this only makes me like him more, but it is understandable why he might be less appealing to others.

Regardless of your view of controversial figures, I hope to convince you that Barton W. Stone was an important figure in his time whose insight is extremely important to our time. More specifically, I demonstrate that Stone’s apocalyptic worldview, which comes through in his approach to worship and evangelism, can help us achieve two objectives:

1. to remain a unique and needed voice in the church universal, and
2. to rekindle the flames of what we still call a movement, without the error of staunch sectarianism.

Stone as an Apocalyptic Thinker

I first engage Barton Stone's apocalyptic worldview, which differed from that of Alexander Campbell. Campbell held a highly optimistic view of the American experience. After all, he named his periodical *The Millennial Harbinger*.¹ Stone, on the other hand, opted for a much simpler title: *The Christian Messenger*. Stone did not share Campbell's optimism about American progress marching toward the millennial reign of Christ, though Stone also believed that Jesus' coming was imminent. Rather than continual progress toward the millennium, Stone maintained a more apocalyptic view of the coming of Jesus. I am using the term "apocalyptic" here in both its dictionary and popular senses. Stone wrote, "Popular establishments must fall in order to prepare the way of the Lord."² He saw a stark separation between the "world" and the "kingdom." In light of the coming of Jesus to supplant the Old Age in which he lived, Stone said, "Our government is a pure monarchy; Jesus being Lord of all, the only Law-giver of the world."³ He ends this article by reminding his readers that "the millennium approaches."⁴ In summary, Stone saw the reign of Jesus transpiring not through civil progress or religious institutions, but through the direct appearing of Jesus to "judge and make war" (Rev 19:11).

Now we need not get lost in arguments about how exactly the millennium will shake out. What we *should* take from this is how Stone believed with intensity that Jesus' coming was near and that massive revivals like Cane Ridge were living, breathing proof.⁵ One can easily imagine how Stone might envision the millennium's

1. This is a reference to the millennial (1000 year) reign of Christ found in Revelation 20:1-6.

2. C. Leonard Allen, *Cane Ridge in Context*, ed. Anthony L. Dunnivant (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1992), 50.

3. Barton W. Stone, "Reflection of Old Age," *The Christian Messenger* vol. 13, no. 4, 124

4. *Ibid*, vol. 13, no. 3, 91.

5. Cane Ridge revival of 1801 was organized in part by Stone at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. It was an open air revival that became Stone's ideal for Christian unity and worship.

arrival as ten to fifteen thousand Christians from various denominations gathered for worship. Even people who had no faith were suddenly caught up, converted, and began declaring the glory of God. He witnessed fervent—even charismatic—expressions of faith not unlike that of Pentecost in Acts 2. All of this would have seemed strikingly similar to what we see in Revelation 5:9: “And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

In other words, Stone looked upon his time eschatologically: the world was about to meet its Lord. Now Stone did not turn this into new publications about blood moons or predictions about the date and place of Jesus’ return. Indeed, he seems to have done no speculating about such things. It did, however, spur his passion for the unity of the church and the intense need to convert people to the worship of the eternal God.⁶

This worldview drove Stone’s ethics and ignited his call for radical discipleship. He warns, for example, against Christians pursuing financial gain.⁷ His life was one of simple, utter devotion to God with Jesus’ imminent coming in full view. While one may disagree with his read on the millennium—after all, it still hasn’t come—we may take great inspiration from his singlemindedness. It is not only endearing; it is driving. If we could imagine with Stone and with Jesus’ prayer in John 17 a united, unwaveringly devoted Christian church, whose eyes beam only for Jesus and whose passion is to spread his renown—if such a thing happened, we might call it heaven.

6. Richard J. Cherok, “Millennialism in the Early Stone-Campbell Movement,” *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. William R. Baker (Abilene: ACU Press, 2006), 222.

7. See portions of Stone, *The Christian Messenger*, vol. 13, no. 4 and vol. 2, no. 3.

Stone as Pietistic Worshipper

Stone's apocalyptic fervor had two practical expressions: piety and evangelism. We begin with piety as expressed through worship. Stone spoke of his conversion as a multi-faceted experience. It didn't happen as a single leap of faith, but he progressed through steps that led him to experience the fullness of God's love in conversion. While this might seem like a small, even insignificant detail, it appears to have had a great impact on the rest of his work and ministry.

He claims that his final conversion and call to ministry resulted from a sermon about God's love based on 1 John 4:8:

But the truth I had just heard, "God is love," prevailed. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and that "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." I yielded and sunk at his feet a willing subject. I loved him, I adored him, and I praised him aloud in the silent night, echoing in the grove around. I confessed to the Lord my sin and folly in disbelieving his word so long, and in following so long the devices of men. I now saw that a poor sinner was as much authorized to believe in Jesus at first, as at last—that now was the accepted time, and day of salvation.⁸

There are two themes in his conversion that stand out through the rest of Stone's life:

1. love and adoration of God, which I am calling worship, and
2. the "nowness" of the accepted time and day of salvation, which I am calling evangelism.

Stone was converted by a sectarian revivalist, worshipped among the Methodists in 1795, ministered among Presbyterians in southern Tennessee, and traveled with Baptists and Unitarians.⁹ It is important to note that Stone's affiliation with these different parties predates the Cane Ridge revivals, though these revivals crys-

8. Barton W. Stone, "*Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*," (Cincinnati: American Christian Publication Society), 12.

9. *Ibid.*, 21-25.

talized his passion for unity. This signals that doctrinal differences rarely functioned practically to divide Stone from other believers.

Alongside these early expressions of unity, as well as during and after the revivals that followed, Stone participated in experiential, even ecstatic worship. He fully accepted charismatic expressions of worship saying,

They would rise shouting deliverance, and then would address the surrounding multitude in language truly eloquent and impressive. With astonishment did I hear men, women and children declaring the wonderful works of God, and the glorious mysteries of the gospel. Their appeals were solemn, heart-penetrating, bold and free.¹⁰

It is hard to imagine such charismatic expression in many Stone-Campbell churches today, which still hesitate to “raise holy hands” unto God. While Stone does not say he experienced such things personally, he certainly looked upon them with awe and not skepticism.

Stone shares numerous accounts of spontaneous outbreaks of conversions resulting in thanksgiving and glory to God. To his credit, Stone exhibited an air of humility about such things. He never called attention to the preacher—even when it was himself. Rather, he always saw these developments as acts of God, flowing from the simple proclamation, “now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

Stone as Unifying Evangelist

Concurrent with Stone’s focus on pietistic worship was his zeal for evangelism. Second Corinthians 6:2, which Stone quotes in his conversion—“now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation”—is repeated several times in his autobiography as well as in his description of the proceedings that led to his break from the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky.

10. *Ibid.*, 45.

Stone recorded the proceedings of his and his co-preachers' break with the Presbyterian Synod. They began when charges were brought against Stone's fellow preacher Richard McNemar. Having recently read them, I can tell you they are incredibly boring. Yet there is an important lesson in them: the free church ecclesiology of the Stone-Campbell Movement is a great treasure. The ability to choose freely what to focus on in the life and ministry of the church—without the interference of a disconnected group of overseers who do not see the work of the Spirit on the ground in that place—is absolutely invaluable.

Stone and others were actively preaching and teaching, and the central issue of the Presbyterian Synod was this: in their preaching they did not highlight the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. In particular, they neglected the doctrines of election and reprobation.

Imagine this. You are working in an area that is relatively unchurched, except for a few nominal Christians. You then begin preaching and directly quoting Scripture: "Repent for now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!" And people begin responding. Indeed, *many* people respond. Then Christians of different denominations begin gathering together, forgetting their differences, to worship and glorify God. This new work is flourishing in manifestations of piety, commitment, and the Holy Spirit.

Then some distant board of directors emails you and says, "Have you covered the issue of election yet?" Then, because you say "No," they drag you through months of meetings and proceedings to determine whether to strip you of your ministry. While their theological question is not altogether meaningless, it certainly bears less meaning than what is transpiring in your ministry!

With Stone and his colleagues, the work of the ministry was the ultimate concern. As that work spread and revivals continued, the finer points of theology were mere luxuries. Moreover, it became increasingly clear that the finer points of theology were actually *the* thing that separated Christians, dividing them and making them enemies of one another. What is fascinating about Stone and his cohort is the language of brotherly love that pervades even

their sharpest disagreements. As they withdraw from the authority of the Presbyterian Synod, they state,

Brethren, you are in our hearts, to live and die with you. Our hearts are bound to you in love. We hope your intentions, in doing what you have done, were good, but we still believe as stated in our protest. In the meantime let us unite our prayers to our common Lord and Father, that he would in his kind providence, heal our divisions, and unite us more closely in the bonds of love. We remain, dear brethren, as ever, united to you in heart and affection.¹¹

Stone says such things without a hint of irony or doubt. His ability to disagree—while at the same time counting his critics as “brothers and sisters” and without imposing his theological formulations as a test of fellowship—was a unique gift. Though we seldom execute this practice with such grace, it remains a piece of our heritage that we should take more seriously.

Implications

Stone was an apocalyptic thinker, a pietistic worshipper, and a unifying evangelist. It now remains to draw together these strands and show a way forward in our current church climate. How might core issues still allow for disagreement in fellowship? Stone rigidly adhered to a biblicist stance on Scripture. Such a stance is embodied in the popular slogan, “Where the Bible speaks, we speak and where the Bible is silent we are silent.” Though this

11. Barton Stone, *An Abstract of Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*. Available online at https://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/Library/HR/restmov_nov11/www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/bstone/APOLOGY.HTM. Similarly, in Stone’s most controversial theological move—his questioning of traditional Trinitarian formulations—he calls those he is opposing “brethren” and concludes of Trinitarians, “Pious and good men have received such doctrines. God loves and pities them; and so will I.” See “On The Trinity,” in *An Address to the Christian Churches in KY, TN, & OH*. Available online at https://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/Library/HR/restmov_nov11/www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/bstone/ADDR-2ND.HTM.

can be interpreted in a naïve sense, Stone was anything but naïve. His commitment to the Bible allowed him to question inherited doctrines, even core ones. Yet when he did so, he did so from the stance of never speaking where Scripture does not.¹²

Drawing these three threads together, we, too, should adopt a general apocalyptic worldview. With Stone and the Apostle Paul, we too may confess that the old age is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). With Stone and the Messiah Jesus, we too may pray and act in such a way that the church may be fully united so the world may believe (John 17:21). This worldview plays out as the church re-focuses on the practices of worship and evangelism because these are the eternally significant things. In so doing, even as we maintain our unique identity—without feeling threatened by the identity of others—we may resist getting bogged down in the structures, theological disagreements, and general divisions of our day.

Indeed, Stone's most thoroughgoing treatise (written over ten years after his split with the Presbyterians) tackled ten important topics including the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus, and the atonement—in a mere 100 pages! That might elicit a mocking chuckle from any institution of higher education. We, too, could look down our noses, shake our heads at his naiveté, or jump ship to a more sophisticated scholarly heritage, but my thesis is that *this is precisely the thing to be recovered*.

The treatise I am referring to has the illuminating title, *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee & Ohio on Several Important Doctrines of Religion*.¹³ Stone is not attempting to solve the difficult Bible conundrums for all churches in all times

12. Barton Stone, *Works of Elder B.W. Stone*, ed. James Mathis (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., Printers, 1859). Mathis writes in the preface, "FATHER STONE, entered into the Trinitarian Controversy with much zeal, and it would be strange, if in the heat of the controversy, he had written nothing of a speculative character; but in his more mature years, he came to the only correct conclusion upon this and every other subject of controversy, and that was 'To always speak of Bible things in Bible language.' This is the only safe course."

13. Barton W. Stone, *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee & Ohio on Several Important Doctrines of Religion* (Nashville, TN: M & J Norvell, 1814).

and places. Far from it, this is an epistle to the churches that the Stone-Campbell Movement had planted. Love it or hate it, agree or disagree, Stone's focus was not to systematize the mysteries of religion but to experience them.

This is precisely what he said in the first expression of this new movement: "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."¹⁴ Is this not a fully biblical outlook? I readily admit that it is not a fully systematic outlook, but it puts first things first. Does not Paul boldly proclaim that the world is passing away and the Apostle John echo these same sentiments? Does not Jesus suggest that we look not back, nor even return to bury our dead? Is not the whole New Testament declaring that the world is not worthy of those who are harried and outcast for the sake of one single consuming passion—God?

Within the context of our current churches and my personal experience, we are much better at defining what we are against than what we are for. Perhaps that is because "baptism as a necessity for salvation" fits so nicely as a rallying cry. Or because *not* practicing charismatic gifts is so easy. Or because Calvinism seems so indefensible. Whatever the issue or cause, we are often a church *against* emphasizing particular doctrines, not—and here I don't even bother with the long forgotten dream of unity—a people who can articulate well what we are *for*. Yet Stone's life and example can help. Stone had strong convictions about core issues within Scripture and theology, but he was so focused on ministry in worship and evangelism that theological complexities were unaffordable luxuries and certainly not grounds for division.

Thus he focused on the *practice* of ministry—the most important thing that any single one of us could focus upon. This is not to say we should not engage in theological complexities. We

14. Barton Stone, *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, 1808. Available online at https://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/Library/HR/restmov_nov11/www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/rmcnemar/ocg/OCG.HTM#Will.

should do so as deeply as possible. This is the benefit we have from rubbing shoulders with friends who have inherited Calvin, or Wesley, or the Puritans, or Augustine, or Luther, or Grebel, or any of the varied voices in the rich historical Christian chorus.

We frequently forget that—while Stone himself had complex theological convictions—he focused on Jesus’ return and on gathering new and old believers to worship God because he believed that eternal things should constitute the core of who we are. If I could add to the words of Stone, I would say this: I am certain that most of us will die blind to some moral failure or character flaw, and if we can agree that Christ’s forgiveness is large enough to overlook those moral imperfections, then why not the intellectual ones?

It is difficult to fight over doctrine when we are caught up in a rousing chorus of “Rock of Ages,” “Just As I Am,” or whatever else we may be singing these days. It is precisely here that Stone is able to identify so many disparate groups as Christian brothers and sisters while never compromising his reading of the text. We might call this the mystery of the faith. There is more in God, more in the Bible, and more in this life than I will ever know or understand. I could never systematize it all and wrap it up with some neat theological bow. For as soon as I do, some budding young scholar will make it their life’s mission to prove me wrong. Does this mean that scholars should not invest time in thinking and writing in order to understand big issues? Not at all.

It does mean that while we strive for good exegesis, some answers can be held more loosely. It means that our systematic answers ultimately hold less authority than our commitment to God, to one another, and to the lost. A Bible-centered approach like we talked about last year,¹⁵ allows us to repeat a line in Scripture without needing to unpack all of its mysteries. Most importantly, it means that we—unlike so many others in so many other traditions—can freely call them brothers and sisters. Why? Because

15. See *Restoration Appreciation Week 2016*, Pamphlet #1, 32-36. Available online at <https://www.glcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2016-Restoration-Appreciation-ePamphlet.pdf>.

while we value the deepest of deep thoughts, we know the most important thing in this life is worshipping God and calling others to join us.

Let me say this in closing. The Restoration Movement was founded on this very practice. Alexander Campbell, the most “scientific” of the early founders, was still primarily a preacher and a church man. Walter Scott was a traveling evangelist. Barton Stone and Thomas Campbell (Alexander’s father) were preachers whose lives’ goal was to declare the glory of God. There is nothing—absolutely nothing—more important, more valuable, more life changing, more powerful, more meaningful, than to declare the glories of God in worship and evangelism. Were we to give our entire lives to the pursuit of this passion, we would easily let go of the need to remold every believer in our own image. Only then might we experience what Revelation portrays as a vast array of diverse people all declaring the glory of God in worship. Let us therefore take up as a clarion call Stone’s own apocalyptic words,

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.¹⁶

16. See fn 14 above.

The Kingdom of Heaven

BARTON W. STONE¹

THE VERY TERM KINGDOM implies a king, subjects, and laws. Of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is the king. In Psalm 2:6, the Father speaks, “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” From the next verse it is plainly seen that this king is the Son of God. This truth runs through the Scriptures, especially of the New Testament. The bounds of his kingdom are coextensive with the world. The heathen are given to him as king and the uttermost parts of the earth as his possession.

Matthew 28:18

“All authority in heaven and in earth is given to him.” Therefore, the gospel is to be preached in all the world to every creature. Authority over all flesh is given to him by the Father that he might give eternal life to all, on the condition that they believe in him and obey him. To this kingdom the Son of God has a perfect right, having received it of the Father to whom he will ultimately surrender it. He is made Lord of all. This kingdom had rebelled against God, cast off his government, and would not be subject to his laws.

1. Barton W. Stone, *The Christian Messenger* 9, no. 3 and 4 (Mar 1835): 71, 73. Reprints of the original are available online at <http://stone-campbell.org/CMSngr/Volog/vogno3.pdf>.

In great love and pity to the rebel world, the Father sent the Son, the prince of peace, as his minister to them. His ministry was to destroy their enmity and reconcile them to God. The same ministry was committed to his apostles, and the same was by divine authority committed to faithful men from the apostles, and is yet perpetuated by all the true teachers of Christianity.

What if some—the majority, the overwhelming majority of mankind—do not submit to their lawful king, and yield obedience to his laws? Surely they don't, or they would not be punished for their rebellion by the king himself (Luke 19). Every one of Adam's family, who has ears to hear and understand the word of the Lord preached to them, is under equal obligation to obey him. The same gracious reward is offered the obedient, and the same punishment threatened the disobedient.

But the kingdom of heaven of which we speak is his church—composed of all such as believe in Jesus, who have repented of their wicked rebellion, who have reformed their lives, who have bowed humble submission at the feet of their king, and have been born again of water and of the Spirit. These are the subjects of his kingdom, as we are everywhere taught in the Scriptures. Let us attend to this as among the most important matters of the Christian faith.

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Not the poor of this world, as those destitute of worldly goods; for many of such are wicked and destitute also of true riches. Not the really poor who yet think themselves rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, but know not that they are poor and wretched, blind and miserable. But the poor in spirit is the blessed person whose is the kingdom of heaven. Though he is rich as possessing the kingdom of heaven, yet he is humble, feeling his entire dependence on God for all things. “What have I that I have not received” is the language of his humble heart. As the poor use entreaties, so the poor in spirit, sensible of their wants, are often at the throne using entreaties and making fervent prayer for grace.

They are a thankful people. For they, feeling their unworthiness and that all they receive is of free favor, feel obligations unknown to any other character. How humble is his heart in the presence of his God! Lord, what am I that thou art mindful of me and that thou so kindly visits me with such unmerited mercy! He is humble with regard to his fellow Christians and ever disposed to take the lowest seat because he esteems others better than himself and views himself less than the least of all saints. The poorest in spirit is the greatest in the kingdom.

Matthew 12:21

“Not everyone that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” The will of God respecting our duty is plainly expressed in his Word. He is a member of this kingdom who diligently searches the Word to know his duty and who as diligently endeavors to do it when known. No consideration whatsoever shall prevent him from doing the will of God when known. Everything—his dearest and highest worldly interests, his name, his reputation, and his life itself—shall be sacrificed to truth. Whoever is not in possession of this spirit is unworthy of the kingdom and cannot be a member of it.

Matthew 18:38

“The good seed are the children of the kingdom.” I might multiply texts that speak a similar language, but what Paul says to the Romans is so decisive and pointed that it appears unnecessary to add more: “The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). This verse expresses the very character of the kingdom and, consequently, the character of those who compose the kingdom. They are all righteous, even as God is righteous. They all have the peace

of God reigning and ruling in their hearts. They all know the joy of the Holy Spirit. They are all one.

What a lovely, what a glorious sight would such a kingdom present! Who, beholding, would not be captivated by its beauties? Who, in his right mind, would not sigh to become a citizen of it?

Such was the kingdom of God in Apostolic days, such it must be before the world will believe in Jesus, and such it will be in the full reign of Messiah on earth. Our duty is not to look on with careless indifference and not inactively to wish for its approach, but to engage, heartily engage to hasten it by vigorous endeavors to do the will of God. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," is a petition the Savior has given us to offer up to our heavenly Father. If presented in the proper spirit, will it be neglected? Will it not be answered? "God is faithful, who has promised." "Have faith in God," and endeavor to "walk even as Christ walked."

The Kingdom of Heaven, or Church of God

BARTON W. STONE¹

Nature of God's Kingdom

IN ROMANS 14:17, PAUL describes the kingdom's nature in a few words: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit." By these marks and attributes this kingdom is known and distinguished from all others.

Righteousness is supreme love to God and love and benevolence to man. This we may call inward righteousness, the fountain of all righteous acts towards God and man. For if we love God in heart, we will be led to unreserved obedience to all his commands. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And if we love our neighbor, we will be led to do unto him as we would he should do unto us.

Peace is another property and mark of the kingdom of God. Peace and righteousness are twin-sisters: they always dwell

1. Barton W. Stone, *The Christian Messenger* 11, no. 1 (Sept 1840): 28-30. Reprints of the original are available online at <http://stone-campbell.org/CMsngr/Vol11/v11n01.pdf>.

together and are never separated (Ps 85:10). The righteous have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They have peace in their own hearts, “for there is no condemnation to them, who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). They are led to live peaceably with all men, as much as in them lies, because they love peace. They endeavor to make and promote peace and “quench the coals of growing strife.” Peace is the darling attribute of God himself: he is called “the God of peace.” It is the attribute of the great Mediator: he is called “the prince of peace.” It is also the attribute of his church and people: they are called “the kingdom of peace, the children of peace,” and the gospel—the word of reconciliation—is called “the gospel of peace.”

Joy in the Holy Spirit is another property and mark of the kingdom of God. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ—in his power to protect and bless us, in his wisdom to guide and direct us, in his love and truth and goodness, in his faithfulness to his promises, in all his perfections and promises of the life that is now and of that which is yet to come.

Citizens of God's Kingdom

Should it be asked who constitutes this kingdom or what is the character of its members, the answer is easy. They are those who have the properties and marks of this kingdom. They are all righteous, they have the peace of God ruling in them and the joys of the Holy Spirit. None else are recognized as members of this kingdom. So John the Baptist describes the kingdom, which he proclaimed to be nigh, the very kingdom of which we speak. He told the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Think not within yourselves, “We have Abraham to our father, and therefore we have a right to the privileges of the new kingdom without repentance.” “No!” says John, “For, now the axe is laid at the root of trees; therefore every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire” (Luke 3:9). In your old church were found the fruitful and unfruitful, like trees, growing together—not so in the

new kingdom now at hand; none but the fruitful shall stand in it. In your old church, the good and the bad were mingled together, like the wheat and the chaff in one promiscuous heap. But now with his winnowing fan he will separate them. The wheat shall be gathered into his garner and the chaff burnt up.

The same truth our Savior taught Nicodemus in John 3: “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God; except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To be born again is to be baptized in water, and to be born of the Spirit is to be saved by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Were it possible for an un-renewed soul to be admitted into the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, could he see or enjoy it? Could he relish its spirit and enjoyments? Impossible. “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor 6:14-17). With such a person there could be no fellowship, no enjoyment. Attempting to admit into the church such members has been one cause of her glory departing from her. Of that comes the discord, strife, and division that has so long disgraced her in the eyes of the world.

Timing of God’s Kingdom

O when shall Zion’s glory be restored! One thing is certain: her glory will not be restored until a reformation of these evils be effected and the church be purged from idolatry or the service of mammon, from seeking the friendship and honor of the world, from union with the states and kingdoms of the world, from the vain desire and work of legislating in order to check and destroy the reigning corruption of mankind, and from the vain attempts to have better laws and better rulers in the civil government to the neglect of the king and kingdom of peace. Had half the zeal been expended in the cause of Christianity, which of late has been spent

by religious professors in state politics, religion would have raised her drooping head and smiled in hope of better times.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, beautifully describes the members of the church or kingdom of heaven: "For by, or in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And in Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Where, O where is this church or kingdom, in which these things are, and which is thus shining! We long to see it. We long to see the world, attracted by her light, flowing to her, and joining with her to glorify our Heavenly Father. Lord Jesus, hasten the joyful hour.

Reflections of Old Age

BARTON W. STONE¹

1st The present generation should profit from the experience and observations of the generation last preceding.

2nd I never yet have seen the man, elected to Congress, or to a State Legislature, that returned home a better man, more religiously disposed and religiously engaged. On the contrary, if they had been religious before, they returned less so, barren and dead to God and divine things.

3rd I never saw a man seek for and obtain an office of state whether in the civil or military departments who became more piously disposed and religiously inclined and engaged. On the contrary, his religious affections were cooled and his religious activity paralyzed.

4th I have never seen a man much engaged in politics and religion at the same time. As he advanced in the spirit of the former, he declined in the spirit of the latter, and vice versa.

5th Must we conclude from these facts that our Congress and State legislatures are schools of corruption and demoralization or that the departments of state are nurseries of vice and irreligion and that the politics of the day are in opposition to the politics of

1. Barton W. Stone. *The Christian Messenger* 13, no. 4 (Aug: 1843): 123-126. Reprints of the original are available online at <http://stone-campbell.org/CMsngr/Vol13/v13no4.pdf>.

heaven? Dreadful conclusions! Yet how can we evade it, with such facts in view?

6th Are we not tempted to think that the whole foundation of all human, civil, and military governments is built upon the sand and that they must ultimately fall?

7th Was not the first organized government a pure theocracy? God by Moses was the only lawgiver, the judge, and executive. Every different department was filled by men of the Jewish religion according to God's appointment. The nation was not permitted to change their government, to add to or diminish from the laws given by God, or to appoint judges from any other nation than the Jews. They, it is true, changed their executive—they would have a king, but from that day forward they never were the same united and devoted people.

8th Their laws and government were changed at last by God himself—he having appointed his Son, Jesus Christ, Lord of all. Him we are now to hear and to obey. He is Lord not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, of all nations. To him is given authority over all flesh. He is the one, the only lawgiver of all, of the whole world. All, Jews and Gentiles, are under his government and bound to obedience to his laws. They may neither add to nor diminish from his laws. They must not change his government, but submit to it cheerfully, fully, and cordially. Were all to do this, peace, love and harmony would unite and keep united the now jarring, wretched world. All would become Christians. Indeed, the earth would be full of the glory of the Lord; as the waters cover the sea. The will of God would be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. It would be heaven on earth.

9th Our government is a pure monarchy, Jesus being appointed Lord of all, the only lawgiver of the world. While he reigned and ruled alone in the first centuries [AD] of the world, religion in her loveliest forms dwelt on earth. But in the fourth century, the Christians became dissatisfied with their government and desired a change. A change they must have—not the common people, for they still heard him gladly—but the leaders seduced the

people and yoked them in bondage and led them from the good and the right way.

The leaders thought there was no king in Zion, for he was in heaven. They must have one near them to go before them. His government of course must be changed—a vicegerent must dwell amongst them. They, the clergy, changed the laws and government of the king of Zion at the council of Nicaea (AD 325), and the many took the government from the shoulders of Zion's king and laid it on their own. Zion must have a visible God or king to go before them. This was the beginning of Israel's fall, when Moses was so long concealed in Mount Sinai, and they "knew not what had become of him" (Exod 32:23), they made a molten calf as a god to go before them and to be among them. So in the days of Samuel they said, "Make us a king that may judge us like the nations" (1 Sam 8:20). They, by this, rejected God from being king. So did the clergy reject Jesus Christ from becoming king, when they changed his government and assumed it to themselves and finally put it on the shoulders of one man, the Pope—the man of sin who is seated in the temple of God, claiming to be the vicegerent of the king of Zion.

The Protestants have rejected the Pope from being their king. They will not submit to his government and laws, but they have substituted themselves in his stead. They claim the right to change the government of the Lord and to add to his law and form governments for the people and to rule them. The difference between Papists and Protestants is that the Papists are ruled by one infallible Pope, and the Protestants by many. They are based on the same principles. The lawful king, Christ Jesus, will shortly put them all down and reign with his saints on earth a thousand years, without a rival. Then shall peace be restored to Zion, not before. Then the unity of Christians shall take the place of discord and strife. Then shall all man-made laws and governments be burnt up forever. These are the seat of the beast.

Men by the light of truth are beginning to see that Christians have no right to make laws and governments for themselves and that all should submit to the government and laws of our king.

This is a great reformation, but more must be done. We must cease to support any other government on earth by our counsels, cooperation, and choice. We believe that all are bound to submit to the government and laws of Jesus, the Lord of all. If they will not, we should not aid them in rebellion against their rightful sovereign. Let Christians show by their peaceful, holy lives, that his laws are sufficient to govern the whole world in peace and love. If these earthly governments and laws are according to the divine will, why do they destroy the fervor of devotion and the comforts of religion in those who are occupied in them? If they were divine, would these effects follow? These thoughts are boldly, but modestly submitted to my brethren. If wrong, do show the wrong. If right, let us labor to promote the great and needed reformation. If we do not, it will be done by others—the millennium approaches.

