



Bicentennial of the Brush Run Church  
1811-2011



Reaching a Common Understanding of “Truth” and  
“Method” for Raising the Level of “Conversation”  
Engaging the essential and ongoing “Interpretive  
Communities,” for affirming “Reality,” “Truth-  
Claims” and “Sense Making”  
Enlightenment Hermeneutics, as originally  
articulated by Alexander Campbell (1788–1866).  
Tracing how these “interpretative principles” speak  
into the present day.

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An Essay

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**W**ithout creeds, the Stone-Campbell Movement<sup>1</sup>  
(SCM) has only a history of interpretation of the  
Bible as guidance for determining an identity and  
distinctive vision “before the watching world.”<sup>2</sup> More than any other church tradition, we  
will need to be better at this hermeneutical project than others, and since Alexander

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this presentation, and for our general inquiry, the phrase, “Stone-Campbell Movement” and “Disciples” are used interchangeably, although the complications of our three traditions within this history are differentiated when necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Following the excellent example of Mennonite Ethics Scholar, John Howard Yoder (1927-1997), of doing Biblical interpretation and “exegesis,” around “practices” found in the early New Testament Church, [**A re-imagining of ‘Restorationism,’ I would propose**], Yoder affirms a theme we will advocate here, that “Hermeneutics” must always be “PUBLIC,” and in consideration of “The Watching World.” See his, excellent example of doing just this, in *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992).

Campbell, we have not been. When we have “lost our way,” it has been not only over, (1) “how we handle [or interpret] the Bible,” but (2) because of our assumed and unexamined “Epistemologies.”

“Epistemology” means a “theory or science of method or grounds of knowledge,”<sup>3</sup> and “epistemological” is an adverb describing whether a phenomena is “capable of becoming an object of knowledge.” [Campbell thought some testimony was NOT epistemological.]

The word, Epistemology, derives from a conflation of three in the Greek: “stama” = “stand,” “epi,” = “upon,” and “logos,” = a “word or study of.” Thus, epi-stama-logia [“Epistemology”] is a “study of” the “foundations,” “upon which we stand” for knowledge, or operational reasoning processes in our “relationship” to truth. Epistemology involves both Truth and Method, as does “Hermeneutics.”<sup>4</sup>

Why we trouble ourselves with these definitions of “Epistemology” and “Hermeneutics,” --- which, since Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) are now considered to be “formal academic disciplines” within Philosophy, Theology, Biblical Interpretation, the Humanities, and the Sciences --- will become clear as we explain Alexander Campbell’s “Principles of Interpretation” for his time and for ours.

If “epistemological” [or “scientific”] “methods,” have to do with “upon what foundation to stand for knowledge,” as we lean into this study it is logical to ask: What are the “Epistemologies” of the Stone-Campbell Movement?

Mainly there have been two:

I. A “Fundamentalist Epistemology,”<sup>5</sup> is constructed upon (a) outdated theories of

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<sup>3</sup> From the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, based on the authoritative 20 volume OED.

<sup>4</sup> Since Heidegger and Gadamer, “Hermeneutics” deals with not only the “discovery” of truth-claims, but their “communication.”

<sup>5</sup> On a scale from 1-10, different “degrees” of “Fundamentalist Epistemology” may be present in any public reasoning process. Summarized here are what may be regarded as the “best definitions,” which represent what clearly may be described as a “Fundamentalist World View,” or a “Fundamentalist Mental Operational Process.” These identifiable construals of truth and reality are not limited to Christian Theologizing, but are to be found all over the world, and they may be best explained by Martin Marty, and other scholars, whose descriptions can be taken as authoritative. See, (1) Martin Marty (Editor) from the Ten Volume Lilly Grant Study, “The Fundamentalist Project,” (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1994 - 2004), and, for Fundamentalists, in their own words, [Signed by over 300 Pastors and Theologians], the (2) “Normative” [Their phrase], “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” at [www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html](http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html) [1978], and to be included would be this document’s “Summary Statement,” “Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” and “Accompanying Exposition,” along with (a) expanded

“scientific method” and knowledge (Bacon),<sup>6</sup> (b) “logical positivism” (Early Wittgenstein)<sup>7</sup> and (c) a “Naive Historic Objectivism” (Gadamer).<sup>8</sup> This Fundamentalist construal of reality is further characterized by (d) a certain personality “style” which is to say, (i) a fear-based, defensive manner of “doing battle royal” against “modernity,”<sup>9</sup> expressed in such phrases as

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commentary by Norman L. Geisler, *A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*, (Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983), and (b) an “explanatory,” second Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics, 1983. “Inerrancy,” “Infallibility” and “Fundamentalist” reasoning processes may, then, in summary, be considered as one and the same. These statements or positions for interpreting the Bible, are to be taken, also, as authoritative. For describing a “Fundamentalist Epistemology” these two sources will be referenced throughout this essay to be “fair” or “clear” and as a means of engaging these “Hermeneutics.”

<sup>6</sup> Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the “father of empiricism,” and the “scientific,” “critical,” or “inductive method.” [“Inductive” reasoning is defined as starting with many instances of observation by the senses, and from them affirming general principles. “Deductive” thinking starts from a single principle to make general inferences.] Campbell did not use Bacon, or the “pure reasoning” proposals of Kant, (1724-1804.) His influences were: The “Natural Theology” reasoning process of Locke, mainly through William Paley (1743-1805) - - - (Even the contemporary scientist, Richard Dawkins, expressed appreciation for the way Paley would argue his case from “Natural Reasoning.”) But Campbell used only certain aspects of John Locke, and took from a few strains of Common Sense Philosophy, as originally articulated by Thomas Reid (1710-1796). Reid was explained more completely by Dugold Steward (1753-1828) whom Campbell frequently referenced. Tracing all these “influences,” upon Campbell and projecting the “effluences,” flowing from him, requires discriminating treatment.

<sup>7</sup> The Philosophical School of “Logical Positivism,” (or Positivism) flourished from the early twentieth century until shortly after World War II, and is represented by such names as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), the “early” Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), A. J. Ayer (1910-1989) and, even more recently by W. V. O. Quine (1908-2000), claiming, as they did, a “scientific method” of “inductive,” “observable to the senses, evidence,” which was subsequently criticized by Karl Popper, 1902-1994 - - - “the most important philosopher of science since Francis Bacon,” as being too superficial for explaining the complexities of language, social systems, and even science, especially since Einstein, Bohm, Heisenberg and modern physicists, where even so-called “observable” scientific phenomena, the “stuff of the universe,” is in motion and changes by the act of observing it.

<sup>8</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (NY: Continuum, 1975 [1989, 2004]), translated from the German, this magisterial work is . . . “one of the two or three most important of this century on the philosophy of humanistic studies,” and is referenced throughout this essay. Gadamer makes distinctions between “historical” [Naive Historic Objectivism] and an “historically effected consciousness,” [or “Ontological Hermeneutics” and an “ontological mode of understanding.”] Since Heidegger (the 1920 lectures) Hermeneutics deals with “communication” of the text, and not just with the attempt to discover the author’s *singular intent*, which is, in this view, seen as almost an impossible task. Contrast the [Fundamentalist] “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” (1978): “Article VI: WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration,” and “Article X: WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture . . . which can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy.” And that we further affirm that . . . “these copies [of manuscripts] faithfully represent the original.” A “single meaning” of the Biblical author is advocated by “Inerrancy” theologians, like Albert Mohler, (Ed., et al.), *Whatever Happened to Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway books, 2005), his essay, “Truth and Contemporary Culture,” 75-95. See, also, George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism in American Culture* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> The “intensity” of this “militant” stance against “modernity” is one of the key descriptions in Martin Marty’s explanations of Fundamentalism.

“taking back America’s Soul,”<sup>10</sup> this language of a “life-and-death-struggle” against what is perceived and derided, scorned, scoffed, sneered and snarled at as a threat to a cherished, “earlier way of life,” through means of [and these are “catch words”] “revisionist” “subjective,” and “relativistic,”<sup>11</sup> “dangerous” reasoning methods, while (ii) violently resisting “change” from a position which is understood as a (iii) “fixed foundation,” or a single “constitution,” with “normalized” interpretations of truth.”<sup>12</sup> More generally this emotionally-charged posture may be characterized as that of a particular personality, or “deep-individuation-complex”<sup>13</sup> of the “Authoritarian Personality” (The Frankfurt School: Habermas, Marcuse, Fromm, Adorno).

Despite protestations to the contrary, these were not Campbell’s “fixed” principles of “Epistemology,” Biblical Interpretation or Hermeneutics, and these cannot be ours today. Rather, we must consider all that has happened since the “ontological,” “Hermeneutical Turn,”<sup>14</sup> especially reflecting on the ideas of Husserl, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, and Ricoeur in recent Hermeneutical studies.<sup>15</sup>

In the main, Campbell based his Epistemology on John Locke, who proposed: What is unknowable and outside the realm of “evidence,” observable by the senses, we cannot talk

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<sup>10</sup> This phrase originated with Jerry Falwell, a self-referenced Fundamentalist.

<sup>11</sup> For a good example of taking this broadside-dismissive view of “Hermeneutics” as “merely subjective,” - - - (which argument is obviously leveled at Gadamer) . . . Mohler shows no evidence of having read him, for it is exactly the opposite position Gadamer argues, that is to say, against the Neo-Kantian German subjectivism of a previous generation, before Heidegger, in self-described “Fundamentalist,” R. Albert Mohler, (Ed., et al.), *Whatever Happened to Truth*, his essay, “Truth and Contemporary Culture,” 75-95.

<sup>12</sup> As recently as 1989, the dissident Disciples Heritage Fellowship proposed a formal Resolution that the Disciples General Assembly declare the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice, to be taken at the uncritical, literal, and “inerrant” level. The assembly, wisely, rejected this Resolution, seeing it as a *de facto* fundamentalist understanding of Scripture and an assault (which it was) on Historical Critical Method and Scholarship. Michael Kinnemon and Jan Linn, *Disciples: Reclaiming Our Identity, Reforming Our Practice* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2009), 29-30. The *Chicago Statement on Inerrancy* (or Fundamentalism defined) states that truth and the interpretation of a text has a “single” meaning, which was “the normalized intention of the author,” and that the “original autographs of the manuscripts of the Bible,” can be legitimately inferred as “one reading” intended by the author.

<sup>13</sup> “Complex” not in any pejorative sense, but as Jung originally understood it, a complicated system of personality qualities.

<sup>14</sup> The “Hermeneutical Turn” refers to how we must now, since Heidegger, consider “ontological” dimensions within the interpretative process.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the issues involved here, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text: The Bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) and *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

about. A “Fundamentalist” cannot be “silent” or “let be” the realm of the “unknowable,”<sup>16</sup> but simplistically “asserts” propositions.<sup>17</sup> A “Conservative” or “Evangelical” does not “make a big deal” over what we cannot know. This is one way [and there are many others] to distinguish between the two. A Fundamentalist is not the same as a Conservative or Evangelical --- which three positions are often confused. The clear discernment of these “differences” in reasoning processes, determines whether anyone can have a “conversation.” There are explanations for why groups of persons “can’t talk to” one another. It is very difficult to “have a conversation with” a “Fundamentalist” in isolation from the “watching world.” As is clear from the “Chicago Statement on Inerrancy,” there are explanations for why Fundamentalists mainly, only talk to themselves. With a Conservative or Evangelical you can have conversations. Distinguishing who is a “Fundamentalist” in potential and hoped-for “Conversations,” has to do with “how the beliefs are held,” not the content of the beliefs by themselves. A Fundamentalist has a different view of “reality” and “stands on different foundations,” using unacceptable [to the watching world] methods for getting there. It is not just the case of disagreeing about ideas or proposing a “bipartisan” problem-solving session, or arriving at solutions, or, a, [“nonsense” statement], “agreeing to disagree.” Arguing with a Fundamentalist, this will never happen. How often have we found ourselves saying, wiser than we thought: “They’re Conservative; they’re Evangelical; but you can still talk with them.”

(2) A second “Generative Dialogue Epistemology,”<sup>18</sup> is “fearless,” seriously entertaining

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<sup>16</sup> A technical term in current Hermeneutical conversation, the “unknowable,” for example, might refer to thinking we can understand the original intent of an author, expressing the essence of a revelation from the (“mind”) of God.

<sup>17</sup> In his 1929 Debate with the agnostic, Robert Owen, Campbell was insistent that Owen was not dealing with evidence but only making “assertions.”

<sup>18</sup> The origin of the phrase “Generative Dialogue” comes from the arguments on the need for the kind of “conversation and dialogue” which produces new insights and knowledge, and which is a matter of hermeneutical principle, these ideas originally articulated by Gadamer, Habermas, David Tracy, Bernard Lonergan and others. Especially we must mention William Isaacs who is credited with coming up with the designation. *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (NY: Doubleday, 2011). Isaacs is the Director of MIT’s, Sloan School of Management’s, “Dialogue Project,” which outlines distinctive (Jungian) processes for what passes the test as being “Generative Dialogue.” This practically applied and theoretically researched field of study is based upon the thinking of quantum physicist David Bohm (1917-1993) and his fascinating argument on “how the universe works as a unit, through thinking together” and by means of a kind of “dialogue.” See Bohm’s *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge 1980); *An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory: Thought as a System* (1982); *Unfolding Meaning* (1985); *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987) and *On Dialogue* (1996), his

the possibilities of change --- and even relishing having one's mind, "Epistemology" and sense of "Reality" shaken up. For this medium of Dialogue and Conversation is a welcomed, energizing process by which expanded knowledge [and the experience of "revelation"] may take place. Conversation is the way we end up knowing more than we are able to know by ourselves, which, of course, is never enough.<sup>19</sup> Coincident with this attitude, is a willingness to "enter [what proved to be] *the pivotal* conversation" of "Historical Critical Method"<sup>20</sup> in Biblical Studies, which, for Disciples, began with Herbert Lockwood Willet (1864-1944) at the University of Chicago in 1894. These two "Epistemologies" were somewhat "dormant"<sup>21</sup> from 1866 (the

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posthumous, published conversations on the topic as edited by Lee Nichol. For Dialogue, and "Conversation," see also "The Socrates Cafe" Movement, with now over 600 conversation rooms around the globe, based on French Writer, Philosopher and Teacher Marc Sautet (1947-1998), who founded the initiative. His ideas were followed in the US by Christopher Phillips (b. 1959), who outlines the "rules" for how to set up such a conversation room, in his book, *Socrates Cafe* (2001). Phillips now teaches media at New York University. Thomas Morris, (b. 1952) is also important in the Socrates Cafe Movement. He wrote important books on this topic, one being *The Socrates Cafe* (2008), as he now produces work more in the field of Theology, instead of Philosophy, having received a Ph.D. in Religious Studies at Yale. Morris taught at Notre Dame and currently has his own consulting firm, *The Morris Institute for Human Values*, in Wilmington, NC. All the books by Sautet, Phillips and Morris are worth consulting for how to hold a Conversation.

<sup>19</sup> The renowned literary critic, Harold Bloom, says: Why do we read others? Because we can, on our own, never know all that we need to know. *How to Read and Why* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> I employ the phrase, "Historical Critical Method" in its broadest sense, to include THREE DIMENSIONS, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: That of (1) a disciplined process for knowing as nearly as we can, what is "behind" the text; (2) with modern Hermeneutical understandings, experiencing and being ontologically "present with" the text --- [cf. Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret Ellen Lee, *Sound Mapping the New Testament* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2009), participating in the "awakening" of the text as "live experience" or "revelation" and (3) the "future" projections or trajectories, "theological interpretations/judgments," about the "performative function" and recreated "story world" of the text. Which is to say, where is this text "going" and what is it supposed to be "performing" as "event?" This latest interpretative process is understood in "Confessional" and "Narrative Theology" terms. See on this subject, New Testament Scholar Raymond Brown, [on textual "trajectories," or "where the text is going" --- or "needing to go," after the original Apostles have died, the best known, Peter, Paul, James and John, having been martyred by 64-65], and with most of the New Testament written after that time. Brown explains that in the past we have (unthinkingly) resolved this problem by assuming the New Testament and the Apostolic era were coterminous" (Brown, 14). This we can no longer say, due to a "consensus" conclusion by scholars. Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (NY: Paulist Press, 1984); and see also Philosopher, Paul Ricoeur for what he describes as the all-important phenomena of revelation which takes place "in front" of the New Testament text, the current Bible study methods, based upon "presencing," or *lectio divina*, by Pat Kieffert, ("Dwelling in the Word" at [www.churchinnovations.org](http://www.churchinnovations.org)); the excellent materials in this method developed by *The Center for Parish Development* in their consultations to bring about transformation in churches. [www.missionalchurch.org](http://www.missionalchurch.org) and the "Scriptural Reasoning Project" [Interfaith exchanges] in David Ford (Ed.) *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> By "dormant" I mean that these issues did not come into awareness, or were not emphasized, in that it was assumed that the New Testament, including all four Gospels, were each written by the four, named Apostles, that Paul wrote all the letters attributed to him, and that these "eye witnesses" were reporting

date of Campbell's death) until 1894, as they came to a head in the "Heresy Trials" of the College of the Bible (later, Lexington Theological Seminary).<sup>22</sup> From this date, one Epistemology created the "Bible College" Movement, and the other,<sup>23</sup> the Liberal Arts College, continuing the educational model of Campbell, that of Bethany College.

From 1866 to 1894 western culture experienced great cultural shocks from Marx (you can't trust the economic systems), Freud, Feurbach (you are unable to have confidence in your so-called "rational mind," for any "thought" of God or ultimate reality is mere "projection" of subconscious longings) and Darwin (you are no longer able to believe in your own human "Nature"). With Einstein, Heisenberg, Boehm, modern Physicists each one (the universe is not fixed), combined with the Hermeneutical Conversations, especially from Husserl, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas and Ricoeur, which advocated that a text is not "rigidly situated" either, but is always "on the move," and must be "ontologically engaged."

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, what are the cultural conditions into which ultimate reality must speak? Jurgen Moltman describes the nineteenth century as "truly the Christian age, not just for Europe but for the rest of the world too." This age of progress and expansion ended in 1914-1918, after WW I, the "primal European catastrophe" (Steiner, Spengler), and as (Guardine) after WW II put it . . . creating "an end to the modern world." So, now, with the Atomic Age and a potential global, environmental threat of annihilation, our "hermeneutical space" has turned "eschatological." The "great event of the twentieth century was the end of Christendom," which involved the identification of the church with the culture, (Liberalism) and now, since Karl Barth, and "Post Liberal" theology, we see the beginnings of

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what they experienced, in real time. Since the consensus view of scholarship today is that the Four gospels, while having historical elements, were written later and developed by the churches to meet their current, reinterpreted situations, from a variety of oral traditions. (Mark, written in 68-72; Matthew and Luke, 85-90; John, 90-120) and that there was an oral-to-written "tradition-ing-process" which goes against the grain of a "Naive Historic Objectivism" described by Gadamer.

<sup>22</sup> An "Old Liberalism," represented by Willet and others at Chicago, who stressed, as they did, the Gospels, and a "Life of Jesus" approach, Jesus as an "example," or "model" for our behavior, leading to taking responsibility [this is never enough for motivation] for "social action" [The Social Gospel Movement]. Campbell being depicted, today, as emphasizing a "high Christology," using the New Testament writings of Paul, and being more attuned with "Post-Liberal" thinking (since Barth), makes the 1917 "Heresy Trials," "old battles" based on "tired Epistemologies."

<sup>23</sup> . . . (with some exceptions to this description from the Church of Christ tradition who did not establish as many Bible Colleges.) Their Liberal Arts Colleges, did, however, manifest the "Naive Historic Objectivism" and "exclusivistic" emotional tones of the "Fundamentalist Epistemology" as outlined above.

the church's, "Missional Church," re-imagining of itself. We are, says Moltman, at the "beginning of an ending."<sup>24</sup>

This Essay is limited in focus, to the impact of two clashing Epistemologies or "Social-Personality Styles," --- these "conditioned constructs" or "construals of the self," within two of the Stone-Campbell Movement traditions [The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or "Independents"], which have implications for the larger church and for our culture. "Epistemologies" are not so much "fixed" propositional "positions," as they are "psychological," personality-prone "dynamic processes," or "ways of being in the world."<sup>25</sup>

The "Hermeneutical Turn" which started with Dilthey, the later Heidegger, and then was explained by Heidegger's student, Gadamer (who was, later in critical dialogues with Habermas and even Dirrida), sees Hermeneutics as requiring an engagement with texts in an "ontological mode of understanding." Such method, by its very nature, commits to dialogical processes or conversation, to arrive at a kind of truth which "awakens texts," and which involves dynamics leading to what Gadamer calls, "Practical Wisdom."

Like Art, Heidegger and Gadamer suggest, the essence of meaning in a text is not its "representational character," but rather a capacity to introduce the disclosure of a world. "Ontological Hermeneutics," then, stands over against the traditional idea of truth as "correctness." Truth is not exhausted by statements or propositions, but rather is to be experienced, through the text, as a starting-point "event," in and through which both the things of the world and what is said about them come to be revealed at one and the same time. The possibility of "correctness" and being "corrected," Gadamer argues, is made possible by paying careful attention to the structure of language in ensuing conversations. This process of "taking care," he calls the "Hermeneutical Horizons," so that it will not be possible that, for an

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<sup>24</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise!: God's Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Charles Taylor uses the helpful term, "social Imaginaries," or "construals of the self" to describe these more complex hermeneutical and social science realities. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). See, In Taylor, 2007, on "modern social imaginaries," 159-212.



interpretation, “anything goes.” This explanation represents a solid defense against the Fundamentalist charge of “subjectivism” and “relativism.” Going even further, with this “Hermeneutical Turn,” even our own pre-judgments / prejudices, (Habermas), must be considered. Through conversation, they can move us toward resolution. To get at “truth” one must “stay engaged in the conversation.”

This “Ontological Hermeneutics” or the “Hermeneutical Turn,” relates well to Alexander Campbell’s “Rule 7”<sup>26</sup> which states that: *For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the oracles of God, --- We must come within the understanding distance.* The ontological hermeneutical processes we use, do exactly this. They overcome the “distance” between ourselves and the “Other,” [the Biblical text itself being ‘distant,’ “Other,” and “strange”] causing us to enter the narrative world, or to engage in and be engaged and formed by it.<sup>27</sup> This means that, clearly, Campbell’s “Epistemology” was not “Fundamentalist,” or “pattern-biased,” but has been best described within the conceptual framework of “Post-Liberalism.”<sup>28</sup>

In his extensive research (1997) *Disciples New Testament Scholar*, Gene Boring, wrote:

“We claim to abandon creeds and human tradition for ‘*just the Bible.*’ Then during the Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy [1917 and following], we lost our grip on the

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<sup>26</sup>For the complete list of Campbell’s Seven Rules of Interpretation of Scripture, see Appendix A.

<sup>27</sup> This description of Campbell’s Hermeneutics parallels a statement by Boring: If there is to be any “next generation” of Disciples interpreters of the Bible, [after this one of 1968-the present], then, they will do well to consider “confessional and narrative theology” as a way into the future. M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997), henceforth referenced as Boring, *Disciples* . . .

<sup>28</sup> See, Burton Thurston, “Alexander Campbell’s Principles of Hermeneutics,” Th.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1958, who, as quoted below, summarizes Campbell as being a precursor to “Post-Liberalism.” “Post Liberalism” [Neo-Orthodoxy] was set in motion by Karl Barth (1868-1968), by his *Epistle to the Romans* Commentary (1921), who was [in the 1930s] . . . “the original force behind [also] the modern Trinitarian Resurgence” and, who, along with “Trinitarianism,” a “high Christology,” and a “Lordship of Christ” theology, restored to the center of theological discussion, a new “Ecclesiology.” Barth’s “*Church*” Dogmatics, was articulated over against the “Christendom” constructs of Harnack, and the more than two hundred German Intellectuals who were so “*identified*” with their own culture that they went on record as supporting Nazism. With Barth’s and Bonhoeffer’s response in the *Barmen Declaration (1934)*, [www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm) , Subtitled: “. . . [the Nazi’s] sin of idolatry and the Lordship of Christ,” we have turned a corner, away from “Liberalism” to “Post-Liberalism.” Cf., Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church’s Confession Under Hitler* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1962), 237-242. For the “Trinitarian Resurgence,” see Miroslav Volf, *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 16-17; Ellen Davis and Richard Hays, (Eds.), *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) and Moltmann, 2010, and including the excellent, new biography by Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

Bible. Having neither creed nor Bible, we are now at sea . . .  
. . . Our internal history and troubles, in all their grandeur and goofiness, are mirrored in, and to some considerable extent caused by, how we have handled the Bible. . . The history of our Biblical interpretation represents the history of our thought even more than is typical of Protestantism . . . We have expressed our theology primarily as Biblical interpretation. [For Disciples] The issue was interpretation, not authority. - - - [Therefore we mostly escaped the “inerrancy/infallibility” battles] - - - What [Alexander] Campbell did was to provide a “fresh and vital re-interpretation of the Bible.”<sup>29</sup>

Our daunting task, then, is to survey the extensive academic disciplines surrounding the field of Hermeneutics, to discern not only “where we went wrong,” but to imagine alternative, potential, futures, or a “story/narrative/vision” for the Disciples. The logic behind this “apologetic” is that if our “narrative, confessional theology” cannot make its case in the “Public Sphere” (Habermas), or as Yoder puts it, “before the watching world,” we are “turned in on ourselves,” with “intramural discourses,” “civil religion relativism,” as just one more “pitiful, little sect” naively appealing to the Bible for authority, in what amounts to “cultural-impact-irrelevancy” and “rear-guard action.”

## Problems

Having an identity only through a “history of interpretation,” has proven problematic: “We are now (1997) at sea on the issues of authority in the life of the church and the function of the Bible” and “may not know what we are doing” (Boring, *Disciples* . . . 403ff.); and this: The Stone-Campbell Movement in its “. . . intent to recover the New Testament church and bypass the orthodox-creating creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon left the Movement utterly exposed to American sectionalism, nationalism and civil religion, best described by John Howard Yoder [and, I would add, others]<sup>30</sup> . . . as “. . . the ‘Constantinianization’ of the

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<sup>29</sup> [Boring, quoting in this last statement, J. J. Haley], *Disciples* . . . 1-4.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, this statement: “A Christendom [“Constantinianization” or “Established Church”] Model is now gone and it will not be regained.” (George R. Hunsberger, page 6), this as one summary statement from an identifiable group of “Missional Church” and “Gospel and Our Culture Network” discussions, which started with Leslie Newbigin (1909-1998), in 1984, then were taken up by Douglas John Hall, George R. Hunsberger, Craig Van Gelder, Alan Roxburgh, Inagrace Dieterich, George G. Hunter III, Mark

Established Church.”<sup>31</sup>

## Creating a “Base–Line” of determining what we are taking about within the larger History and the Academic Disciplines of “Hermeneutics,” “Epistemology” and in “New Testament Scholarly Interpretation.”

By “commonly accepted” and “mainstream,” we mean that a majority, and often up to eighty percent and more, have achieved “consensus.” --- with scholars, and “public intellectuals,” never reaching total unanimity --- or a high level of resulting agreement by a deliberation of “Peer-Reviewed”<sup>32</sup> New Testament Scholars.” These positions of agreement constitute a “base-line assumption” about the texts under consideration, from which all future conversation can then fairly unfold. If we cannot assume some basic hermeneutical principles and scholarly understandings [a place to “stand”], we simply “cannot talk to each other,” and any attempt at conversation is frustrating and futile.

*“Before men can reason together, they must agree on first principles, and it is impossible to reason with those who have no principles in common with you.” Without these foundational, established principles, there are some who are “not fit to be reasoned with.”*

--- Thomas Reid (1710-1796)<sup>33</sup>

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Lau Branson, as leaders among those who are producing excellent writing in this field of study. See, George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Editors), *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), as but one of the original studies from these scholars, and first in a series of books on “Missional Church” transformation. There is a vital relationship between “Missional Church” initiatives and Campbell’s urging people toward Bible study so that they could understand the “will of God” [or the *missio Dei*] for their lives.

<sup>31</sup> Joe R. Jones, “Yoder and Stone-Campbellites: Sorting the Grammar of Radical Orthodoxy and Radical Discipleship,” a Paper presented to the Stone-Campbell Dialogues, 2009, available at Jones’s web site, [www.grammaroffaith.com](http://www.grammaroffaith.com)

<sup>32</sup> The phrase “*Peer Reviewed*” comes from the research world of the sciences. This description means that there has been an ongoing conversation amongst recognized scholars in the field to arrive at “corrections,” “consensus” and “assured result” conclusions.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Reid is considered the founder of the “Common Sense School of Philosophy,” and is known mainly for his “positive, ontological” Epistemology (over against the skeptic Hume, and the idealists Berkeley and Kant). In one stream of Reid’s thinking, he challenged Locke, and Dugold Stewart, Reid’s brilliant student, openly declared he had no use for Kant. The Common Sense School had great impact

*“It is not enough to have a liking for architecture. One must also know stone-cutting.” ---*

*Maurice de Saxe (1696-1750)*

## How to Continue

At best, in determining a Stone-Campbell Movement “history of interpretation of the New Testament,” identifiable “practices” must be determined. Being faithful to the high scholarly standards set by Alexander Campbell, will require showing evidence of the best intellectual engagement with the History of Ideas and Philosophy, [Hermeneutics and Epistemology] and with Historical Critical Method in New Testament Scholarship. Of necessity there will be much “back and forth,” from Campbell’s time to ours.

For the Stone-Campbell Movement, the best “commonly accepted” and “mainstream” understanding of the New Testament may be found, today, in the 2004 publication by Disciples M. Eugene Boring and Fred Craddock.<sup>34</sup> This work is an expansion of the tradition of Barton Warren Johnson’s *The People’s New Testament With Notes*, in two volumes, 1889 and 1891, which assumes a basic Campbell perspective of “trusting the people with the best of scholarship” and “not protecting them from the findings of research” (Boring/Craddock, ix).

## An Emphasis on the New Testament

Campbell was a “populist scholar of the first rank,” (Boring, Disciples . . . )engaging New Testament studies at the highest level of scholarship “available” to him. To operate from “within” the world of New Testament Scholarship meant more than “memorizing a lot of

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upon the “pragmatism” of nineteenth century, North American intellectual life - - - and, also, upon such Philosophers as Charles Thomas Pierce and C.E. Moore, in the early 20th century. This school of philosophy affirmed a form of “scientific method” relating to the constantly evolving, dynamic “evidences.” Underneath this way of looking at the world was the assumed understanding that certain interpretative principles would need to be present for human beings to reason with each other at all. Reid’s thinking, though, cannot be easily caricatured, as “Naive Historic Objectivism” (Gadamer’s critique).

<sup>34</sup> M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The Peoples’s New Testament Commentary* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004). This New Testament Commentary has enjoyed wide acclaim from other denominational leaders and scholars.

English Bible Verses and reciting them.” For understanding Campbell’s potential, continued relevance and even that of the Stone Campbell movement itself, being a New Testament Scholar “then” must be compared and contrasted with what it means to be a New Testament Scholar “now.”

## An “Attitude” of urgency: Another Necessity of Interpretation

A serious study of the New Testament through scholarship must also interact with Hermeneutics at the level of: The (a) “psychological” (Scheiermacher), “ontologically”<sup>35</sup> dimensions (Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Ricoeur), for the “personally, formative power,” of the text when engaged by the interpreter, or in a method which determines how the text connects with its “authority over our lives.” This Hermeneutics assumes that Scripture will (b) “address, interrogate, shape and form us,” without (c) truncating the New Testament as a “super-secessionist” document,<sup>36</sup> separated from the narrative of the Hebrew Bible, which “whole” is part of the “grand story of Redemption.” Campbell called this an “attitude” [a sense of urgency and learning readiness] on behalf of the interpreter.

## Campbell within his Intellectual Context

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<sup>35</sup> These Enlightenment Epistemological Principles are still relevant, but requiring us to understand nuances. Thomas Reid (1710-1796), for instance, anticipated “ontological,” contextual or sociological/literary/anthropological interaction, and a direct line of influence may be traced from Schleiermacher (who is considered the father of Hermeneutics and who studied this subject, originally, employing Aristotle, as a means of analyzing Biblical texts), to Husserl, (especially) Dilthey, (the later) Heidegger, Gadamer (reinterpreting Heidegger), de Certeau, Habermas, Lonergan, Lindbeck, Tracy, Frei and Ricoeur. These connections suggest a warning: “Evidence” and “testimony” about “reality” are not to be so simply depicted in Alexander Campbell, as they involve interactively dealing with phenomenological questions, the history of philosophy, the social sciences, literature and the “social imaginaries” of ordinary, everyday life (for which last concepts, see de Certeau (cited below) and the excellent summary in Taylor 1989, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Campbell’s discourse on the Law, 1816 and his rule (Appendix A), that the whole must be interpreted from the point of view of the parts, and the parts from the whole. Gadamer agrees with this necessary principle of interpretation, “To what Extend does Language Perform Thought?” in *Truth and Method*, Appendix I, 506ff. The “genre,” “era,” or “dispensations,” according to Campbell, must also be considered, relating the parts to the whole.

Campbell's original, grand vision for Christian Unity, had its predecessors,<sup>37</sup> yet, today, we must address different questions: What still endures and why? What are the examples? When the leaders in the SCM have said, "we only teach and preach the Bible," surely, this is not enough, since many have said the same thing.

## Campbell's View (and our challenge today) Considering the Question of "Raising the Level of 'Conversation'"

Given the need to arrive at the necessary agreement on questions of Hermeneutics and Epistemology --- These scholarly disciplines addressing the "Epistemology" of "how we go about knowing anything we claim to think we know," what, then, passes the test as (a) constituting real "conversation"<sup>38</sup> (b) with agreed-upon-ahead-of-time "rules for engagement"<sup>39</sup>

### Conversation

Since 2005 and 2006, leadership in the three expressions of the Stone - Campbell Movement: (1) The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or "Disciples"; (2) The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or the "Independents," and (3) the Churches of Christ --- have now gone on record as accepting "Historical Critical Method" in Biblical studies.<sup>40</sup> In the words

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<sup>37</sup> For instance John Glas (1695-1773), William Sandeman (1718-1771) and Robert Haldane (1764-1842) are three examples of advocates for restoring the New Testament Church. Campbell was later to become discouraged with these groups as being too isolationist. Earlier movements for Christian Unity were articulated by the Bohemian pietistic sentiments of John Hus (1369-1415). The translators of the New Testament into the language of the people must be mentioned, represented in the scholarly work of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), John Rogers (1500-1555) and William Tyndale (1494-1536).

<sup>38</sup> See what "real conversation" involves, in this, the best historical exploration of the subject, Benedetta Craveri, translated from the Italian by Teresa Waugh *The Age of Conversation* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2001 [2005]).

<sup>39</sup> "Rules" for a "Generative Dialogue" in conversation are explained in Isaacs and C. Otto Scharmer.

<sup>40</sup> See the important, archived documents on this topic, from the "Campbell-Stone Dialogues" and "Conferences," (meeting at least yearly since 1999), to be found at the Disciples Council on Christian Unity web page: [www.disciples.org/ccu/programs/documents](http://www.disciples.org/ccu/programs/documents) --- "How Disciples Interpret the Bible," by Disciples New Testament Scholar, M. Eugene Boring, Emeritus Professor of New Testament from TCU's Brite Divinity School . . . "a presentation to the "Stone-Campbell Dialogue," June 6, 2005, and the "Mutual

of the summary document: (1) “We all take into account the larger themes<sup>41</sup> in Scripture in seeking to understand or interpret the meaning of specific passages”; [2] “We all seek to understand Scripture through the process of Hermeneutics, and all generally employ historical-critical or theological-grammatical methodology<sup>42</sup> using similar methods”; [3] “We all affirm Alexander Campbell’s Seven Rules of Interpretation” [For which, see Appendix A].

The SCM has found, however, that, “applying” these principles of Historical Critical Method in New Testament Studies to the everyday life of the church has proven to be “tentative at best,”<sup>43</sup> raising another set of issues altogether.

## Hermeneutical Principles

Without some initial, but comprehensive philosophical work, we cannot even begin to have a

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Affirmations on Scripture,” June 12-13, 2006. See also the many related articles on this topic, in the *Stone-Campbell Journal*, published, twice yearly, since 1998, at [www.stone-campbelljournal.com](http://www.stone-campbelljournal.com).

<sup>41</sup> For considering the “whole Bible,” the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) in Disciples Tradition, we recognize with scholars that for the New Testament Church of the first and second century of our era, “The Old Testament, *in Greek*, the Septuagint, or LXX Translation,” was “the *only Bible* the New Testament Church had available to them.” For how the Hebrew Bible was to be utilized to interpret the New Testament, as was explained in Alexander Campbell’s famous *Sermon on the Law* (1816), see the excellent book by Disciples Patristics SCM Scholar Ronald E. Heine, (Professor at Northwest Christian College), *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). For determining how New Testament Scholarship understands the manner in which the Old Testament should be utilized to understand the New, and how not to separate the New Testament from the Old, refer also to these excellent articles, Disciples M. Eugene Boring’s excursions: “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in Boring/Craddock *The Peoples* . . . 542; and “Mark and the Scriptures,” in *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2006), 404; his commentary on chapter 5:17-20 in *Matthew, The New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Volume III, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 185ff. This same point of view is presented in the new commentary on Matthew by Disciples, Stanley P. Saunders, Associate Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, *Preaching the Gospel of Matthew: Practicing God’s Presence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 12-13. The “fulfillment quotations,” are to be understood as as the New Testament Church looking backwards, seeing connections for interpretation with the Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, and not that the OT “predicts,” or “foretells” the future. This last theological position is an important “epistemological” finding in New Testament scholarship today.

<sup>42</sup> The weakness of this “grammatical-linguistic” model is that it is very similar to the Fundamentalist one described in the *Chicago Inerrancy Statement*, i.e. “operating only at the level of the sentence.”

<sup>43</sup> From examples cited by Gene Boring. . . Commentaries written by the Independents reveal an unwillingness to engage the best of current New Testament Scholarship or to do so only “tentatively.” For instance, these recent commentaries indicate that the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were written by these, named Apostles, and were eye witness reports, of the events in real time, all written in the 50s. The need to operate from within this ideological perspective, suggesting an adherence to Gadamer’s critique of “Naive Historic Objectivism.”

fruitful conversation. “Agreed-upon-ahead-of-time rules of engagement” or a common “Hermeneutical Method” is foundational.

*“In building a wall, you cannot put one brick upon another, and none upon the ground; or before beginning to sew, a knot must first be tied in the thread.”*

*- - - Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)*

Alexander Campbell presented lucid, original and “ontological” ideas on Hermeneutics which were NOT a mere rearming of Bacon’s Epistemology. Instead, Campbell’s Epistemology was constructed from certain streams of the Enlightenment within the context of “The Age of Reason” as he anticipated “Historical Critical Method” in New Testament scholarship and modern Hermeneutical conversations. These discernible and assumed interpretative understandings guided him throughout his life for engaging in “rational” dialogues in his leadership role as a recognized “public intellectual.” Critical for understanding the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, is what Campbell meant by “Reasoned Argument.” With all that has taken place for at least the last two hundred years, in the academic disciplines of “Hermeneutics,” and “New Testament Historical Critical Method,” this question presents itself: How may we still consider Campbell’s interpretative principles satisfactory, arriving at a “basis,” a “consensus,” or “universal” understanding, from which we might conduct, today, a “Dialogue or Conversation,” based upon “evidence,” “testimony,” and “reason?”

*“What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence.”*

*- - - Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011)*

Further complicating our inquiry: In today’s verbal “exchanges” in the “Public Sphere”



(Habermas) --- [we dare not call them “conversations”] --- this description of our “crisis”<sup>44</sup> in communication may be summarized as follows: Among thought-leaders from both left and right, our present situation of “talking past one another with intense conviction” (Yoder), is driven by (a) febrile, “totalitarian,”<sup>45</sup> “ideological” presuppositions and pre-judgements and (b) an inadequate, “flat,” “univocal,” “historicism-objectivism” (Gadamer), all of which obscures clear thinking about the complex “ontological” levels of the “realities” in any subject under consideration.<sup>46</sup>

--- A “Fundamentalist Epistemology” says: “It’s all simple, just do this.”

--- A “Generative Dialogical Epistemology,” responds. “Simple? it is definitely not.”

--- This is what we call a “Conversation Stopper” and an “Epistemological Impasse.”

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<sup>44</sup> For a qualitative characterization of our current “verbal exchanges” as a “crisis” of “reason” or “mind” and “how we think,” see Cognitive Science Theorist, George Lakoff, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenges to Western Thought* (1999); *Metaphors We Live By* (2003); *The Political Mind: Why you can’t understand 21st - Century American Politics with an 18th - Century Brain* (2009), all published by Basic Books, New York.

<sup>45</sup> The classic studies on “Totalitarianism” in thinking and behavior, are still lively as articulated by Hanna Arendt, which include, among others of her works, *The Life of the Mind* (NY: Harcourt, 1971 [1978]) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (NY, Schocken Books, 1948 [1976, 2004]).

<sup>46</sup> It is not that helpful merely to “wring our hands” about the deterioration of “civil conversation,” the abundance of vitriol and rudeness in the “Public Sphere.” Something more is required, or, as we argue here, what is essential is an intellectually respectable hermeneutical “method” for effecting a “Generative” “Conversation.” Recent suggestions for raising the level of public discourse have come from Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (NY: Basic Books, 1993); *Integrity* (NY, Basic Books, 1996); *Civility: Manners, Morals and the Etiquette of Democracy* (NY: Basic Books, 1998), from former Senator, John Danforth, *Faith and Politics: How the “Moral Values” Debate Divides America and How to Move Forward Together* (NY: Penguin Books, 2006); Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (NY: Ballentine, 2000), and more recently, Marilyn Robinson, *Absence of Mind: Dispelling Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self, the Yale Terry Lectures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). For some specific proposals, refer to the theoretical framework for “Generative Dialogue” of Physicist, Davie Boehm, below, and the Quaker Theologian, Parker Palmer, who describes this crisis in conversation in today’s culture as taking on the qualities of a “National Clinical Depression,” as he offers specific processes and interventions for “a cure.” *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2011), and a similar set of solutions in Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How the Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011). Among Theologians, it is noteworthy, how, over the years, in many “conversations,” Mennonite Ethics Scholar, John Howard Yoder, influenced Stanley Hauerwas to embrace pacifism. See, Joe R. Jones, a paper presented to the Stone-Campbell Dialogues, 2009, “Yoder and Stone-Campbellites: Sorting the Grammar of Radical Orthodoxy and Radical Discipleship,” now at his web site, [www.grammaroffaith.com](http://www.grammaroffaith.com) and his more expanded argument in *Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine*, 2 Volumes (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

*We are not merely disagreeing about ideas or policies; in the current debates we are assuming different foundational descriptions of reality. We must fix this problem in our culture or it will destroy us.*

- - - David Brooks (1961 - - - )

- New York Times essayist, journalist, who describes himself as a “moderate.”<sup>47</sup>

What do we mean today by a fatally-flawed, *ideological* discourse? What is new to our condition, now, is that someone may know that an idea is false; yet they act as if the idea is true, or that it doesn't matter whether or not it is true, leading to catastrophe.<sup>48</sup>

- - - Slavoj Zizek (1949 - - - ) A world renowned intellectual and Philosopher who labels himself as “radical left”

Is there a way out?<sup>49</sup> Alexander Campbell's intellectual legacy (revisited and re-imagined), considers his being informed especially by Locke, William Paley, Thomas Reid and Dugold Stewart Enlightenment Hermeneutics and his practice of interacting with what we now have

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<sup>47</sup> See his recent, excellent book: *The Social Animal: The hidden sources of love, character and achievement* (NY: Random House, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010). *The New Republic* calls Zizek “the most dangerous philosopher in the West.” He is currently writing a book on Hegel. His speeches on political theory are currently available from several sources on *utube*. Zizek's rhetorical flourishes are exhausting and reading him is hard labor, but rewarding. His compelling interpretations of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who until recently has not been accessible, since he led only “closed door seminars,” with his notes now being collected for publication . . . Zizek may be the only way to be exposed to Lacan, who has had great influence on French post-structuralism, but is, himself, difficult to understand.

<sup>49</sup> Commenting upon Kant's essay *Was ist Aufklaerung? [What is Enlightenment] (1784) in the Berlinische Monatschrift*, Michael Foucault, (1954-1984), draws attention to Kant's statement that the Enlightenment meant “coming to maturity,” in our way of thinking or reasoning and “finding an exit” from past ideological limitations of thinking. See: Michael Foucault, “What is Enlightenment,” *The Essential Foucault* (NY: The Free Press, 1994), 43-58.

come to regard as THREE, necessary, “Interpretative Communities.”<sup>50</sup>

--- Philosophy and Western Intellectual Tradition

--- Historical Critical Method in New Testament Scholarship and

--- “Every-day Life” and “Language” of the people<sup>51</sup> as it is lived out [as an ongoing “Conversation”] within the local Congregation.

V. At stake is the vitality and “reason for being” for the Stone - Campbell Movement, and whether or not, as is claimed, this tradition may be seen as “A Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World,” and a “A Church for These Times.”

## Caveats

As we take up each of these schools of thought in western intellectual history, we can only make suggestions and point in some exemplary directions. Substantial and “dense” content are represented in these several, connecting academic disciplines, over hundreds of years of philosophizing. To cover these subject areas responsibly would fill volumes of books.

## Then there is the need for a response to a nagging question?

This essay will advance some responses to these particular questions: Where did we go wrong? How is it that a movement for unity ended up with three divisions? The (a) Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the “Disciples”; The (b) Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or the

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<sup>50</sup> The need for “ongoing conversation” (with “conversation” being the “operative construct”), and being immersed in a continuing “Interpretative Community,” has been excellently argued by Hans Georg Gadamer, David Tracey, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Frei, Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor.

<sup>51</sup> Michel de Certeau [Who is very important, though little known], *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2011); *The Writing of History* (NY: The Columbia University Press, 1988); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), on “modern social imaginaries,” 159-212.

“Independents,” and (c) the Churches of Christ.<sup>52</sup> In practice each of these groups has “gone their separate ways.” Why this is so, has much to do with the failure to engage, simultaneously, the THREE “Interpretative Communities,” represented by “Philosophy and Hermeneutics,” “Historical Critical Method” [in mainstream New Testament and Biblical studies, following Alexander Campbell’s death in 1866] and socially imbedded “construals of the self” [Taylor] and the “everyday life” [de Certeau] of the local Christian congregation.”

A Personal Meditation and “Excursus,” as a necessary “sidebar”

I am an ordained Pastor within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and a third generation Disciple. My Father, Alva Sizemore, (d. 2002) was an ordained minister and recognized leader within the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ or “The Independents,” as also were his two, now deceased, ordained minister brothers Foster and Denver. All three of these “Sizemore-Preacher Boys” (as, charmingly, they were called back then), graduated from a “Bible College,” Kentucky Christian College, and then they went on to receive degrees at Butler School of Religion, Indianapolis. This graduate school of religion, later was to become a freestanding graduate theological school of the Disciples, (chartered in 1958), as Christian Theological Seminary, moving to its own campus, adjacent to Butler University, in 1966. Looking back, a whiff of rueful Ironies . . . as “by twists of fate,” I ended up attending this same graduate seminary, and, because of our Stone-Campbell Movement heritage, with its emphasis upon the importance of the New Testament, going on for a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies at the University of Edinburgh. During this Edinburgh time, I studied for one year at the University of

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<sup>52</sup>The Churches of Christ became separately listed in the US Religious Census in 1906; and the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (The “Independents”) were considered as a separate body in 1968, after the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the Disciples underwent “Restructure.” However the “Independents” can trace their separation from the Disciples to as early as 1917, with the “Heresy Trials” at Lexington’s College of the Bible (Now Lexington Theological Seminary), which resulted in the Bible College Movement, with the founding of Cincinnati Bible Seminary in 1924. The organization of a separate, North American Christian Convention,(for the “Independents”), took place in 1927.

Tubingen, Germany, thanks to hospitality of the European Evangelistic Society (established in 1946, by Dean E. Walker with the conviction that our tradition must “have a presence” at the very “epicenter” of New Testament studies, which Tubingen has always been.) All of these “coincidences,” combined with the occasion of this essay, stimulate personal reflection. With appreciation for the irenic spirit, “a sense of urgency and passion” for the gospel message, and inclusiveness as experienced through my particular exposure to the “Independents,” I grew up “not excessively stressing” over perceived “differences,” between Independents and Disciples. I did understand distinctiveness between these two groups and the Churches of Christ, who, I knew, did not use instrumental music in worship, and were seen as “extremely legalistic” and “exclusivistic” in their outlook. I was aware, too, that certain streams of thinking among the Independents’ “Bible College” institutions saw things much more narrowly and stridently. The differences drawn by C. J. Dull, (an “independent”) as referenced in Gene Boring’s book, are helpful for our analysis - - - [But with some emendations]: In 1985, Dull categorized the three graduate seminaries of the “Independents” as expressing identifiable emotional tones: (1) Milligan College and Emmanuel School of Religion, under the Presidency of Dean E. Walker [“Old Conservative Disciples” - - - I prefer the term usually applied to Walker: “Free Church catholics”]; (2) the “Midwestern Pragmatics” represented by Lincoln Christian Seminary, and (3) the Independent “Fundamentalists” at Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Even then the descriptions of these three examples were said to “be in transition.” It appears, though, that I was “sheltered” from the angry defensiveness that marked some of these Independents. What I experienced through my father’s “style” of church leadership was “inclusiveness” and “encouragement.” From among the “Independents” whom I met, while growing up, and who frequently “stayed at our home,” they seemed an “intellectually curious” bunch and of a “warm-hearted spirit,” supporting one another in working for their notion of Christian unity while, to a large extent, taking seriously the challenges of their present culture. The Butler School of Religion narratives included, an appreciation for early teachers like Dean E. Walker (1898-1988) who is described as “a progressive conservative with apostolic grounding and catholic appeal” (ESCM). Throughout his life, my father would never consider any professional move without first consulting Dean Walker. I would hear much about Fredrick D. Kershner (1875-1953), a “free

church catholic” and early mediator between Liberal and Conservative factions, and Will Robinson (1888-1963), “a high/church/free church theologian,” and Toyozo Nakarai (1898-1984) an esteemed teacher of Hebrew at Butler School of Religion, under whom I would later study. In 1968, with Disciples “Restructure,” there was some “difference” now to speak about. Looking back, even then, the reasons for separation now appear to have been based upon “whipped up” or “manufactured” fears . . . [i.e. Open Membership, Direct Support of Missionaries, and populist anxieties that a “bureaucratic organization,” or “big brother” would interfere with your life and steal the church property]. And, now, in 2011-2012, things seem to be “coming round full circle,” as a result, I would propose, of: (a) the fruitful “Campbell Stone Dialogues” (1999 to the present); (b) the publication of the excellent *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*<sup>53</sup> (ESCM), the (c) *People’s New Testament Commentary*,<sup>54</sup> with its “consensus” of current New Testament Scholarly research forthrightly presented by two Disciples Scholars; the (d) accumulative, positive contribution of the *World Convention* (which brings all three traditions together once every four years, for fellowship and workshop-learning) and (e) such organizations as the European Evangelistic Society --- [as a “New Testament People” we must have a presence at the very center of world-renowned research, as an “Institute” in “Christian Origins” at the University of Tubingen.]<sup>55</sup> So today, there may, again, be a hopeful environment for “little difference” to be experienced between at least these two traditions.<sup>56</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, my father would attend “both conventions” --- The *International Convention* of the Disciples and the *North American Christian Convention*, of the “Independents.” He would be recommended to and would seriously consider himself as a

<sup>53</sup> Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant and D. Newell Williams, Eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> By Disciples M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock (2004)

<sup>55</sup> Among the Independents, such an idea was to be replicated at UCLA, under the leadership of Robert O. Fife and the present Director, of the “Institute,” S. Scott Bartchy, who has a Ph.D. in New Testament from Harvard, having studied under established New Testament Scholar, Krister Stendahl.

<sup>56</sup> This statement from Christian Church/Churches of Christ (Independent) academic, Dr. Henry Webb, Professor of Church History (Emeritus) at Milligan College, in a private conversation at the World Convention, Nashville, 2008: “I think the chances for unity and cooperation between at least these two groups [Disciples and Independents] are better now than they have ever been.” According to Bob Wetzel, President (Emeritus) of Emmanuel School of Religion, from a private conversation, where he states that this graduate school has now intentionally “positioning itself” to appeal to and serve both of these theological traditions.

Pastor-Leader Candidate for both “Independent” and “Disciple” congregations. Today, I am, suggesting that we must not be too quick to say: “That was then, this is now.” Somewhere about the time of my encounter with graduate theological education I sensed a growing intellectual uneasiness moving me more in the direction of the Disciples and away from the Independents, though this transition was made with some degree of painfulness in giving up a world where I knew that one did not “sweat the small stuff” and where now, in 2011-2012, we may have discovered that “most of it all was small stuff.” Why this complicated personal migration occurred may be taken as a mirror, I would think, to explain a journey of separation for the whole movement, into these now, [at least] two traditions, which originally were and may, again, (although for different reasons) be experienced as one. We will discover from this study that our tradition imagined “unity” of all people, in an amplitude of embodiments. Which is what people might have meant in calling the best among us: “Free Church catholics.”<sup>57</sup>

The role of Classic Philosophy . . . “Plus”: It has always been the case that the critical disciplines of Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Epistemology and Rhetoric are to be linked for any description of “agreed-upon”<sup>58</sup> “reality” we might hope to put forward. Formal fields of study, and

<sup>57</sup>I take “catholic” to mean that these leaders, like Dean Walker, Dean Kershner, and Will Robinson, were so described because of their commitment to serious “conversation” with all denominations in ecumenical conferences, world-wide. See Dean E. Walker, *Adventuring for Christian Unity and Other Essays* (Milligan College, TN: Emmanuel School of Religion Press, 1992). The same description might be applied to Disciples leaders like Ronald Osborn, Kenneth Teagarden and T J. Liggett, for example. (See: D. Duane Cummins, *The Disciples: A Struggle for Reformation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2009), and his *Kenneth L. Teagarden: The Man, the Church, the Time* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2007). This willingness to seek out discourse opportunities with any serious inquirer, who shows a capacity for rational conversation on important matters may be observed in Alexander Campbell’s appreciation of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) and Theodore Parker (1810-1860), with whom he was in regular contact, these being two of the founding voices among the Unitarians. His several-days Cincinnati debate (in 1829) with the agnostic Robert Owen (1771-1858), which was remarkably “civil” - - - [as was astonishingly noted by Frances Trollope (1779-1863), who was in attendance, she being the mother of the novelist Anthony Trollope (1815-882). Source: Frances Trollope, *The Domestic Manners of the Americans*, (1832). For this animus driving Campbell toward conversation, see Eva Jean Wrather, and D. Duane Cummins, Ed., Three Volumes, *Alexander Campbell, Adventurer in Freedom: A Literary Biography* (Fort Worth: Texas University Press, 2009), and Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (1868)* which can be “googled” for the online version.

<sup>58</sup> Instead of “agreed-upon,” or “consensus,” Gadamer and Habermas philosophize around the hermeneutical term, “universal.” The Lutheran, George Lindbeck (1923 --- ), of the “Post-Liberal Yale School,” best known for his engagement in ecumenical dialogue, who was an “observer” at Vatican II, he

involvement with other disciplines, Cognitive Science, Literary Criticism, Anthropology, Sociology, Communicative Theory, should all be included. Each of these fields has a place within the larger context of western intellectual history. Addressing the contributions of these many fields constitutes the only responsible justification for claiming to “know, what we think we know, regarding what we claim to be talking about.”

The substance of our particular investigation, the contribution of Alexander Campbell, to rational thinking methodologies and his involvement with “interpretative communities” and “conversational” processes, requires some clarification around his seminal ideas on interpretation. We must deal here with more than “content,” or “historical reporting”; but with the “bigger,” “ontological” or “existential”<sup>59</sup> questions he stimulated. As with all original thinkers and public intellectuals, Campbell is important for “what he triggered.” Listing the “influences upon him from his intellectual culture” has been well covered before. It is helpful here to use Ricoeur’s idea of “Surplus of Meaning,” and Harold Bloom’s reflections about “Effluences” in literary genius.

## The “Influences” and “Effluences”: Originality in Alexander Campbell

*Campbell’s . . . “approach to the study of Scripture would be more akin to the theological emphasis of ‘post-liberal’<sup>60</sup> studies than those which dominated the close of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. It is evident from the survey of Campbell’s work in interpretation that he borrowed heavily from his predecessors . . . He evaluated his own work in this same light by using an analogy of John Newton. Newton had said that whenever he found a pretty feather in any bird he endeavored to attach it to*

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being known for “getting people to speak together who never did before,” outlines three, interactive levels of truth: (1) Categorical (First order propositions), (2) Ontological and (3) Intra-systemic (as lived out in the Christian Community). As an example, the theological statement, “Christ is Lord” must be “true” at all three levels to be “rightly utilized.” *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1984 [2009]), *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (London: SCM Press, 2003). On Campbell as a “Post-Liberal,” see the quotation, regarding Campbell, by Thurston on the next page.

<sup>59</sup> The ability to bring opposites into coherence, and think in “bigger picture” categories, Gardner calls “Existential Intelligence,” as one of the Five Modes of Intelligence required for functioning today.

<sup>60</sup> Lindbeck, Frei and Lonergan, of the “Yale School” represent this “Post-Liberal” school of thinking, who were influenced by Karl Barth and Neo-Orthodoxy. Others should be added to this list, including, David Tracey, Stanley Hauwerwas, Henri de Lubac, Alistair Macintyre, and sociologist interpreters Clifford Geertz and Peter Berger.



himself. By this he became a speckled bird and belonged to no particular species but flattered himself that he was the prettiest of birds. Campbell concludes by saying that he had been looking for pretty feathers also and had become more speckled than Newton of Olney."<sup>61</sup>

**With the "Great Ones," Imaginative Writers and Thinkers who live in the world of "The Sublime," [Bloom's Term] they "give you a sense of something ever more about to be"; or with these literary figures we consider the question of "Effluence," not "Influence."<sup>62</sup>**

Pressing into currency Bloom's quotation and applying it to Campbell, we can conclude that it is difficult to trace influences upon him. He read Kant at age 16, taught himself languages and read and studied deeply eight hours every day all of his life, keeping a journal in Latin. In the Campbell-Owen Debate (1829), much to the astonishment of his audience, Campbell held forth with a twelve-hour discourse quoting freely and from memory almost every significant intellectual of his time. It has been said that Thomas Reid's "Common Sense Philosophy" and the Scottish Enlightenment (1650-1800) represented the general intellectual environment in which Campbell operated. Yet, Campbell defies linear connections of influence. Considering, as we must, the classical disciplines of Hermeneutics, Epistemology and Rhetoric and Thomas Reid's "Common Sense Philosophy," which itself, was extremely complex, as his thinking included the "ontological" dimensions of textual interpretation. In fact, it can be asserted that a clear connection can be seen in Alexander Campbell's Hermeneutics, from Schleiermacher (who used Augustine), (1768-1834), to Reid (1710-1796), Dugold Stewart (1753-1828), Husserl (1859-1938), especially Dilthey (1833-1911) --- who worked out a "scientific Method" for the "Human Sciences," especially the "later" Heidegger (1889-1976), Gadamer (1900-2002),

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<sup>61</sup>Thurston, (1958) p. 187, and quoting Campbell from *The Christian Baptist*, 228. John Newton (1725-1807), converted slave trader and author of "Amazing Grace," joined with poet William Cowper (1731-1800) at Olney, England, where Newton was the Curate, to produce what was later the Sacred Harp Collection of "Olney Hymns."

<sup>62</sup> This insight, on "the Sublime" and "Effluence" which, I am arguing, may be applied to Alexander Campbell, comes from world renown Literary Critic, Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 9; See also, his earlier work, *The Anxiety of Influence* (NY: Oxford, 1997).

Habermas (1929 --- ), and importantly, as we will see, Ricoeur (1913-2005).<sup>63</sup> The particulars we are driven here to articulate, demand, as context, a working knowledge in a wide swath of this history of western ideas.

## The Three “Communities” of “Conversation” for Alexander Campbell’s “Hermeneutic”

Campbell worked from within the intellectual framework of the European and Scottish Enlightenment, which should not be caricatured or easily dismissed as one-dimensional, especially as we think of Hermeneutics, or definitions for “history” and “the historical.”

“The expression ‘*Common Sense*’ was subject to severe misunderstanding because it was misread to convey the general idea of practical evaluation that any person might display under certain circumstances. It was largely developed as a *technical science* by Thomas Reid.”<sup>64</sup>

Reid must be regarded as a pure “Philosopher,” as well as was Campbell. Reid’s intellectual vigor involved a serious concentration on the works of Frances Bacon (1561-1626) Immanuel Kant, David Hume, John Locke and George Berkeley, whose writings, in matters of Epistemology and how the mind works, were considered foundational. Reid himself established such a wide ranging impact, his books and ideas representing a *tour de force* stretching well into the twentieth century. Reid was a constant and “civil” [though, one-sided] conversation partner with the skeptic, David Hume” (who never responded to critics), and with other Empiricists of his time. Reid presenting his theories of knowledge with much more ontological<sup>65</sup> passion and aliveness than is often credited. From his earliest years in Aberdeen, with George Beattie (1735-1803) --- who was well respected by the *literati* of his time, such as Edmund Burke (1729-

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<sup>63</sup> We exclude from consideration Derrida, Foucault, de Certeau, for example, or those Hermeneutical Critics who operate more distantly from the disciplines of what may be considered “pure” Philosophy and New Testament, “Historical, [even Narrative] Critical Method.” For their importance in theological reflection, however, see the contemporary works of David Tracy and Bernard Lonergan.

<sup>64</sup> Thurston, (1958) 49.

<sup>65</sup> His writing about memory, intuition, [In his fruitful critiques of Berkeley] and art experience are widely ignored.

1797) and Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), “arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history.” Reid established several, famous “Conversation Salons,” starting in Aberdeen (and later in Glasgow), with the “Wise Club” or the “Aberdeen Philosophical Society,” founded by Reid and Beattie in 1753. Samuel Johnson was a leader in “The Club” in London (founded 1764) as another example of how intellectuals saw “conversation rooms” as a way to advance knowledge. During this time in history it was thought that, if you could not “hold your own” in live conversation at this highest level, the ideas were not considered to be worth much. In 1645, “conversations” at Oxford, led to the “London Royal Society for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge” (1660), which still exists today as the United Kingdom’s esteemed, “Academy of Sciences, [popularly referred to still, as “The Royal Society”]. In France and Dublin<sup>66</sup> such “conversations” were going on starting in the early 1600s.

The Importance of “Conversation” and “Public Cultural/Intellectual Dialogue”: From the early to middle 1800s, we see in North America a wide popularity of the “Public Lyceum Lectures,” within the age of “The Personal Essay”; this impulse was the “Education” and “Entertainment” for the period. Transcendentalist Poet and Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and lecturer, writer, humorist and entertainer Mark Twain (1835-1910) enjoyed a considerable following, in this forum of intellectual and cultural exchange, leading (in 1874) to the founding of the “Chatauqua Movement of Educational and Cultural Centers,” in Chatauqua, New York, which continues up to the present day with several other vibrant expressions of this educational model. With his many debates and public lectures, Campbell was at home in this world.

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Historical origins of “Conversation Rooms”: The “Great Hall,” and “Conversation Room,”<sup>67</sup> of “The Philosophy Club” or “The Philosophical Debating Society,” founded in 1683 as “the oldest paper-reading and debating society in the world,” at Trinity College, Dublin --- the college itself being founded in 1592, as Ireland’s first. The aforementioned Royal Society of London started as a “conversation” group among scientists and intellectuals. [at Oxford, in 1645] who gathered to discuss the “new science” of Bacon. In Campbell’s day, in Scotland, and as a vital part of the Scottish Enlightenment, such “conversation groups” were common. Later Reid was to be a professor at the University of Glasgow, which included serious intellectual exchanges with David Hume (1711-1796) (1711-1776) and, later, with Dugold Stewart (1753-1828), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and Adam Smith (1723-1790), whose “Professorial Chair” Reid took over at Glasgow. “Conversation” is to be seen, then, as an essential fabric of the “Scottish Enlightenment.”

Reid’s brilliant student, Dugold Stewart came to the Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1785, and in matters of Epistemology and even New Testament interpretation, Campbell demonstrated a frequent indebtedness to him. In Campbell’s day, it must be noted, there was little separation between all fields of academic study which explains why he founded Bethany College on these educational principles. Throughout his life, “Natural” or “Rational” hermeneutical foundations guided Campbell’s “Epistemology” and, in particular, his interpretation of the New Testament. These principles may be summarized as:

A deep understanding of John Locke and Immanuel Kant, especially as interpreted through Dugold Stewart, and with all the nuanced response and criticism from Thomas Reid and the Scottish Enlightenment with its stress on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and especially his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). [Reid had a lot to say about “judgment”]. Campbell also freely used the rational epistemological arguments of John Locke and “Locke’s theory of knowledge as based upon sensation” and the arguments of William Paley.”<sup>68</sup> To Thomas Reid’s *Scottish Common Sense Philosophy*, along with that of his followers, must be added the recognized intellectual vigor in the overall cultural environment of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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<sup>67</sup> Pushing this bias, the web page for my essays on faith and culture goes by the label . . .

[www.theconversationroom.org](http://www.theconversationroom.org) .

<sup>68</sup> Thurston, (1958) p. 64.

In Reid's view, there must be agreed-upon "rules" of interpretation before any conversation can begin. In all his debates, Campbell always clarified, ahead of time, the "rules of engagement." If agreement was not reached, there were certain conversations he refused to entertain. On several occasions Campbell cut off a "conversation" because the "rules of engagement" had not been met. He was a stickler for not becoming involved in a "low level of language usage" which indicated to him "the inability to reason properly."

A commitment to "Natural Reason" as expressed by the spirit of the "Age of Reason" or the "Enlightenment" (emanating from France, but spreading throughout Europe (1650-1800), and with especial appreciation for the best of Biblical scholars of his day. Above all, Campbell demonstrated a careful exegetical method which (a) assumed a critical understanding of Christology [who is "the Christ" as "Lord?"], and a passion for (b) the Gospel message with a well-articulated Ecclesiology [A Theology of the meaning of the Church, which cannot be reduced to "pattern restorationism"]. (c) Skills with the original languages and manuscripts, were within his grasp, through his knowledge of Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812). (d) Campbell was acquainted with the critical methods in Biblical studies of his day,<sup>69</sup> and . . .

A clear-headed assumption that God *continues revelations* to us through our (a) serious study, (b) without, as a prerequisite, the need of any special intervention, religious "experience" or appeal to the "supernatural." [Campbell rejected the "Mourners Bench].

The whole and the parts of the text must interpret each other, without seeing the New Testament as "superseding" the Old.

It may be said that by 1750 the Scots were the most literate citizens of Europe. The French and European Enlightenment shaped The Scottish Enlightenment, especially as it was made known in Scotland through Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Dugold Stewart (1753-1828), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and Thomas Reid. Both Hutcheson and Reid taught at the University of Glasgow, though Reid gave up his chair in 1781 "in order to write."

This unfolding revelation by God through Natural Reasoning is not "fixed" for all time in what came later to be described, in the era following Campbell's death or from 1866 forward, as appeals to "the plain meaning of the text." Along with contemporary Biblical Scholars of his time, Campbell believed that the "plain" meaning of the text is "not so plain," is not to be "spiritualized," making it necessary for interpreters to commit to the disciplines of "Historical

Critical Method.” Mostly this level of scholarship which emanated from Germany came to North America only in the latter third of the nineteenth century after Campbell’s time. But, there is enough evidence to indicate that Campbell would have been heavily involved with this German and European Biblical Scholarship, as we now know it, because Campbell consulted the best of German New Testament Scholarship of his day, as he studied and respected the works of Moses Stuart (1780-1852), faculty member at Andover Theological School [Now, Andover Newton Theological School], which was the first graduate Theological Seminary in the United States, founded in reaction to the Unitarianism they perceived to be present at Harvard, in 1807.

## The Nature of a “Populist Movement” and “the Interpretative Community”

Historians inform us that all “Populist Movements” are characterized by an ongoing “Democratic Conversation.”<sup>70</sup>

If their message is to prevail, this “Democratic Conversation” must be (a) “moved inside,” that is to a space within accepted, intellectual disciplines (Gadamer)<sup>71</sup> and, (b) for the sake of any wider influence, taken “outside” into a “Public Sphere” (Habermas). The *processes* for this kind of “conversation” involve being positioned within an (c) “understanding distance” of the authoritative, foundational documents, or texts, upon which the Movement depends. For the purposes of our study, then, (d) we consider a hermeneutic of the New Testament texts themselves<sup>72</sup> within the context of (e) mainstream, historical Critical Methods in peer-reviewed

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<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Goodman’s epic study, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt (1870-1892) in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1979). The Agrarian Revolt was “the largest democratic mass movement in American history.”

<sup>71</sup> The “Fusions of Horizons,” between the (1) discipline of the interpretation of texts and (2) our “sense of self, as construed by everyday life,” come together, or interact with each other. Hermeneutics must have limits and cannot consider everything (literature, sociology, anthropology, psychology, existentialist-ontology). In the case of the two best contemporary examples of Hermeneutical Theory, in Gadamer and Habermas, these limits are within the scope of classical Philosophy (Hans-George Gadamer, 1900-2002) and Jurgen Habermas (1929 --- ), who use Philosophy in dialogue with language and “Communication Theory.”

<sup>72</sup> This is one of Campbell’s, famous “seven rules” for the interpretation of Scripture. An elaboration of them may be found in M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples . . .* 85-87. An assessment of Campbell as a textual

scholarship.

Since the time of Friedrich Schlegel (1768-1834), who is seen as the “Father” of “Critical Method, Hermeneutics and Theology,” the interpretation of Biblical texts was recognized as a formal discipline within the Enlightenment. Schleiermacher established “Theology” as a legitimate department within the university. Hermeneutics positioned itself as an academic speciality which originally was used for the interpretation of Biblical texts, and later was considered for all literature and for an interpretation of the law. Hermeneutical *processes* are now driven by a serious and necessary engagement with an “Ongoing Interpretive Community” (Paul Ricoeur). Here is a critical observation:

“In contrast to Habermas and Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur . . . though much neglected,” is the most important among current thought-leaders on Hermeneutics today . . . For he, among all others “has seriously engaged *classical philosophy* itself,” always considering himself a “Philosopher,” and has stressed the essential value of “immersion in an ongoing interpretive community” (emphasis, mine).<sup>73</sup>

For Ricoeur, this “Ongoing Interpretive Community” means THREE: (a) Not only Classical Philosophy<sup>74</sup> and (b) Mainline New Testament Scholarship but, also, (c) the everyday life of the Christian Congregation.<sup>75</sup> Ricoeur regularly attended church worship services and viewed his work “in Philosophy” as being conducted on behalf of the church, as he appreciated listening to and was a “student of” sermons. For our current focus of attention, then, these three areas --- Classical Philosophy, Historical Critical Method [Broadly conceived] in New Testament Scholarship and the everyday life of the congregation --- are to be considered, an important working definition of what it means, according to Ricoeur, to be “immersed in an ongoing

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and historical critical method “scholar” is confirmed by Boring in pp. 57ff. and 87ff. The rules for interpretation were originally put forth by Campbell in “Tracts for the People, No. III, “The Bible-Principles of Interpretation,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, Series III, Vol. III, Bethany, VA., January 1846, No. 1 (10 pages).

<sup>73</sup> Glenda Ballantyne, *Creativity and Critique: Subjectivity and Agency in Touraine and Ricoeur* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3. On Ricoeur by a Disciples Scholar, see the unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Emory University, 2010) on Paul Ricoeur by the current Disciples Assistant Professor of Hermeneutics, (since 2010) Lance Pape, at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University.

<sup>74</sup> Unlike the other Hermeneutical Philosophers, who ranged into the fields of sociology, literary criticism, historiography, anthropology, semeiotics, and the cognitive sciences, Ricoeur remained within the “Hermeneutical Horizons” (Gadamer’s definition) of the field of Philosophy.

<sup>75</sup> See Frei, Lonergan.

interpretive community.” *These three “Conversational Communities,” as well, must be recognized as the essential focus of Alexander Campbell’s “Hermeneutic.”*<sup>76</sup>

New Hermeneutics and “Learning Theories” which may guide today’s “rational” Conversation and Dialogue. Examples: Jungian<sup>77</sup> Learning Theory.

“ . . . Day by day, we must create a domain in which we and those around us continually deepen our understanding of reality and are able to participate in shaping the future . . . [which involves] . . . collectively ‘listening’ to what is emerging in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required.”

--- Joseph Jaworski

For “method” in how we know “reality,” “truth-claims” and “sense-making,” the Learning Theory represented by the psychoanalytic psychology of Carl Jung (1875-1961) must be taken into account. As background we must consult the esteemed intellectual, Jungian Analyst, and “Archetypal” Psychologist,” James Hillman (1926-2011),<sup>78</sup> Quantum Physicist David Bohm (1917-1990), who, from the perspective of a physicist, [i.e. knowing the “way the *universe works*”], wrote the classic “philosophical” study on “Generative Dialogue,”<sup>79</sup> and who became the stimulus for the creation of the MIT Institute of Organizational Learning, [[www.solonline.org](http://www.solonline.org)], which was founded by Peter Senge.<sup>80</sup> Leaders in this “circle” are Joseph Jaworski, C. Otto Scharmer and William Isaacs, with their Jungian theoretical Epistemology of

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<sup>76</sup> Many have justifiably lamented the “purely academic” (as historians of religion) study of the New Testament, without any evidence of participating in church life. In the work of the “New Testament Scholar,” such an absence . . . “shows.”

<sup>77</sup> The Jungian theory of the “Collective Unconscious,” is similar to what Campbell would argue through natural theology, and our ability to know the Mind or Will of God. In both Jung and Campbell, this “God” is made known through discernment and study.

<sup>78</sup> Hillman has written many stimulating books, on “synchronicity,” “archetypes” and Jungian learning theory, one of which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

<sup>79</sup> *On Dialogue* (NY: *Rutledge*, 1992). See those who followed up on his theories, especially Joseph Jaworski.

<sup>80</sup> A classic, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (NY: *Doubleday*, 1990), and subsequent editions, the latest of which is 2006.



“sensing [“presencing”] the future which announces its arrival.”<sup>81</sup> The theories of Harvard Psychologist, Howard Gardner<sup>82</sup> have resonance within this school of thinking as he describes at least five different kinds of intelligence which are essential for reasoning in our time. In this Jungian Learning Theory “group” we are introduced into an entirely other, “counter-intuitive” or “ontological” way of knowing.

## Claiming to be a “New Testament People” is not enough.

For any intelligible understanding to be alive in public conversation, Principles of Interpretation must be established and agreed upon, which assume as a starting point, the commonly accepted tools of the academic discipline. *As with any other academic field of study, we must enter into “conversation” with the best minds or, with justification, we will not be taken seriously.* In our case we are talking about mainstream<sup>83</sup> Historical Critical Method in New Testament Studies, including European Scholarship. The Stone-Campbell Movement is to be judged upon the basis of whether or not and to what extent its leadership can show evidence of engaging New Testament Scholarship which has been productive since 1783.<sup>84</sup>

This task of interpretation must be accomplished “from within the world of Biblical scholarship looking out,” ( this insight by Boring, *Disciples . . .* ), which especially involves being

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<sup>81</sup> From this MIT Institute group, see C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Flowers and Peter Senge, *Presence* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2004), and Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges, The Social Technology of Presencing* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 2009) --- which explains the process of “downloading” or getting rid of past ways of knowing in order to know through “presencing.” See a similar idea in Harold Bloom’s advice to writers, from Samuel Johnson, “to first rid your mind of cant.”--- and compare with Scharmer’s concept of “Downloading patterns of the past,” “suspending,” “Seeing with fresh eyes,” “deep dive,” “Sensing from the field,” “letting go,” “Presencing: connecting to the source,” (the “source” being the Jungian belief in the “Collective Unconscious”). See also, Joseph Jaworski, *Synchronicity* (San Francisco, Barrett-Koehler, 2011) and William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (NY: Doubleday, 2011). Isaacs is the Director of MIT’s, Sloan School of Management’s “Dialogue Project.”

<sup>82</sup> *Multiple intelligence* (NY: Basic Books, 2006); *Five Minds for the Future* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009) and *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (NY: Basic Books, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> A good contemporary example of these commonly accepted scholarly views, as we have argued, may be found in M. Eugene Boring and Fred Craddock, [Both are Disciples], *A People’s New Testament Commentary (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004)* which has received wide-spread positive acceptance across all denominational lines.

<sup>84</sup> German New Testament Scholarship, as we have stated, was not strongly present in North America until the latter third of the nineteenth century, or early twentieth. Even then, it must be observed, this scholarship seemed to show up with more of its limited, “British” empiricist expressions.

informed by continental European and German Scholarship. Any study of the New Testament,<sup>85</sup> then and now, will need, also, to be conducted in conversation with the church. Too much of the Stone-Campbell Movement's past Church of Christ and Christian Church / Churches of Christ (or the "Independents") history may be best characterized as "looking, if at all, from the outside, in," [toward New Testament Scholarship] and even then, only "tentatively." There has been much intellectual irresponsibility, with "Fundamentalist" or "Hard-Conservative" and defensive approaches, which appear to be little more than taking up rigidified positions on the outside of the house of "conversation," and "throwing rocks."

A "Movement" will need to overcome an initial and defensive, "grass-roots, anti-intellectualism," characterized by "isolationist, compartmentalized thinking" where the leaders end up "only talking to themselves." Eventually these movements must "join the mainstream-scholarly culture" within the "moving flow of the history of ideas," or they lose their "reason for existence," ending up only "justifying themselves," and not contributing to the larger world of ideas.

These prerequisites mean that, a fruitful conversation cannot even begin, unless guidance is given by . . .

Necessary, and agreed-upon-ahead-of-time "rules" of engagement, [which is to say, being

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<sup>85</sup> For the formative development of Campbell's thought, we have attended to the time-period of the Establishment of the Brush Run Church, which had a short history (1811-c.a.1828), his preparation for ordination at this Church in 1812, the "Sermon on the Law" (1816), his first debate with James Walker (1820), and until the publication in 1826 of his New Testament translation [with commentary, "notes" or "helps."] --- *THE LIVING ORACLES: THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS OF JESUS CHRIST, COMMONLY STYLED THE NEW TESTAMENT, TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK,*<sup>119</sup> BY GEORGE CAMPBELL, JAMES MACKNIGHT, AND PHILIP DODDRIDGE, DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, (WITH PREFACES TO THE HISTORICAL AND EPISTOLARY BOOKS; AND AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING CRITICAL NOTES AND VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS OF DIFFICULT PASSAGES. PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY ALEXR. CAMPBELL, BUFFALOE, BROOKE COUNTY, VIRGINIA. 1826), (First Edition). Campbell references George Campbell (1719-1796), James MacKnight (1721-1800) and Phillip Doddridge (1702-1751), throughout his translation, and regarded them as the best "commentaries" and "translations" of his time. He began to consider German Biblical Scholarship through his interactions with Moses Stewart, as mentioned above. For manuscript evidence, and for his translation, Campbell used the latest version of the Greek New Testament, from the German textual critic, J. J. Griesbach (1745-1812), second edition (1809).

aware of the extended conversations within classical Hermeneutics,<sup>86</sup> Epistemology and New Testament Scholarship] . . .

Carried on, it must be added, with an all-embracing, irenic spirit, an “emotional-feeling-tone,” or a warmhearted openness to and respect for differing points of view. Jungian communication theorist Isaacs calls this a posture of “befriending polarization.”<sup>87</sup>

The dynamics here described assume what might be called modes of “Intellectually Honesty,” an absence or reduction of “fear in the system” and a “Learning Theory” commitment that, “suspends judgment,” in the presence of and while being “interrogated” by the “Other.” For the purposes of this essay, the “Other” means being vitally “addressed” by the New Testament Texts themselves.

A genuine commitment will need to be evident for entertaining the possibility of “being shaped, formed and changed” by “the Other.”<sup>88</sup>

Margaret Mead (1901-1978) is instructive here: “We must *teach* in such a way as, at the same time, to learn from those whom we teach” . . . or, Disciples, Hermeneutics-Story Teller, Fred Craddock: “Tell a story so that it invites others to tell theirs.” This “emotionally-toned stance in the world” represents a *bona fide* “learning theory,” and is a prerequisite for stimulating “conversation.” In “communication theory,” this kind of conversation goes by the formal name of “Generative Dialogue.”<sup>89</sup> A “Generative (kind of) Dialogue,” then, *raises the level of conversation* for it is a means through which a body of knowledge is expanded by being immersed in an “Ongoing Interpretative Community,”

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<sup>86</sup> Any study of Hermeneutics [An overwhelming task in itself] must also consider Classical “Greco-Roman Rhetoric.” See, contemporary New Testament Scholar Hans Dieter Betz, who uses Rhetoric, its “structures” and “rules,” as a key to understanding how the Gospel tradition was formed, in redaction and source criticism, and its use (since Augustine) for interpreting New Testament Texts. See his commentary on *Galatians: the Hermeneia Series* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), and especially, the magisterial (694 pages of small print with elaborate footnotes), *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), and Bernard Brandon Scott’s new work (with Margaret Ellen Lee) on orality and Rhetoric [albeit Rhetoric understood as a “function of sound”], *Sound Mapping the New Testament* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2009).

<sup>87</sup> One of William Isaacs four rules for conducting a “generative dialogue.”

<sup>88</sup> Gadamer considered this understanding of the “Other” in explaining the critical contributions of Martin Buber (1878-1965), in his classic book, *Ich und Du* (1923), later translated into English as *I and Thou* --- The last and best translation with notes, being by Walter Kaufmann, Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (NY: Scribners, 1970 [1996]).

<sup>89</sup> Based on the theories “On Dialogue” of physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992) and subsequent “learning theory” practitioners, Peter Senge, (“The Learning Community”), William Isaacs (Director, “The Dialogue Project,” MIT’s Sloan School of Management) and especially, the descriptions of prerequisites for “Generative Dialogue,” as explained in C. Otto Scharmer, (which Research is based on the seminal “learning theories” of Psychologist, Karl Jung), *Theory U: Leading from the Future As it Emerges: The Social Technology of Presencing* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009).

which according to the theories of Karl Jung, includes also an openness to being instructed by the “Collective Unconscious.”

## Summary --- “How We Must Begin (Anew):

These essential processes and building-blocks constitute a “Hermeneutic” --- or a “rational way of being in the world” or “inside an intellectual discipline,” which operates “*within*” (and not “outside of” Scholarship, Philosophy and the “Everyday Life” of the Church), or these processes mean being, as Riceour reminds us, “Immersed in an Ongoing Interpretive Community.”

The commonly accepted rational methods which characterize this “Public Sphere” would have to be agreed upon, as the “the scientific”<sup>90</sup> or “mainstream Historical Critical Method” in Biblical (and especially New Testament) scholarship, which disciplines need to be combined . . . with a “Rational,”<sup>91</sup> intellectual functioning, in an open, public forum setting,<sup>92</sup> which is . . . dedicated to “interactivity,” the free exchange of ideas, making room for “*sustained deliberation*,” over extended periods of time, trusting the “average person” to handle the highest levels of scholarship and the best minds of the day.

In this “attitude” of being “open to change by the Other,” serious “Conversation” or “Dialogue” will shape, “correct” (Gadamer) and form us. This is the only way to overcome isolation, or to end up (hopefully) knowing more than we can know by ourselves, which is never enough. “It is why we read,” says the noted Literary Critic, Harold Bloom, “for we cannot, left to ourselves, know all we need to know.”<sup>93</sup> Campbell illustrated this spirit (a) in his first debate (with Walker, 1820), when he spent much time, as he would always do in his future,

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<sup>90</sup> Originating, it can be said, with Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the “father of empiricism,” and the “scientific,” “critical,” or “inductive method.”

<sup>91</sup> We know today that it is not enough to say, merely, that we take a “Rational Approach” to addressing truth-claims. We no longer have only a false dichotomy between “objective” and “subjective.” There is no “value free” place we can stand to look at the “object.” To be “Rational” in discourse is defined in many different ways today with multiple forms of “cognitive functioning,” for which see the excellent work by Harvard Psychologist, Howard Gardner, mentioned earlier.

<sup>93</sup> Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 22; *The Anatomy of Influence*, . . . (2011).

setting out the “rules of engagement,” and, (b) at the end of the debate itself, he said that he would become a Baptist, Presbyterian, Quaker or a Unitarian “in an instant” if “evidence could but be presented from the Apostles.” We have explored here what Campbell meant by “evidences,” and the authoritative “testimony” . . . “of the Apostles.” Now we must look at how these ideas might resonate today.

Campbell also (c) kept a daily Journal [in Latin], or a “Commonplace Book,” which in his time, (1) influenced by Calvinist thinking which permeated the culture of his day, was a means for “working out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” while, at the same time, (2) the notebooks functioned as a method for gathering new information to expand the world’s knowledge (as Charles Darwin did with his notebooks).

## Caveats

The academic disciplines represented here, are substantial and constitute dense content for investigation and hundreds of years of scholarship. To cover these subject areas responsibly would fill volumes of books.

## A Nagging Question

This essay advances some answers to these particular questions: Where did we go wrong? How is it that a movement for unity ended up with three divisions? The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or “Disciples,” (b) The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or the “Independents,” and (c) the Churches of Christ, who have, for all practical purposes, “gone their separate ways.” Why this happened, as we have argued, has much to do with the failure to engage “Critical Method” in mainstream New Testament and Biblical studies, following Alexander Campbell’s death in 1866.

## Specifics Examples

Considering these explanations, on all counts, the Stone-Campbell Movement qualifies as a “North American Populist Movement.” This nineteenth century “Reformation” or “Restoration Movement,” which began in 1801, 1804, or 1809 (depending on what gets counted), is best articulated through the “scholarship” of Alexander Campbell, and his “discourses” as a “public intellectual.”

We have expanded upon Gene Boring’s excellent survey of Disciples New Testament Scholarship and Interpretation (1997), to explore further questions. Reflecting upon “echoes” from Alexander Campbell’s earlier years (1810-1829), we need now to attend to some present-day examples. A burning Issue of Campbell’s day and the subject of his debates and writing --- (“Infant Baptism” versus “Baptism by Immersion”; the threats of “Roman Catholicism” or “Agnosticism”; The “remission of sins” and “prevenient grace” as understood by John Calvin), do not have the same sense of urgency today.

A starting point is the agreement of the 2005-2006 Campbell-Stone Movement Dialogues on the use of “Historical-Critical Method” in New Testament Scholarship, and its possible application (or not) in current interpretation.<sup>94</sup> For illustrative purposes we summarize three issues:

(1) An understanding of what constitutes “fixedness,” in understandings of “history,” “facticity,” “correctness,” “propositions” and “evidences,” over against “the dynamic, New Testament, oral-to-written, tradition-ing process,” which is the “assured result findings” by current New Testament scholars . In summary, then, this is HOW the New Testament Gospel tradition was formed and therefore the “genre” of the texts under consideration. This way of seeing the texts constitutes an “Epistemology,” a “place to stand” before we can begin. Such a consideration, which is also established by Boring/Craddock, *Peoples* . . . (2004), will lead us beyond the criticism of Gadamer that we cannot afford to become mired in what he calls a

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<sup>94</sup> In the 2005 Campbell-Stone Dialogues, Gene Boring gave this kind of example in his exegesis of Romans 14:1-15:9, between the “weak” and the “strong,” in dealing with conflict. Source: the web citation referenced above.

“Naive Historic Objectivism.”<sup>95</sup>

(2) Utilizing the best of current New Testament Scholarship, addressing the question of the Ordination of Women and their Leadership Role in the Church (at least as “Elders”), a long-standing issue within the Independents and the Churches of Christ, but not much at all with Disciples.

(3) Utilizing the thought-world of Alexander Campbell, a contemporary theological understanding of “Salvation” or “Atonement Theology” in contrast to Calvinism --- for Calvinism<sup>96</sup> was everywhere present in Campbell’s day as it is in ours; especially it is ubiquitous with present-day Fundamentalists and Evangelicals.<sup>97</sup>

In all three of these issues we will briefly illustrate the advantage of participating in the “THREE Interpretative Communities” of Philosophy, New Testament Critical Method, and the everyday-life of the congregation, and all of this seen as “an ongoing conversation.”

Campbell spoke of the authoritative “testimony” of the New Testament for helping us know the will of God within the grand, meta - narrative of redemption. Though his form of reasoning reflected “propositional” arguments, his Hermeneutic was not caught in a “Naive Historic Objectivism.” We have put forth sufficient evidence to conclude: Campbell would be right in the thick of the current New Testament scholarly discussions, today, because he remained connected to the three interpretative communities we have here outlined.

In baptism by immersion, along with his family, on June 12th, 1812, after extensive study of the New Testament, Alexander Campbell carefully outlined instructions that a confession of faith should say just this, and nothing more: “Jesus is Son of God.” The implications of this

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<sup>95</sup>Some “Evangelical” theologians, like Kevin J. Vanhoozer, do not do justice to the complexity of Gadamer, Habermas and Derrida, choosing to describe them as erasing all meaning in texts with their “deconstructionists” (Derrida) or other Hermeneutical theories (Habermas, Gadamer). *Is There a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998 [2009]); *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005).

<sup>96</sup> The five points of Calvinism from the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) which condemned Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers for what has come to be called “Arminianism,” which is to say, for advocating a form of “free will” and the capacity of persons to choose. Campbell was accused of “Arminianism” by the Calvinists of his day.

<sup>97</sup> The Fundamentalist Albert Mohler, mentioned earlier, has pushed the Southern Baptists to adopt more of a “Reformed” or Calvinist perspective.

simple affirmation are significant. He did not add . . . “for the remission of sins,” which omission he was later to defend. This simple confession implies “Creation Theology,” a “high Christology,”<sup>98</sup> [The “Trinitarian Resurgence” since Barth],<sup>99</sup> and an Ecclesiology that sees “being church” as participating in the *missio Dei*, for the sake of the world.<sup>100</sup> Regarding the Trinity, Campbell was accused of being a “Unitarian,” and “Socinian” --- along with labels of many other “. . . isms,” as he called them. However, when asked to respond directly to his ideas of “Trinity,” the nuanced explanations, for example, of Jesus as the “Word” (John 1:1-14) and “thought” of God, moves well beyond any simplistic or later Calvinist arrangements.

“Post-Liberal” seems the most appropriate way of understanding Campbell’s way of being in the world. Since Karl Barth, and the “Post-Liberal” Yale School of theologians, mentioned earlier, we, too, as a Stone-Campbell movement, are thrust into the thick of things. The saving act of Christ, “for the world,” implies a “universal meaning” for the Gospel. The best “Ecclesiology” or “definition of church” and “Gospel” is to be found in Disciple Theologian, Joe R. Jones, stating that the . . . “Church is called to witness in word and deed to the living triune God. . . .”:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Good News  
that the God of Israel, The Creator of all creatures,  
has in freedom and love become incarnate  
in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth  
to enact and reveal God’s gracious reconciliation  
of humanity to Godself, and  
through the Holy Spirit calls and empowers human beings

<sup>98</sup> Campbell stated that he was in agreement with the classical creeds of Chalcedon and Nicaea.

<sup>99</sup> This larger theological issue, “universal salvation,” is much more than we can cover here. See Disciples Scholars Boring and Jones who advocate this “universal” understanding of salvation and the Lordship of Christ over all creation. This “universal meaning of theology” is significant for us, as a “Post-Liberal” expression of the church, within the “Trinitarian Resurgence,” and would require distinctive, and full exploration. See the important essay, which asserts “. . . particular and universal salvation *language*” are equally present in the authentic letters of Paul, and for interpretation, this “paradoxical language” should be “held in tension,” the one informing the another, without simply making arguments which attempt to come down exclusively on one side or the other. M. Eugene Boring, “The Language of Universal Salvation in Paul,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 105. No. 2 (June, 1986), 269-292. See also, Joe R. Jones, “Christology and Jewish Christian Dialogue,” “God: Triune in Essence and Actuality,” Schematic Reflections on Salvation,” all articles in The Journal, *Encounter*, at [www.cts.edu/academics/faculty/jones](http://www.cts.edu/academics/faculty/jones).

<sup>100</sup> Informative for today’s “Missional Church” initiatives.



to participate in God's liberative and redemptive work by  
acknowledging God's gracious forgiveness of sin,  
receiving the gift of freedom, and  
embracing authentic community by  
loving the neighbor and the enemy,  
caring for the whole creation, and  
hoping for the final triumph of God's grace  
as the triune Ultimate Companion of all creatures<sup>101</sup>

Women in Leadership (As Elders) and their Ordination. The Fundamentalist wing of the Southern Baptist Convention, in denying ordination for women, stated that --- "it is simple and straightforward; we are only *implementing what the Bible says.*" However, in weighing carefully what Paul writes, and not what the later Pauline interpreters revised, we are instructed. Here, we assume that, according to the best Disciples consensus (that of the Boring/Craddock, 2004 One-Volume Commentary, mentioned above), Paul wrote (a) seven letters (namely, I Thessalonians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon and Romans); these are "undisputed." Shortly after Paul's death, which can be assumed to be around 64-65<sup>102</sup> under Nero, (b) his interpreters wrote II Thessalonians, Ephesians and Colossians (these, called "deutero-Pauline" because they show a more immediate reliance on Paul's ideas, and they are written shortly after his death, or in the 80s). Then (c) there are the Pastorals, written later, in the 90s and beyond, not by Paul, though claiming to be, I and II Timothy and Titus.

In the undisputed letters of Paul, then, women are in leadership positions throughout his churches. Even one, a certain Junia, is called "outstanding among the Apostles,"<sup>103</sup> (Romans 16.7), though to arrive at this conclusion requires serious consideration of the manuscript

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<sup>101</sup> Joe R. Jones, Vol. I, *A Grammar of Cristian Faith*, 30.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), still one of the best.

<sup>103</sup> Translation from Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 949. The NRSV has "prominent among the apostles," referring to Andronicus and Junia.

evidence.<sup>104</sup> The meaning in the tortured lines of I Corinthians 11:2-16, have proven difficult for any commentaries to explain satisfactorily,<sup>105</sup> and most scholars conclude that I Corinthians 14:33-36, was not written by Paul, and is inserted as a later “gloss.”

So when a Fundamentalist says: “We’re just doing what the Bible says,” they are making this statement without benefit of what the best minds have to say on the matter, or out of “ideology”<sup>106</sup> and “willful ignorance.”

Atonement Theologies: In 2007, John Piper wrote *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway) --- A defense of Calvinism,<sup>107</sup> and in 2009, Wright wrote a response to the response, as *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2009). This exchange is important for current New Testament studies and for an example of how two Epistemologies - - - theories of the atonement in a “Fundamentalist” and “Generative Dialogue” perspective - - - work against each other.

Piper took Wright to task for departing from Calvinist ideology, with his so-called “new interpretation” of Paul. Wright responded with the “evidences,” what he, as a New Testament Scholar, is arguing “is the case” with the texts. In other words Wright denies ever advocated anything “revisionist” at all. The fact that Piper, a Calvinist, would demand that Wright, an Episcopalian, comply with the *Westminster Confession*, is a bit ludicrous on the face of it, and is akin to the [probably apocryphal account] attributed to former Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles: “Why don’t the Arabs and Israelis just settle their differences in a Christian manner?”

Where you stand, or your Epistemology, makes all the difference. Coming at Biblical texts

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<sup>104</sup> As for instance in the thorough study by Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). John Dominick Crossans has an excellent analysis of how Thecla was dismissed as a teacher by the later church, as her sixth century, Ephesus, cave-painting figure along side that of the Apostle Paul, in a recognized posture of a “Teacher,” was defaced. Crossans, and many interpreters agree with him when he says a similar discounting by the later church took place in the inserted gloss of I Corinthians 14.33-36 and in the later “deutero-Pauline” and ‘non-Pauline’ literature. *On Thecla, see his In Search of Paul*, San Francisco: Harpers, 2004), preface.

<sup>105</sup> The most plausible interpretation is that Paul is using a “talmudic” method of argument, for interpreting a problem in the Corinthian Church, based on Genesis 6, that “because of the angels,” a woman should wear a “veil.” In any case, it is not central to the argument about women’s role of leadership in the church.

<sup>106</sup> A position based on the Chicago Statement of Inerrancy.

<sup>107</sup> To be fair, we understand that, later interpreters of Calvin oversimplified his complexity of thought.

with a previous, Fundamentalist or any other kind of militant “ideology,” would be laughable if it were not so destructive, counterproductive and sad.

## The question is not what is “Distinctive” about the Stone–Campbell Movement; Rather, what is our “Witness?”

### Here’s our problem as Disciples:

Mennonite Ethics Scholar, John Howard Yoder, in the Anabaptist Tradition --- which became visible in the 1540s; but has antecedents going back to the 1400s --- has done a better job than Disciples at articulating a “restoration” principle, explaining the great variety of New Testament Practices [not a single pattern] and what it might mean to be an “alternative community,” separated from “Civil Religion,” “Christendom” or the “Establishment Church.”

George Lindbeck, a Lutheran, has succeeded in getting people to talk together who never have before.

David Tracy, a Roman Catholic, has interpreted the past two hundred years of Hermeneutics, stressing the importance of “Conversation,” and has done so in an “irenic spirit” which respects even the positive contributions to theology of the atheist, “deconstructionist,” Literary Critic and Philosopher, Jacques Derrida.

In the Lord’s Supper, and in Baptism by Immersion, Disciples have presented these understandings, not as **rules**, but as our “**witness**” to the whole church. There are signs that our “witness” is being heard and responded to by others.

From our beginnings, with Thomas and Alexander Campbell, the very essence of our being was to refrain from any behavior which would be construed as “sectarian.” We bear witness to and exist for the sake of the whole.

An important document for Disciples History, *The Last Will and Testament*, (1804) advocates “. . . sinking into union with the body of Christ at large.” What about “witness” as this movement

of “sinking?” “Being Heard” or “Engaged” in the larger conversation might be the better language.

Disciples New Testament Theologian, Gene Boring has spent a large portion of his academic life, translating from the German, those New Testament Scholars he thought should be heard. He is “bearing witness” as a Disciple to the larger “watching world.”

“Although Campbell intended to abandon all *human tradition* . . . he, in fact, formulated a vital new tradition of confessional interpretation. By ‘*confessional*’ is meant “taking one’s stand within the Christian tradition and interpreting the Bible as the Scripture of those who make the Christian confession.”

- - - M. Eugene Boring (*Disciples* . . . 3)

As lengthy as this essay has turned out to be, there is much more to the story,<sup>108</sup> However, here is a beginning of a conversation, for the Stone-Campbell Movement to be able to proclaim, without apology, and as “Free-Church catholics,” that we can be “A Church for These Times.”

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## Appendix A

### The Seven Rules for Interpreting Scripture<sup>109</sup>

Rule I: On opening any book in the sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.

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<sup>108</sup> . . . for which for some more complete development see my essays on faith and culture, at [www.theconversationroom.org](http://www.theconversationroom.org)

<sup>109</sup> These rules for interpretation, here in Appendix A, were originally presented by Campbell in “Tracts for the People, No. III, “The Bible-Principles of Interpretation,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, Series III, Vol. III, Bethany, VA., January 1846, No. 1 (10 pages).

Rule II: In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc., observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates. Is he a Patriarch, a Jew or a Christian? Consider also the persons addressed - - - their prejudices, characters, and religious relations. Are they Jews or Christians - - - believers or unbelievers - - - approved or disapproved? This rule is essential to the proper application of every command, promise, threatening, admonition, or exhortation, in Old Testament or New.

Rule III: To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, etc., the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of language, or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.

Rule IV: Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification; but when words have according to testimony more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning; for if common usage, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passages fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language.

Rule V: In all tropic language ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.

Rule VI: In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories, and parables, this rule is supreme. Ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point - - - to all the attributed, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory or parable.

Rule VII : For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the oracles of God, - - - We must come within the understanding distance.

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