

## Restoration History

**LESSON 1 — Small American Movements**

- by Charles Dailey

(This short lesson series was designed for a church class and gives an overview of our heritage in being like the church of the New Testament era. The series is not designed for the college classroom with documentation on each point. We have relied heavily on the class notes of Dr. Roger Chambers. )

**Introduction:**

1. God likes Church History. His Book of Revelation is history written before it occurred. Looking at what has happened before our time enables us to see the continuing hand of God in bringing about the present.
2. Looking at the stories of those who have gone before us is fun and informative.

Going back to about 1500 — **Martin Luther** had broken from the Catholic Church in Germany. 1517.

Other groups soon did the same. They were called Protestants. The Church of England and **John Calvin** are examples. Calvin's views are often summed up in this acrostic:

T otal depravity  
 U nconditional election  
 L imited atonement  
 I rresistible Grace  
 P erseverance of the saints.

These teachings have been a blight on Christianity. It was a reaction to them that motivated many of the early preachers of the Restoration Movement.

3. Newly formed Protestant churches designed their own clergy-driven organizations, just like the *Catholic Church*. They formulated their own creeds (means "I believe") after rejecting those of the Catholic Church.
4. So by 1800, the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church were the only game in town. But that was about to change.
5. Five or more movements that would break from existing church authority began in the eastern half of the U.S. They did not know each other until much later. Those groups are the subject of this lesson.



Drawing of Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses for discussion. Interest exploded.



6. The divine hand of Providence is seen in this nearly simultaneous outbreak of freedom and rejection of church creeds as binding on others.
7. Jesus has prayed for the unity of believers and this must become our goal.

"For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:19-21 NASB)

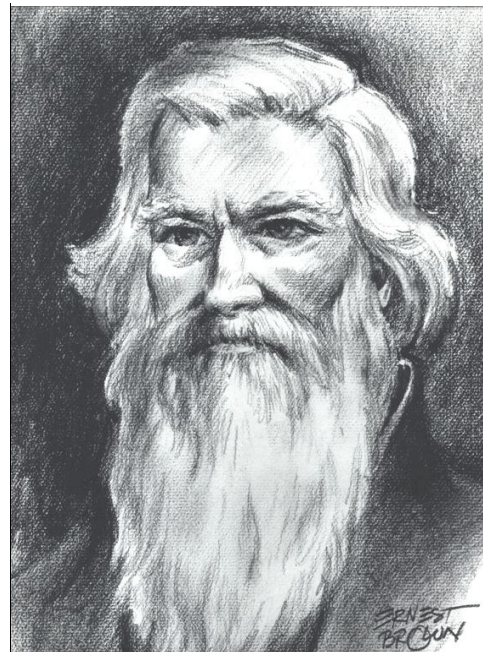
8. The historical interpretation of Revelation sees the two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, in mourning for 1260 days (years) and that period ended about 1793.

"Meanwhile, I'll provide my two Witnesses. Dressed in sackcloth, they'll prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days." (Revelation 11:3 MSG)

## I. James O'Kelly Events

### A. The Christian Movement in Virginia and North Carolina

1. Although an Anglican by birth, O'Kelly was influenced by Methodist revivalists in Virginia, and in approximately 1775, he converted to Methodism; in particular, he adhered to **Francis Asbury's** teachings and identified with *Asbury's Methodist Society*.
2. Background: The Methodist Church under Asbury was a benevolent dictatorship; a system that practically ignored the people and their wishes and concentrated power in the hands of the high clergy. This in contrast to the sentiment expressed by John Wesley (in England) that Methodists in America were "at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church."
3. The rebellion (1792-1793). James O'Kelly became a Methodist lay preacher; a powerful leader who led the early Methodist advance in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. He was the leader of the majority of preachers who had pushed for separation from the *Church of England* before 1784.
4. At the General Conference in 1792 at Baltimore, Kelly presented a "Right of Appeal" motion, calling for the right of preachers to appeal circuit-riding appointments. When he was voted down, he led a number of preachers to withdraw from the conference.



James O'Kelly

Those who withdrew maintained their standing as Methodists for some time. When it became clear that a reconciliation with Asbury was impossible, the group met and organized the *Republican Methodist Church*. This group included 30 ministers, about 1,000 members and lasted seven months.

At an “open door” conference in Virginia in 1794, the group adopted the name “Christian Church,” and declared that the Bible would be their only creed. **Rice Haggard** stood with a copy of the New Testament in his hand and said,

Brethren, this is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, and by it we are told that the disciples were called Christians, and I move that henceforth and forever the followers of Christ be known as Christians simply.

The motion was adopted unanimously. The new church emphasized the following points:

- a. The Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of the Church.
  - b. The name Christian to be used to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names.
  - c. The Bible as the only creed.
  - d. Christian character the only test of fellowship and membership.
  - e. The right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience as the privilege and duty of all.
5. The group divided. **William Guirey** led a group calling for immersion. O’Kelly was a firm advocate of infant baptism and sprinkling, and refused to consider the question. Guirey and his followers divided and continued to use the name Christian. The immersionists organized the Virginia the Virginia Christian Conference.
  6. The movement merged with some of the other reformers later in the 1800s.



O’Kelly Chapel in Farrington, NC. Claimed by some as the first Christian Church building.

- B. Analysis: O’Kelly broke with a powerful denomination, but did not have salvation correct. But a break was made from a powerful denomination.

## II. Elias Smith

- A. He was born in Connecticut, but grew up in Vermont. Smith was a school teacher, doctor, preacher, author and editor. His father was a Baptist. As a young man, he had a violent experience of conversion when a log fell on him. He joined the Baptist Church, began to preach, but became dissatisfied with the Baptist dogma. He resolved to put aside Calvinism and study the Bible. By 1805, he had rejected all other books for the New Testament and was calling himself a Christian to the exclusion of all other names. He was moody and erratic.

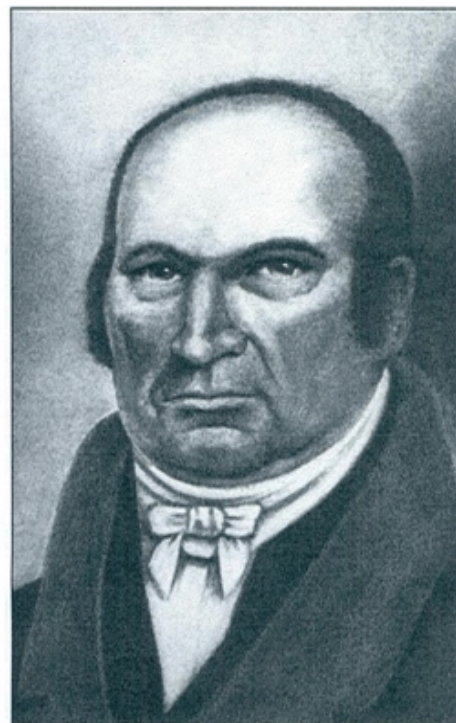


- B. Smith's conclusions:
1. Calvinism is wrong.
  2. Creeds as tests of fellowship are wrong.
  3. Overhead ecclesiastic structure is wrong.
  4. There is a need to restore simple New Testament Christianity.
- C. In 1808 Smith founded the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, the first American religious newspaper. It continued for 122 years.

### III. Abner Jones

- A. Born in Massachusetts, but made Vermont his home. Jones led a dissolute life until his conversion. At age 20 he was converted and baptized into the Baptist Church. Was a school-teacher, doctor and preacher. His continued study led him to repudiate the Calvinistic system and proclaim himself a Christian only. He emphasized Christian character as the only and all-sufficient test for membership.

He worked with the Free Will Baptists, while maintaining his theological independence. He was encouraged to break with the Calvinistic Baptists after hearing Elias Smith preach (although Smith himself was still in fellowship with the Baptists). For a while he associated with Smith in evangelistic work.



Abner Jones

Courtesy of Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

- B. The reforming work of Jones.
1. Jones established "Christian Churches" in Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. After Smith left the Baptists, Jones and Smith organized a Christian church at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.
  2. The New England Movement merged with some from the O'Kelly Secession and with some Christians of the Stone Movement in Kentucky and Ohio who refused to participate in the merger with the Reformers of the Campbell Movement.
- C. The distinctive theology of the New England movement:
1. Unitarian. Probably believed that Jesus was the first created creature.
  2. Non-sectarianism.

"We mean to be New Testament Christians, without any sectarian name connected with it, without any sectarian creeds, articles, or confessions, or discipline to illuminate the Scriptures. . . It is our design to remain free from all human laws, confederations and subscriptural combinations; and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

### 3. Baptism by immersion; immersion not a test of fellowship.

*Herald of Gospel Liberty, 1827:*

Question: If a brother is not buried in baptism, is it a bar to communion?

Answer: It is the uniform belief of all the elders and brethren in this part that baptism is only one thing, viz., a burial in water and that it is enjoined upon all believers only; that it is the duty of all believers to be baptized as soon as they are born again . . . At the same time they do not think a believer ought to be driven to submit to that command before he sees the duty, and do not think a brother ought to be shut out until he is baptized but they consider it their duty to instruct such in the way of the lord more perfectly.

### 4. Regarding unity, there was little positive effort.

### 5. The "Plea" of the New England Christian movement:

- a. Christ as the head of the Church.
- b. Christian the only name.
- c. The Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.
- d. The right of individual interpretation of Scripture.
- e. Christian character as the only test of fellowship.
- f. The union of all followers of Christ, that the world may believe.

## IV. Barton Stone in Kentucky.

### A. Barton W. Stone:

1. Early life. Born 1772 (16 years before **Alexander Campbell**) in Port Tobacco, Maryland. A descendant of **William Stone**, first Protestant governor of Maryland. His father died before the American Revolution. A sizeable inheritance allowed Mr. Stone to move to Pittsylvania County, Va., near North Carolina (1799).
2. Stone attended the academy of **David Caldwell**, a Presbyterian minister and fine educator. (Greensboro, N.C.) **Thomas Crawford McBride** of the Mulkey Movement also attended school under David Caldwell. The school was open to the revivalism of Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Stone completed the classics course in 1793, intent on being an attorney.
3. The influence of **James McGready**, prominent Presbyterian revivalist is noted. McGready, great leader of the Western Revival preached in Greensboro. He "converted" most of the students at Caldwell's Academy. Stone fell under his preaching and was frightened by the "hell fire and brimstone," and



inquired after salvation. McGready could only tell him to wait God's sovereign pleasure (Calvinism). For one year Stone was tossed on the waves of uncertainty, praying, agonizing. to obtain "saving faith." Sometimes he was in despair of ever being saved.

4. The influence of **William Hodge**. Whereas McGready emphasized the wrath of God, Hodge focused on the love of God and his readiness, to accept people. He said that anyone could be converted without a miracle. Stone prayed and was finally convinced that, since salvation was offered to all men, surrendered his life to God and found peace. Under the influence of Hodge, Stone decided to become a Presbyterian preacher.
5. In 1793 Stone applied to the Orange Presbytery for a license to 'preach. Hodge supervised his preparation for the trial sermon. Stone was assigned to preach on the Trinity. His sermon was accepted and, shortly thereafter, he received his license. Stone was to struggle with the doctrine and concept of the Trinity for the rest of his life.
6. Soon after receiving his license to preach, Stone was forced to spend some months in his brother's home in Georgia recovering from an illness. Upon regaining his health, Stone was assigned to preach in two country churches in Kentucky, Concord and Cane Ridge. Without Stone's help, a great movement began at a camp meeting at Cane Ridge.



Cane Ridge Meeting House

This building, near Paris, Kentucky, is now encased inside of a protective structure.

We have included excerpts from a description of events by Barton Stone. His eye-witness record of the Cane Ridge meeting:

"**The bodily agitations or exercises** attending the excitement in the beginning of this century were various, and called by various names, as the falling exercise, the jerks, the dancing exercise, the barking exercise, the laughing and singing exercises, and so on. The falling exercise was very common among all classes, the saints and sinners of every age and grade, from the philosopher to the clown. The subject of this exercise would generally, with a piercing scream, fall like a log on the floor or earth, and appear as dead.

"**The jerks** cannot be so easily described. Sometimes the subject of the jerks would be affected in some one member of the body, and sometimes in the whole system. When the head alone was affected, it would be jerked backward and forward, or from side to side, so quickly that the features of the face could not be distinguished. When the whole system was affected, I have seen the person stand in one place, and jerk backward and forward in quick succession, the head nearly touching the floor behind and before.

"**The dancing exercise** generally began with the jerks, and was peculiar to professors of religion. The subject, after jerking a while, began to dance, and then the jerks would cease. Such dancing was indeed heavenly to the spectators. There was nothing in it like levity, nor calculated to excite levity in the beholders.

"**The barking exercise**, as opposers contemptuously called it, was nothing but the jerks. A person affected with the jerks, especially in his head, would often make a grunt or a bark, from the suddenness of the jerk.

"**The laughing exercise** was frequent--confined solely to the religious. It was a loud, hearty laughter, but it excited laughter in none that saw it. The subject appeared rapturously solemn, and his laughter excited

solemnity in saints and sinners: it was truly indescribable!

"The running exercise was nothing more than that persons feeling something of these bodily agitations, through fear, attempted to run away and thus escape from them; but it commonly happened that they ran not far before they fell, where they became so agitated they could not proceed any farther."

These were interesting events, but were not the emerging church. It is not accurate to say that the Cane Ridge Revival was an important step in restoring the church of the New Testament.

## 7. SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY - The Last Will and Testament

In the course of time, Stone and other of his preacher friends left the established organization and established their own *Springfield Presbytery*. Then they realized they had simply exchanged one authoritative organization for one of their own making.

To correct this error, they drew up a will, just as a person might draw up a personal will.

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, [2] traditions of men, 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 assume 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 labourers 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 written call or subscription--admit members--remove offences; 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, that 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.

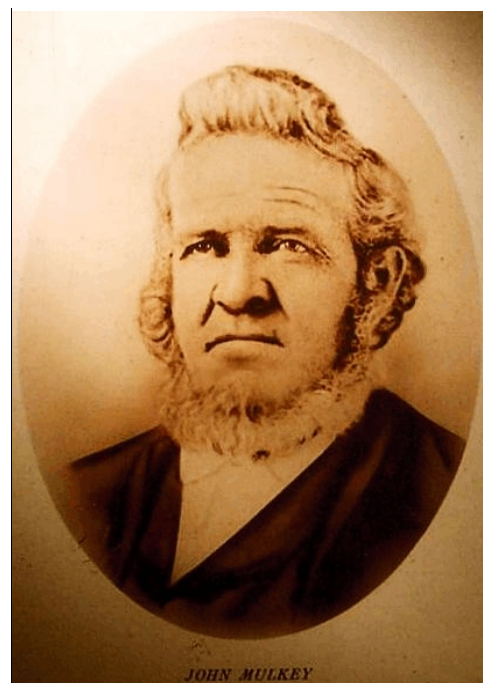
Springfield Presbytery,  
June 28th, 1804. } (L. S.)  
ROBERT MARSHALL,  
JOHN DUNLAVY,  
RICHARD M'NEMAR,  
B. W. STONE,  
JOHN THOMPSON,  
DAVID PURVIANCE. Witnesses.

We will have more about Stone in a later lesson about Alexander Campbell.

## V. John Mulkey in Kentucky.

Few historians would include the Mulkey Movement, but it was very important to the evangelizing of Oregon.

- A. John Mulkey was born in South Carolina, January 14, 1772. His father, Jonathan, moved into East Tennessee and established probably the first Baptist church in Tennessee (Buffalo Ridge) In the 1770's. Jonathan had three sons who all became Baptist preachers : John, Philip, and Isaac. John began preaching in East Tennessee at the age of 20, studied hard and soon won a reputation as a fine preacher. He and his brother Philip moved to Kentucky and preached. He located at Mill





Creek but extended his labors beyond the Green River.

- B. The Baptist Churches connected with the Mulkeys originated from their own study of the Word and were not Calvinistic. They appeared to believe that immersion was part of the salvation process.
- C. John Mulkey's earliest contact with "Christians only" was with **David Haggard**, preaching brother of Rice Haggard. The Haggard brothers were connected to the work of James O'Kelly, all of them former Methodists. John Mulkey, in company with David Haggard, had attended the Cane Ridge Revival.
- D. The idea of not testing the faith of others with a denominational creed was intriguing to John Mulkey. His *Mill Creek Baptist Church* held to the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (though he apparently did not.)
- E. Partly because of his success and influence, John was selected as the Moderator of the *Stockton Valley Baptist Association*. Some of his circuit riding work found him preaching at the *Roaring River Baptist Church* in White County, TN. This is where Thomas Crawford McBride was a church leader.
- F. By 1809, when John was 36, he was expressing reservations about the doctrine of unconditional election. That year the *Mill Creek Baptist Church* voted on John's orthodoxy and a majority voted to side with John Mulkey. He had spoken out against human creeds. *The Mill Creek Baptist Church* split at that point. The larger group that stayed with John Mulkey became known as the Old Mulkey group, the minority built a new *Mill Creek Baptist Church*.
- G. The *Old Mulkey Meeting House* is now owned by the State of Kentucky and is a tourist attraction.
- H. John influenced his brother Philip. They both preached that a believer could be a Christian alone and not part of a denomination. They joined forces with Barton W. Stone and others in Christian Union. Stone had recently come to the same realization.



The Mill Creek Baptist Church that became the Mulkey Meeting House. Davy Crockett's sister is buried in the foreground.

The story of John Mulkey's separation from his Baptist heritage is the plot of *A Fork in the Road*, E. Clayton Gooden's historical novel.

John Mulkey of Tompkinsville, KY preached 53 years, delivering nearly 10,000 discourses. He immersed many into Christ. He and Elizabeth are buried on land they owned southeast of Tompkinsville, Kentucky. See my bio of John Mulkey at: [ncbible.org/nwh/ProMulkey.html](http://ncbible.org/nwh/ProMulkey.html)

- I. How Mulkey has touched us in the west:
  - 1. The churches connected with John Mulkey in Kentucky became Christian Churches and Church of Christ. Abraham Lincoln's parents were among them. Lincoln understood the Restoration Movement quite well.

2. Lincoln's close friend was a Christian Church preacher named E.D. Baker. He moved to Oregon and Baker City bears his name.
3. Many of the pioneer preachers in Oregon had been influenced by John Mulkey. One of his sons, Philip, owned much of the area west of Eugene. There is the *Mulkey Cemetery* in Eugene. Dr. James McBride and his father, Thomas Crawford McBride were connected with the Mulkey Movement.
4. Archie Word attended church as a little child where John's son, Jonathan Mulkey preached at Glasgow, Kentucky. This was the kind of aggressive preaching that he had known as a child. When he was converted to Christ years later, Jonathan Mulkey could well have served as his model.

**Summary:**

We have met the leaders of several small breakouts:

James O'Kelly  
Elias Smith  
Abner Jones  
Barton Stone  
John Mulkey

**Next lesson:** The Irish origin of the main line restoration. It came later than the movements that we have discussed today.