

RESTORATION APPRECIATION WEEK 2018

JIM AMSTUTZ & JERRY HARRIS

Edited by John C. Nugent



Great Lakes
Christian College

Pamphlet #3

Restoration Appreciation
Week 2018

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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.

We were pleased to host our third annual Restoration Appreciation Week, October 9–14, 2018. This year was a bit unique. We focused our theme on one of the three branches of the Restoration Movement: the a cappella Churches of Christ. To that end, Jim Amstutz (Sr. Minister of East Superior Christian Church in Alma, MI) spoke during our Tuesday chapel and did an excellent job conveying the core values of our non-instrumental brothers and sisters. Having earned his doctorate at Harding University, a Church of Christ school, he brought a wealth of personal experience to this conversation. On Friday Jerry Harris (publisher of the *Christian Standard* and *Lookout* as well as lead pastor of The Crossing, a multi-site mega church based in Quincy, IL) deepened the conversation by focusing our attention on the African-American Churches of Christ. Jerry's research was also enriched through personal interaction with these churches in his work with the Solomon Foundation. Jerry divulges more of his passion for this subject in his guest appearance on the After Class Podcast, co-hosted by three GLCC professors. It is available at <https://>

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afterclass.libsyn.com/stone-twain-and-mlk-the-past-and-future-of-the-restoration-movement.

Following Jerry Harris'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. This conversation was both interesting and edifying.

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 are resources and pamphlets related to previous years' Restoration Appreciation Week celebrations.

Finally, in 2018 we added a new component to Restoration Appreciation Week by identifying the Sunday following our special chapel services as Restoration Appreciation Sunday. On that day we encouraged all constituent churches to join us in remembering our heritage in some concrete way and instilling our most important values in the next generation. On our website we included resources to help churches do precisely that. Many churches took advantage of this opportunity and raised awareness among their own congregants of our fascinating past and hope-filled future.

GLCC is continuing this tradition in 2019 by hosting Restoration Appreciation Week on October 15–20. We invite you will join us during chapel on the 15th and 18th (whether live or streaming online) as well as in your own congregations on Sunday, October 20, which is Restoration Appreciation Sunday. For the most up-to-date information and congregational resources for past and future events, frequent us online at <https://www.glcc.edu/advancement/restoration-appreciation-week/>.

Where Scripture Speaks, We Often Disagree

JAMES L. AMSTUTZ

IT IS AN HONOR for me to speak about a subject I have been familiar with all my life. When John Nugent first contacted me about speaking for Restoration Appreciation Week, I was hesitant to say yes. I assured him that I was no expert on the Restoration Movement, so he suggested that I talk about my experiences among the “a cappella group.” I said, “I can do that.”

Personal Connection

I would like to begin by telling you a little about myself in relation to this topic. I have been in the Independent Christian Church/Church of Christ all my life. As far back into my childhood as I can remember, my family attended an Independent church. My faith journey began at Bethel Church of Christ in Ada, Ohio. My parents would eventually meet Don Chism, who asked them to come and help serve the congregation in Pandora, Ohio. My mother played the piano and my father led the singing.

In 1969, following a revival service, my father felt called to enter the ministry. So we moved to Grayson, Kentucky where my dad enrolled in Kentucky Christian College. I soon began to hear

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about the Restoration Movement through my father's studies. I especially remember hearing about the Restoration fathers and their mottos.¹ During the summer of 1970, we moved to Lewis County, Kentucky and my father began his first ministry with Petersville Christian Church. Since we lived fifty miles from the Cane Ridge Meeting House,² my parents made several trips to Cane Ridge, often taking church members to see the historic site.

In time, I would learn about the other Restoration groups, the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ (a cappella). My limited perspective of those groups was mostly negative. As a child, I only knew that we had nothing to do with the Disciples and I could not understand why the Churches of Christ refused to use musical instruments in worship.

In the fall of 1983, I became a student at Great Lakes Bible College. Eventually I took Lloyd Knowles' Restoration History class and gained a historical and academic understanding of the Restoration Movement. Upon graduating from Great Lakes in 1987, my wife and I moved to East Tennessee so I could attend seminary at Emmanuel School of Religion. There I took another Restoration class. Though my perspectives did not change, they were matured and enlightened.

I graduated from Emmanuel in 1992 and took my first full-time preaching ministry at Jonesboro Christian Church in Jonesboro, Arkansas. My friend, Richard Cherok, who ministered at the University Christian Church across town, approached me about teaching at Mid-South Christian College in Memphis and soon I began to help out at the college. As our friendship grew, Richard asked me one day, "Have you thought about going on in your education?" At that time, I had not. When I questioned the

1. For a discussion of these mottos, see Lloyd A. Knowles, "What's So Great about the Restoration Movement," in *Restoration Appreciation Week 2016*, available at <https://www.glcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2016-Restoration-Appreciation-ePamphlet.pdf>.

2. Cane Ridge is the site in Paris, Kentucky where the great Cane Ridge Revival took place in 1804. The log cabin church where Barton Stone preached has been restored and housed inside of a limestone structure.

possibilities, he said, “There is always Harding.” I smiled and asked, “Would they accept me?” They were a Church of Christ school.

After discussing the matter with my wife, I called Harding University Graduate School and talked to Dr. Everett Huffard, the Academic Dean. I introduced myself and expressed my interest in the school but was not certain if I would be accepted. Dr. Huffard asked where I had attended school and I told him. He then immediately said to me, “Welcome aboard!” I began my Doctor of Ministry studies at Harding University in 1995. Dr. Huffard told me that I was the first student from the Independents to go through that program with them. Seven years later, in 2002, I completed my doctoral studies there.

While at Harding I felt very much at home, both doctrinally and historically. I felt like I was getting to know a long lost relative whom I had heard about all my life. Although we had much in common, there were also significant differences. I knew that I was “no longer in Kansas.” As my friendships grew with fellow classmates, I realized that they didn’t know much about us Independents either.

Historical Context

What I have learned through my educational and ministerial journey is that we know little to nothing about many with whom we share a rich heritage. I want to briefly present the historical background of our movement in this presentation. Many books have been written about the Restoration Movement, so what I am going to share is highly condensed.³

The Restoration Movement began in the late 1700s out of a desire to simply follow the Bible. Groups of people were reading the Bible and embracing its teachings for the first time. They were tired of creeds and rigid church structures. They began to question the practices and doctrines of their churches. When their

3. I used James B. North’s book *Union in Truth* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1994) as my primary source for historical information.

questions were met with condemnation, they chose the Bible over their denomination.

These fledgling groups shared several core convictions, including congregational autonomy, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and a biblical structure. At the Home of Abram Altars in 1809, Thomas Campbell preached a message expounding upon these ideas. He concluded by saying, "Where Scripture speaks, we speak; where Scripture is silent, we are silent."⁴ The goal was to unite believers around the authority of Scripture for faith and practice. That motto would initially unite and propel the fledgling movement forward, but tragically it would also lead to division.

The name "Disciples" was chosen for the group, but not without some disagreement between Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone.⁵ By the 1830s, tension began growing in the movement. There was a push for the development of organizations beyond the local congregation. There was a desire for full-time salaried ministers, and musical instruments were being introduced into congregational worship. Historian James North noted that "these were all symptoms of the underlying issue, biblical authority and how it applied."⁶

The core problem traced back to Thomas Campbell's motto, "Where Scripture speaks, we speak; where Scripture is silent, we are silent." There was no problem with the first half of the motto; it was the last half that raised hackles. Some felt that when there is no New Testament command, precedent, or inference, then we are prohibited from observing a practice. That is the *a cappella* position. Others felt that when we lack a New Testament command, precedent, or inference—as long as it does not violate other Scriptures—we were free to observe it. That is the Independent Christian Church position.

4. Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 1, (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1897), 236.

5. Henry Webb states that "Campbell's reasons never impressed Stone or any of his followers, so the issue of the name has never been resolved." Cf. *In Search of Christian Unity* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1990), 158.

6. North, *Union in Truth*, 223.

The issue that caused the greatest problem for many was using instruments in worship. Why? Because there are no New Testament examples, precedents, or commands commending the use of musical instruments in Christian worship. Earl West acknowledges that the instrument was beginning to appear in several congregations. However, he credits Dr. L. L. Pinkerton as the one to bring the issue to the forefront. In 1859, Pinkerton—a minister of a congregation in Midway, Kentucky—introduced a melodeon⁷ to his congregation because the singing had resorted to “screeching and brawling, it was so bad that it drove the rats away.”⁸ By 1906 (date debated), the tension was so strong that a group broke away from the Disciples and was recognized as the Church of Christ (a cappella).

In the 1860s liberalism began creeping into the movement. Issues such as the social gospel, Darwinism, biblical criticism, open membership, and a continued push for national organizations caused tension among conservatives. Such tensions grew so that by the 1920s there was another group within the Disciples that broke away in 1926 (date debated) and became known as the Independents (Christian Churches/Churches of Christ). One of my a cappella classmates once said to me that he had more respect for us because whereas they broke away over a piano, we left the Disciples over the integrity of the Scripture. I appreciated the sincerity of his comment.

This is where we have been for many years now: three groups who share the same heritage. We are three family members who don’t fully get along. Although there have been several attempts to bridge the gap, at present the Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ (a cappella), and Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ remain three distinct groups.

7. The original melodeon is on display at Midway University in Midway, KY.

8. Earl Irvin West, *The Search for The Ancient Order*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974), 311

Personal Observations

Now back to my story. I was excited but nervous as I began my studies at Harding University. I didn't know how I would be received. I knew we had much in common, but I also noticed clear differences. When John Nugent asked me to share my experience, I contacted my friend Tony Reynolds (minister of Gladwin Church of Christ), Dr. John Mark Hicks (professor at Lipscomb University and friend from Harding University), and Dr. Dave Bland (professor and advisor at Harding). I wanted to double check my perceptions with them before I shared them. I wanted to ensure that I accurately represented the a cappella church.

What follows are four of my most significant observations from the seven years I spent at Harding University Graduate School in Memphis, Tennessee.

Non-Instrumental music remains important to the Churches of Christ

As a student I gained a greater appreciation of how important refraining from using instruments during corporate worship is for the a cappella churches. Though, for many, it is no longer the issue that it once was, it is still a valued tradition. A missionary's wife overheard a conversation I had with another student one day about the traditional non-instrumental doctrine. She approached me afterward and said, "Not everyone in the Church of Christ believes that way."

Though some a cappella churches do not consider the Independents as brothers and sisters in Christ because of our stance on instrumental music, others do, albeit brothers and sisters in error. According to Dave Bland, however, many a cappella churches have introduced instrumental music into their worship in recent years.⁹ When I asked how this happened, he answered, "They have

9. The largest a cappella congregation, Richland Hills Church in Texas, made front page news in *The Christian Chronicle* when they decided to add a Saturday night instrumental service on January 1, 2007. Sr. Minister Rick

changed their hermeneutic concerning that subject.”¹⁰ By this he meant their way of interpreting Scripture.

I cannot emphasize enough how significant this shift is. Still, we need to be sensitive toward our a cappella brothers and sisters because this is an issue that they still truly wrestle with. It remains a matter of conscience for many, just as it was in the beginning.

The Church of Christ position on missions differs greatly from the Independent Christian Churches

In the Independent churches, we tend to support mission organizations as well as individual missionaries without seeing any biblical conflict in doing so. The a cappella churches support individual missionaries solely through the local congregation. The host congregation usually considers the missionary a staff member who is accountable to their congregation. Individuals from other congregations may also contribute financial support to the missionary, and the missionary is free to seek such support.

Yet a cappella churches neither approve nor support missionary agencies. This has been their position from the beginning. Although the issue of the instrument was the primary catalyst for division, missionary societies were a close second.¹¹ The Missionary Society issue was a troubling one due to inconsistent positions taken by movement leaders. Many who argued most strongly against instrumental music based upon scriptural silence saw no problem with supporting Missionary Societies.¹² By the 1890s opposition to Missionary Societies had become a test of fellowship.¹³

Atchley stated that it would “allow the congregation to reach more people who need Christ.”

10. The Church of Christ non-instrumental hermeneutic is based upon the absence of instruments in corporate worship in the New Testament. They have also viewed Ephesians 5:19–20 as a biblical directive for a cappella singing.

11. Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, revised edition (Joplin: College Press, 1994), 308.

12. Garrett, 358–362.

13. Garret, 363.

Whether it remains so today is not clear, but their basic position remains the same.

The Churches of Christ are more engaged with the African American community

While at Harding I observed a greater emphasis upon reaching out to African Americans. Garrett says that “unlike the other churches in the Movement, the Churches of Christ have a substantial brotherhood of black churches, with a long and impressive history.”¹⁴ The two most historic African-American preachers were G. P. Bowser and Marshall Keeble. Both men opposed the racism of their day, but approached the subject differently. Bowser was more militant and Keeble more subtle in preaching.¹⁵ Michael Casey writes, “Keeble, less threatening to whites, was lionized by white Southerners, while Bowser was generally ignored.”¹⁶

With regularity, I heard professors and students express interest in the growth and development of African-American congregations. In one of my classes, two African-American ministers shared their struggles with developing male leadership in their congregations. Out of ignorance, I asked why it was such a problem. They both said it was due to the absentee father problem in the black community. Although we share similar struggles in our churches, African-American ministers have greater social barriers to overcome than their white counterparts.

Confusion persists over the role of the minister

Alexander Campbell initially opposed paid ministers. He once called them “hirelings,”¹⁷ but eventually changed his opinion.

14. Garrett, 440.

15. Michael W. Casey, *Saddlebags, City Streets Cyberspace* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1995), 138.

16. Casey, 138.

17. Alexander Campbell, “A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things,

Campbell's early opinions reacted against the abusive clergy system of the Presbyterian Church. In time, he saw the need for educated ministers to sustain healthy congregations.¹⁸ While most congregations have paid ministers, some a cappella congregations opposed it.¹⁹

The Churches of Christ are predominantly elder led and staff supported. By way of contrast, the Independent churches are usually church board directed and staff led.²⁰ When I was going through the oral defense of my dissertation, one of the professors commented that I should have written a chapter on the role of the minister. They still struggle with what positions such persons should occupy in the leadership structure of the church.

A related issue on the rise in a cappella churches is the role of women in the ministry. Dr. Dave Bland told me that a small number of congregations already have female ministers who preach from their pulpits. Although this matter has never been completely resolved, it appears to be changing in the twenty-first century.

no. XII," *The Christian Baptist*, reprint (Joplin: College Press, 1983), 233.

18. Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Alexander Campbell's View of Church and Ministry," *Lectures in Honor of The Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788–1988* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 169.

19. Garrison and DeGroot state that "Both Campbells, Barton Stone, and their colleagues were opposed to clericalism from the start." A settled minister was considered an innovation and violation of Scripture. Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ a History* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), 341–342. Congregations who currently oppose paid ministers represent only a small segment in the Churches of Christ.

20. Church structures within the Independent congregations have also been changing in recent years. Steering committees have replaced church boards, Sr. Ministers are often called Lead Pastors, and congregations are led by ministry plans.

Conclusion

John Nugent asked at the inaugural Restoration Appreciation Week, in 2016, “What reason do we have to exist?”²¹ My response: for the same reason we have had from the beginning. We still have a voice in the religious community and in the world. The landscape is virtually the same as when we began. Many denominations do not preach the Bible, and many who are lost still need to hear it. While our position may not be as novel as it once was, it is greatly appreciated by those who meet us.

The Restoration Movement may have begun in the nineteenth century, but its members in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been wrestling to accept their heritage. One of my favorite seminary professors was Dr. Bob Fife. He was bothered by the notion that many in our churches were saying, “Forget the Campbells, forget Barton Stone, just give us the Bible.” He then said, “But if we forget our roots, then we forget who we are as a people.”

So, who are we? We are people who have wanted to follow the Bible alone to the best of our abilities and understanding. Our goal has been to be “Christians only.” We do not claim to be the only Christians, just Christians only. So my challenge to you is to embrace the mottos of our movement proudly.

“Where Scripture speaks, we speak,” and we don’t apologize. We will strive to do “Bible things in Bible ways” and call “Bible things by Bible names.” We don’t change our stance just because someone else disagrees. If the Bible says it is so, we stand on that truth regardless of who says it is wrong or socially unacceptable.

Where Scripture is silent, we also proceed with grace. Let Scripture always guide us, but we must allow for differences in understanding where it is not always clear. I believe we often miss that point. Thomas Campbell wrote in his *Declaration and Address*, “Although inferences and deductions from Scripture, may be

21. “Why We Need a New Wave of Restorationism,” available at <https://www.glcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2016-Restoration-Appreciation-Pamphlet.pdf>

fairly inferred, may be truly doctrine, they cannot be made binding upon a person's conscience, farther than they are able to see the connection . . . nothing can be made binding—where there is no clear thus saith the Lord.”²²

What a powerful statement! If we would have the boldness to embrace it, it could change how we treat others in the body of Christ. I don't know what the future holds for us, but I believe that if we hold true to our heritage, the future looks bright.

22. Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*, Brown & Sample (Washington, PA, 1809; reprint, Lincoln, IL: Lincoln Christian College Press, 1986), 22.

Restoration and Racial Reconciliation

JERRY HARRIS

BARTON W. STONE is the earliest and probably the first person to talk about the Restoration Movement. One of his famous sayings was, “Let Christian unity be our polar star.” The idea of a polar star is a powerful and illuminating idea. A polar star is the one star that doesn’t move or at least doesn’t appear to move in the sky. It always stays in the same place. That is why this slogan is absolutely critical to the Restoration Movement and its steadfast goal of restoring Christian unity.

That’s our topic: unity and the walls that prevent it. I want to discuss the things that come between us, that divide us, that keep us from experiencing the unity that the Restoration Movement talked about and that God wants us to enjoy and benefit from.

Deep Restoration Roots

I begin by reflecting on my personal life in October of 2003. I was in Mulhousen, Germany, where we supported a sister church. Mulhousen is located in what was formerly called East Germany, which in my youth was considered the enemy. If you remember watching the Olympics during the Cold War, the East Germans were ruthless and horrible and you couldn’t stand their team, right? They would win things, but everybody knew they were cheating.

So while we were there on former enemy territory, I was celebrating my birthday. The person who was housing me, a doctor, said he wanted to treat me with something special for my birthday. So he drove me to Erfurt, the capital city of what was formerly East Germany.

Once we got to Erfurt, the gift he gave me was a tour of a Catholic monastery where Martin Luther studied and took his vows to be a Catholic priest. Things got particularly interesting when we entered the sanctuary of this monastery. It is known for a particular individual who was buried up in the pulpit area. His name was Johannes Zacharias. Even if you have taken church history, you've probably never heard of him. But you might have heard of John Huss, who was burned at the stake for his Reformation ideas. The person overseeing the tribunal and the eventual burning of John Huss was Johannes Zacharias. The night before taking up his priestly vows, Martin Luther went into that same chapel and prayed to God all night long that the spirit of Johannes Zacharias would fill him so that he could imitate the zeal of the man who burned John Huss for anti-Catholicism. Ironically, years later this champion for Catholicism became one its greatest dissenters by giving birth to the Protestant Reformation.

Having been declared an apostate, Martin Luther was absolutely sure he was going to be killed. So he decided that the best thing he could do with his time was to translate the New Testament from Greek into German, thereby making it available to the public readership. Just imagine what getting the New Testament in the layman's language did for Christian unity. If only doctors, lawyers, and ministers could read God's word, how many people were locked out?

Daring Restoration Pioneers

Three hundred years after Luther lived a man named Barton Stone. He also wanted to make the simple message of the gospel available to everyone. He lived in Cambridge, Kentucky where Christians would share common communion services. Baptists, Methodists,

Presbyterians and all sorts of other people gathered to participate in a unity service, a common communion service—and then a revival broke out.

Stone was a Presbyterian and thus a Calvinist. They believed that God pre-determined some to be lost and some to be saved. But then Stone heard a sermon saying—and this is really, really deep theology—“Jesus loves everybody.” It captured him. Jesus loves *everybody*? Not just the people God chose, but everybody? So, he went back and started preaching that. And the Presbyterian church said, in essence, “You can’t do that.” You have to preach according to the Westminster Confession, which says that God elects some people to be lost and some to be saved. God alone makes that choice. But Stone replied, “Look, I want to stay a Presbyterian but I want to preach this. In fact, I must preach this, and you can’t stop me from preaching this.” So they promptly excommunicated him. The simple idea that Jesus loves everybody caused Stone and other Restoration fathers to say things like, “No creed but Christ,” “No book but the Bible,” and “No name but the Divine.” That’s why the Christian Church/Church of Christ became the fastest growing religious movement in America during the first half of the 1800s. Because another wall was coming down, another barrier was being removed.

This became personal to me about seven years ago while I was doing research on a location where The Crossing was planting another church, a town called Hannibal, Missouri. I soon learned that Barton W. Stone moved from Kentucky to Illinois not only because of his desire to spread the gospel on the American frontier, but also because of his aversion to slavery, which wasn’t outlawed until 1848. As it turned out, Stone actually died in Hannibal, Missouri. Though he lived in Jacksonville, Illinois, he traveled to Columbia, Missouri at the age of 77 to encourage a group of pastors. On the way back he became deathly ill and died at his daughter Amanda Bowen’s house, on Front Street by the Mississippi River. A year later, Alexander Campbell visited Hannibal just to stand in the house where Barton Stone had died.

That really piqued my interest. Restoration History was more than just facts and figures. It was filled with personalities and stories that hit close to home. Stone's wife Celia, to whom he had been married 33 years and with whom he had born six children, also died and was buried in Hannibal. All of this happened because of their aversion to slavery. What I saw in Stone's life was a person who tore down walls.

Neglected Restoration Icons

The Restoration Movement must remain a movement that strives to tear down walls. If I were to ask you who was the most influential leader of the Restoration Movement in terms of baptisms and church plants in the 20th century, what would you say? What if I told you there was a guy who personally baptized tens of thousands of people in his lifetime and established hundreds of churches? Could you tell me his name? His name is Marshall Keeble. He was born in 1878, the son of former slaves. He was never educated beyond the seventh grade. He began preaching in 1897 and set aside business interests to pursue full-time evangelism in 1914. In 1930 he reported to the Gospel Advocate that he had baptized 15,000 people. By 1967 that number grew to about 47,000. In his lifetime he established over 350 congregations. He conducted evangelistic services all over America, as well as Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, Singapore and Korea. He helped start schools and hospitals in Nigeria. He was the first president of the National Christian Institute. He was instrumental in founding Southwestern Christian College in Texas. It became the primary college for the African-American Churches of Christ.

But ministry wasn't always easy for Keeble. He preached not only in comfortable church buildings, but also in brush arbors, tents, and barns. He was shot at in Florence, Alabama, and continued preaching. He showed compassion for the gunman and stood between him and his arrest. He was beaten with brass knuckles on another occasion only to turn the other cheek as the man was quietly removed. He died at 89 years of age and was honored by

the governor of Tennessee. Three thousand people attended his funeral. In his lifetime, he worked to overcome many obstacles for African-Americans both in education and in preaching. He broke through many cultural barriers that separated black and white people. He was one of the most influential preachers of the gospel in the twentieth century.¹

So why don't we know about him? I'll give you two reasons: he belonged to the non-instrumental Churches of Christ, and he was black. You know what those two things are: they are walls that separate us from one another. I would have never known about Keeble were it not for the relationships I developed with African-American Churches of Christ through the Solomon Foundation. So, I wrote a story about him and about unintentional racism. I did not want anyone to be ignorant of who he was. I've asked Bible college professors and presidents, "Who is this guy? Have you ever heard of him?" "No, never heard of him," they replied. How is that possible?

In one of his photographs, Keeble appears with four young men. He called them his preacher boys. He would take them with him when he went on preaching tours so he could teach them about preaching. As I continued in my research, I found out that one of them was an important cultural figure in the 20th century. I'm not talking about just the church, I'm talking about American culture. His name is Fred Gray. Fred Gray did more than anyone for the civil rights movement in the United States. I know that's a strong claim, and I'll tell you why. Because most of what allowed the civil rights movement to succeed in the United States happened in a courtroom.

There are all sorts of visual icons of the civil rights movement: boycotts, marches, and various kinds of protest. But the substantive change happened in a courtroom, especially the Supreme Court of the United States. That's where Fred Gray did most of his work. In Montgomery, Alabama if you were black, you had a designated spot on the back of the bus. If there was an inordinate

1. See *Marshall Keeble: Biography and Sermons*, ed. B.C. Goodpasture (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1999).

amount of white people who wanted to ride on that bus, even if you were in the back of the bus, you still had to give up your seat. There was a 15-year-old girl named Claudette Colvin. Her class was let out early and she got on the bus at a time when more whites were on it. She was supposed to give up her seat, but she refused. This was before Rosa Parks. She refused to give up her seat and they sent her to jail. Fred Gray's first case was this 15-year-old girl. He got her out of jail.

Through this case, Fred Gray became known in Montgomery and began working with the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) as a youth sponsor. One of Gray's coworkers was Rosa Parks. Soon enough, they started discussing racial segregation on the buses. Fred shared his story about Claudette Colvin and they decided to do something about it. It became the Montgomery Bus Boycott. One evening they were trying to figure out who would be the spokesman for all this. At the time, Gray was 25 years old. The lady at whose house this meeting took place suddenly chimed in, "We have a new preacher in our church. He is very young, but he has a way to move people with words. I wonder if you would be interested in him." Fred said, "Well, I don't know. I know of him, but I don't know him. But, if you think that he would be okay, maybe we will give him a try." He was 26 years old. That man was Martin Luther King.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott didn't last just one day like they had planned. It ended up lasting 382 days. Fred Gray was not only behind the Montgomery Bus Boycott, he was also behind the march from Selma to Montgomery. What is more, he almost singlehandedly desegregated all of Alabama's primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities. He himself couldn't go to the University of Alabama. Since it was an all-white school, Gray had to go up to Cleveland to get his graduate degree.

Gray's court cases and landmark rulings are required reading for every lawyer seeking to pass the bar exam today. He lost every case leading up to the Supreme Court, and he won every case in

the Supreme Court. All during this time, this man was a full-time minister in the non-instrumental Church of Christ.

Jesus's Restoration Prayer

Why am I telling you all this? Because we put up walls so easily that we quickly forget those who are part of our own heritage. The African-American Churches of Christ are a vital part of the Restoration Movement, and when we neglect this vital part, we lose the richness of our movement as a whole. Consider Jesus' words in John 17:20–33:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

I shouldn't need to say it, but Jesus is right. There are so many things that should not divide us. Race should not divide us. Denominations and creeds should not divide us.

In the Restoration Movement we agree that there is no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no name but the divine. We hold that we can be united while being autonomous. We baptize by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. We say, "Whosoever will may come." We believe that the Bible is God's word without error, and it's our only rule of faith and practice.

I can hear them on the other side of that wall. I want to know if you can hear them. There has to be a way forward. There shouldn't be "us" and "them." But it happens through personal relationships and forbearance. Do you know what forbearance is? It's making allowances for one another because we love each other. It's operating in grace. That's forbearance. And we do it all for the

sake of the gospel, so the world might know. That's the way these walls come down.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with a personal story. My brother and I went to Germany with our wives in 2002. It was an incredible trip. We got to see where the Berlin Wall came down. As a CEO, my brother had been there many times for business and he wanted to share the experience with me. Neither of us knew that he had terminal cancer at the time. Shortly after returning, he received the diagnosis.

My brother was a good man, a godly man, but he kept his commitment to the Lord at arm's length. But not after his diagnosis. It moved him to tear down every wall in his life. When he died a year later, he was at peace because there were no more barriers. I miss my brother every day of my life. But God has provided me with countless brothers and sisters if I can only figure out how to embrace unity without compromising faith. I'm praying that God helps me do that. I don't have all the answers, I just want to be part of the conversation. I pray for it, long for it, and desire it.

Jesus promises us that whoever has left houses, siblings, parents, spouses, children, or fields for his sake will receive a hundred times as much in his kingdom (Matthew 19:29). But to receive this new family we must tear down the walls we have built around ourselves and embrace our Christian brothers and sisters on the other side, whomever they might be.

