

**The Influence of the Christian Connection
On the Restoration Movement in Ontario**

By

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For many years the consensus view of the Restoration Movement in Ontario was that it was largely of Scotch Baptist origin. This was the position espoused by Reuben Butchart in *The Disciples of Christ in Canada Since 1830*, and it was made plausible by the dominant influence later in the 19th Century of churches from this supposed background. More recent studies have demonstrated that Scotch Baptist influence was not nearly as significant as that of regular Baptists of Scottish background among the early churches that Butchart describes.¹ Other studies have shown that independent restoration efforts, especially those of Daniel Wiers on the Niagara Peninsula, James Beaty, Sr. in Toronto, and the Christian Connection in numerous Ontario locations, need to be given much more than the passing notice they often receive.² This paper is an attempt to elaborate the contribution of the Christian Connection.

The Christian Connection in the 1830s

The Christian Connection entered Canada via the state of New York, and consequently its roots were in the work of Abner Jones (1772-1841) and Elias Smith (1769-1846). Both were of Baptist background, but they rejected Calvinism and creeds and emphasized Christian liberty and following the New Testament alone. Their movement had a loose relationship with that of Barton W. Stone and others in Kentucky and elsewhere, and by the 1820s its greatest strength was in Vermont and New York. In the latter state its leading second-generation preachers were David Millard (1794-1883), Joseph Badger (1792-1852), and Elijah Shaw (1793-1851). All three men visited in Ontario, and Badger's influence was especially significant as editor of the *Christian Palladium* from 1832-1839.

A very helpful, albeit idealistic, summary of the beliefs of the eastern portion of the Christian Connection in the period we are examining is found in an article one of their ministers, Joshua V. Himes of Boston, prepared in 1833 for Fessendon & Co.'s *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*.³ Himes stated that the "Christians," as they preferred being called, were not so much concerned to establish distinctive doctrines as they were to "assert, for individuals and churches, more liberty and independence in matters of faith and practice, to shake off the authority of human creeds and the shackles of prescribed modes and forms, to make the Bible their only guide, claiming...for every man the right to be his own expositor of it, to judge, for himself, what are its doctrines and requirements, and in practice, to follow more strictly the simplicity of the apostles and primitive Christians."

Himes said that while it would not be accurate to say that any one doctrine was held universally by the Christians, there was an "approximation to unanimity of sentiment" on matters such as one God, the Father, Christ the Son of God and Savior of the world, the Holy Spirit as "the power and

¹ For discussion of the relative importance of Scotch Baptists and Scottish Baptists see Geoffrey H. Ellis, "A Note on the Distinction between 'Scotch Baptist' and 'Scottish Baptist,'" and "James Black's Life and Times" in *The Campbell-Stone Movement in Ontario* (Claude E. Cox, ed.; Lewiston, N. Y.: Edward Mellen Press, 1995): 413-419; 101-142.

² For recent studies of the work of Wiers and Beaty see the author's "Daniel Wiers in the Maelstrom of the Early Restoration Movement on the Niagara Frontier" and Geoffrey H. Ellis, "The Restoration Churches in Toronto," presented in 2007 and 2004, respectively, at annual meetings of The Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society.

³ The *Encyclopedia* was edited by J. Newton Brown and published in 1838 by Brattleboro' Typographical Company, Brattleboro, Vermont.

energy of God,” the “free forgiveness of sins” by God’s mercy through the blood of Christ, the necessity of repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ, the “absolute necessity of holiness of heart and rectitude of life,” the doctrine of immortality and of final judgment, the baptism of believers by immersion, and “open communion at the Lord’s table” of Christians in good standing from every denomination.

While Scripture was accepted as the only rule of faith and practice, in local congregations each person, ideally at least, was at liberty to determine for himself what the Scripture enjoins, and no member was “subject to the loss of fellowship on account of his sincere and conscientious belief,” as long as he lived “a pious and devout life.” Thus, the only cause for church discipline and censure was “disorderly and immoral conduct.” The only condition of admission into membership was “a personal profession of the Christian religion, accompanied with satisfactory evidence of sincerity and piety, and a determination to live according to the divine rule or the gospel of Christ.” Each local church was thought of as independent and self-governing. Churches, represented by delegates, and ministers formed themselves into conferences in various geographical areas. In 1833 there were twenty such conferences in the United States, as well as one in Upper Canada and one in New Brunswick.

From this summary it is apparent to anyone reasonably familiar with the principles advocated by Alexander Campbell and others at that time that Campbell’s proposed reformation had much in common with the Christian Connection, which, of course, is the reason the two groups were able to merge in Kentucky and adjacent states in 1832. Although the Christian Connection in Upper Canada did not merge with those in the province associated with Alexander Campbell as it did in parts of the United States in the 1830s, in Ontario it nevertheless contributed significantly to restoration efforts. It rejected human creeds and sought to make the Bible each person’s sole guide. It helped introduce the writings of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell to several individuals in Ontario. And eventually it was the source of several preachers and other members who defected to the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

How the Christian Connection Came to Ontario

From all the available evidence, the work of the Christian Connection in Upper Canada began with Mary Stogdill, who had been baptized in 1817 by David Millard in Greenville, New York, a few miles south of Albany.⁴ A short time later she moved with her husband, Solomon, and their young son, Seymour, to the village of Newmarket, about forty miles north of Toronto, which was then called York.⁵ When she heard that there were members of the Christian Connection across the river from Canada in Niagara County, New York, she wrote more than once, asking for a preacher to visit her part of the province. Her letter to Thomas Brown of Porter, New York was reprinted in the *Christian Herald* of August 16, 1821:

Dear Brother:

Having an opportunity I again take my pen, fearing my second letter never reached you, for I have not heard from you since you wrote your first, which is a long time. Elder Doubleday has never seen

⁴ From a mistaken reading of an article entitled “Ontario” (*Herald of Gospel Liberty* [May 1817]: 159-161) and signed “Barclay,” J. F. Burnett (*Early Women of the Christian Church* [Dayton Ohio: The Christian Publishing Association, 1921]), assumed that the author was telling about the distribution of the *Herald* in what is now Ontario, Canada. However, the report is clearly referring to the town of Ontario, New York, east of Rochester.

⁵ According to a Winans family genealogist, Mary, who was born February 5, 1794, was the daughter of Seymour and Mary Winans, who also came to Ontario along with some other members of the Winans family. Mary Stogdill died July 8, 1863 in Lloydtown, Ontario, a few miles west of Newmarket.

me. Brother McIntire has never paid us a visit, although most anxiously have I looked for them. Think then how great the disappointment, yet still I hope. O persuade them to come; tell them Paul sought other countries, that he might not build on another's foundation. Bid them God speed to this part of the vineyard, for the fields are white and ready to harvest! Tell me if you have seen Elder Millard this winter; perhaps he too would come if he knew where to find us. I long for brethren, being but a little lamb when I was transplanted from the pleasant flock at Greenville to this wilderness of thorns and poison vines, here to pick my food from various branches called Christian. Think then how forlorn I feel, a stranger in a strange land, toiling along the tiresome road of life, and none to help me bear the burden.

She thought she may have been sent to Canada to “succor the dear heralds of my Master,” and she said, “The door is opened – come ye men of God, and Jesus come in with you.” Her appeal was passed on to Millard, and he in turn published his own letter urging some preacher to answer her urgent plea. Before the summer ended, Allen Huntly responded and arrived at her door. Provisionally, Darius Man from the Keswick area on Lake Simcoe, a few miles from Mary Stogdill's house, was at her house when Huntly arrived. He invited Huntly to go with him to the lake, where he found a number of people who were receptive to his message, probably because of the prior work of Mary Stogdill and Darius Man. Many were ready to be baptized and to form a church, but because he had not been ordained Huntly did not feel he could do either, so he returned to New York with a letter from the people at Lake Simcoe, asking for help.

When he presented this appeal at a church conference, Simeon Bishop and Joseph Bailey volunteered to go back to Canada with him. They reached their destination in October, where, as Bailey wrote, “We saw the grace of God and were glad,” for the work Huntly had encouraged had continued after he left. On Sunday, October 21, 1821 nearly everyone in the settlement gathered, and after Bishop and Bailey ordained Allen Huntly, they all went down to the lake where Huntly immersed ten converts. Then they all returned to the house where they were meeting and organized the first Christian Connection congregation in Upper Canada, with forty-three members. This church at Keswick is still in existence today as a Congregationalist Christian Church.

When Huntly was unable to return the following year, he went to a Christian Connection conference in West Bloomfield, New York to recruit others to go to Canada. Nathan Harding and Asa C. Morrison answered his call, and they reached Lake Simcoe in mid-July 1822. They were able to convert a number of others with their message, and November 20th of that year they organized a second congregation. This one was in East Gwillimbury Township, on the outskirts of Newmarket.⁶ Morrison continued to preach in Upper Canada the next two years, organizing churches in Pickering Township near Lake Ontario and in the northern part of Markham Township, north of York (Toronto). John Blodget worked alongside Morrison part of the time, and one of them organized a second church in Markham Township.⁷

Other Early Preachers from New York

Other preachers from New York soon followed, and the number of churches and constituents quickly increased. Two who came in 1825 and stayed for many years were John T. Bailey and

⁶ Letter from David Millard, July 10, 1821, *Christian Herald* (August 16, 1821); Letter from Elder Joseph Bailey, October 31, 1821, *Christian Herald* (November 20, 1821): 105-106; *Christian Herald* (July 18, 1822): 52; Letter from Nathan Harding, May 14, 1823, *Christian Herald* (April 8, 1824): 9-11. Newmarket was immediately across the township line from East Gwillimbury, in Whitchurch. This church many years later affiliated with the Baptists and remains in existence today.

⁷ Letter from John Blodget, February 24, 1825, *Gospel Luminary* (April 1825): 83-85. This last church was in the vicinity of Unionville, which is now part of the city of Markham

Thomas McIntyre. Bailey did much of his work east of Toronto along the shore of Lake Ontario before moving to the Woodstock area and then, in 1836, leaving Canada for Illinois. McIntyre, who was born in 1789 in New York, stayed even longer, until 1841, when he lost all his property after the Mackenzie rebellion. He continued preaching in the United States and died in 1861 in Michigan.⁸

There were also several New York preachers who made short preaching tours. Elijah Shaw came in 1825, and his *Memoir* gives valuable insight into the early progress of the Christian Connection. Shaw spent nearly three months in the province, traveling about seven hundred miles and attending sixty-one meetings. By the time he left there were seven churches in Upper Canada, and he had visited all of them and had also preached in many places where no church had been gathered. He mentioned that on Yonge Street (where the Newmarket church met) “a large number have obtained hope in Christ, some of whom I had the happiness of baptizing.” He was also in Darlington, on the shore of Lake Ontario, east of Toronto, where he joined John T. Bailey, who had baptized about thirty there. On November 19, 1825, he and Bailey met with them and organized a church, which Shaw said “will probably soon be as large as any in Canada.” When Shaw left there were three preachers who remained in Ontario – Bailey, Thomas McIntyre, and Joseph Blackmar.⁹

Bailey and Blackmar had been preaching in the vicinity of Darlington and Oshawa earlier in 1825, before Shaw joined them, and a significant early convert was Thomas Henry,¹⁰ a young Irishman of Anglican background who had settled in that area before the War of 1812. One day in May, when he had gone to Toronto (called York at that time) to attend court, he met Blackmar, and they began discussing religion. After Henry related some of his spiritual struggles, Blackmar told him that he had an appointment to preach near Port Oshawa, and he invited Henry to attend. That summer Henry and his wife visited some of the Christians’ meetings, including one in a barn where, as Henry later said, “J. T. Bailey preached the Word with power; sinners wept; some pled aloud for mercy; to me it was a solemn time. I went home wounded in spirit, for the Word of God cut like a two-edged sword, and I began to see myself as I was – a poor lost sinner.”

The Christian Connection immersed new members who had never been baptized, and this appealed to Henry, for he had read the debate between Alexander Campbell and the Presbyterian, W. L. Maccalla, which convinced him that scriptural baptism is immersion. On a Sunday he attended a meeting in a grove where Bailey was once again preaching to a large audience. After the sermon Henry and his wife as well as several others expressed a desire to be baptized, and they were immersed in the waters of Lake Ontario. Thomas Henry later became one of the leading preachers in the Christian Connection in Ontario.¹¹

During the earliest years of evangelizing in Upper Canada, these Christian Connection ministers belonged to the New York Western Conference.¹² By 1830 and perhaps a year or two earlier the Upper Canada Christian Conference was first convened, although the close ties with New York continued, and preachers from there continued to visit in Ontario.¹³ Since a few years later these conferences became a point of controversy, attention needs to be given to the practice. More than anything else, these conferences, at least during their first decade, were self-regulating bodies for ministers, and records of these meetings tell of some ministers being disciplined and even expelled.

⁸ E. W. Humphreys, *Memoirs of Deceased Christian Ministers* (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Christian Publishing Association 1880): 228.

⁹ Letter from Elijah Shaw to the *Gospel Luminary*, written December 1, 1825 and reprinted in *Memoir of Elder Elijah Shaw*, by Letitia J. Shaw (Boston, 1852): 100-102.

¹⁰ He spelled his name “Henery” during his early life.

¹¹ Henry: 21-29.

¹² *Gospel Luminary* (July 1826): 166-167; (October 1827): 251-255.

¹³ *Gospel Luminary* (October 1830): 26-27. The *Gospel Luminary* was not published in 1828 and 1829.

The Christian Connection had been badly hurt in their earliest days when Elias Smith, one of the founders of the eastern part of the Connection, defected to the Universalists, and they developed these annual conferences to regulate their ministry. Other churches at that time faced a similar problem and handled it in various ways. In the early days of the Restoration Movement, Alexander Campbell wielded such immense influence that he was often able to handle these situations through the pages of his journal, the *Millennial Harbinger*. There is little evidence that the early Christian Connection conferences exercised direct control over churches, and in theory, at least, they were prohibited from doing this, since local churches were considered to be self-governing. If a conference had any message to local congregations, it was couched as a recommendation. In Upper Canada, for example, the 1832 conference “recommended” Millard and Badger’s Hymn Book to the churches, and it also “recommended” that churches pay preachers that worked among them.

The Pioneering Work of Thomas McIntyre in Ontario

While short stays like Shaw’s were helpful, men like Thomas McIntyre, who came and stayed for years, were responsible for most of the growth that took place.¹⁴ McIntyre was ordained June 26, 1826 at the New York Western Conference at Mendon, near Rochester.¹⁵ He was in Ontario sixteen years and was a tireless worker who traveled extensively. When he first came to Canada, Newmarket was his base of operation, but later he moved to Whitby Township and then to the Cobourg area, which were both on the shore of Lake Ontario, east of Toronto. It was no accident that by the early 1830s the Connection had its greatest strength around Newmarket and along the lake shore. But even more important for the purposes of this study, he was a major link between the Christian Connection and developments in the Restoration Movement in Ontario.

By 1829 McIntyre was a reader of Alexander Campbell’s *Christian Baptist* (1823-1830) and Barton W. Stone’s *Christian Messenger* (1826-1845). In fact, he was an agent for Campbell’s paper beginning in 1829. He sent three reports to Stone’s paper, one in 1829, another in 1830, and the last in 1831. In July 1829 he told Stone that he had been reading his paper “with pleasure, and many others have done the same.” He reported that he had been in Canada four years, where he had traveled and preached continuously, and that during the year then ending he had baptized about seventy people.¹⁶ The following April, after moving to Whitby, he again wrote to Stone and told him, “The Christian cause is prospering in the country. Our meetings are large.” But his work had taken its toll, and he was “almost worn out.” He added that they faced much opposition, including threats of imprisonment. He noted that Stone’s paper was being “read with pleasure in these parts, and it is doing good.” McIntyre expected to get more subscribers for the coming year. He added that Campbell’s paper was also well received. His October 1831 report was brief, but it included the significant fact that the church in Ontario had grown to about five hundred members.¹⁷

As one who traveled widely throughout Upper Canada, McIntyre heard that Daniel Wiers had been expelled from the Beamsville Baptist Church for publicly espousing some of Alexander Campbell’s views, for in an April 1830 letter to Stone he said, “There is also trouble among the Baptist brethren. One of their preachers has thrown off the sectarian yoke, and is walking in the liberty of

¹⁴ It is curious that W. P. Fletcher, President of the Ontario Christian Conference in 1908, in his brief history of this church in Ontario, did not mention McIntyre (W. P. Fletcher, “Christian Church in Canada,” J. Presley Barrett, ed., *The Centennial of Religious Journalism 1808-1908* [Dayton: Christian Publishing Association, 1908]: 581-589).

¹⁵ *Gospel Luminary* (July 1826):165-167.

¹⁶ *Christian Baptist*, (January 5, 1829): 151; (September 7, 1829): 51; “From Elder Thomas McIntyer (sic) of Newmarket, Upper Canada, July 27, 1829,” *Christian Messenger* (September 1829): 259.

¹⁷ “Extract of a letter from Elder John M’Intyer (sic) Whitney (sic), Upper Canada, April 7, 1830,” *Christian Messenger* (June 1830): 167-168; (December 1831): 279.

the gospel.”¹⁸ In 1832 Wiers reported his new work near Beamsville in Stone’s paper. Whether Wiers learned about the publication through McIntyre is undetermined, but the fact that he submitted his report to a journal McIntyre promoted suggests this possibility. Alexander Campbell excerpted Wiers’ report in the *Millennial Harbinger*, and David Millard reprinted it in full in the *Gospel Luminary*.

Whatever may have been McIntyre’s dealings with Wiers, we know he pointed Joseph Ash, who later played a significant role in Ontario Restoration history for half a century, to the writings of Stone and Campbell. Ash had grown up near Cobourg in the Anglican Church, but the year he turned twenty-one he went through what he later called “one whole year of deep anxiety and struggle...to get religion.” During this time he concluded that he should be immersed, and so in September 1830 he was baptized by a Christian Connection minister. Two months later McIntyre called at Ash’s father’s place while on a preaching tour. Ash was there at the time and asked McIntyre to recommend some religious publications to him. McIntyre told him about Stone’s paper, as well as the *Millennial Harbinger*, which Campbell had just begun publishing in place of the *Christian Baptist*. Ash subscribed both to Stone’s paper and to Campbell’s and was profoundly influenced by each of them.¹⁹ Others, too, were influenced significantly, and it was McIntyre who introduced many of these people to these periodicals and the ideas found in them.

McIntyre lived in Whitby from 1829 until 1832 and was living there when he first met Ash. But after three years in Whitby, McIntyre moved forty miles farther east along the shore of Lake Ontario to the Cobourg area, where Ash lived. Ash wrote enthusiastically about McIntyre coming to work there: “We have engaged Elder McIntyre to travel through this district and preach for the term of one year, and anticipate great blessings as the result of his labours. He is a pious and talented man. He has been here several times this summer, and his preaching appears to raise considerable excitement among the people.” Ash wrote again at the end of the year: “Elder McIntyre travels through a circuit of about forty or fifty miles distance, once in two weeks. He is a faithful labourer, and, I trust, his labours will be blessed.”²⁰

When Joseph Badger came to Canada in June 1833 to attend the annual conference at Newmarket, McIntyre made appointments for him at various churches during the nearly two weeks Badger was in the province. He also traveled with Badger part of the time. After Badger returned home, he reported in his paper that “great prosperity has attended the labours of our brethren in Canada,” and Elder McIntyre has been among the most active and useful ministers there for eight years past, and still devotes the principal part of his time to traveling.” During this trip the editor first met Joseph Ash, who was twenty-five at the time. Badger enigmatically referred to him in his report as an “interesting young man.”²¹

By the end of 1837 McIntyre, who was forty-eight, was suffering health problems. Asa C. Morrison, who came to Upper Canada from New York for a preaching tour, wrote, “This son of thunder has seen the best of his days; his constitution, though once of the most robust kind, begins to tremble, his masterly voice which so often has dissipated your fears and dispelled your gloom, now begins to give a sepulchral, or hollow sound. His bold and open countenance which once was the picture of health, now wears the image of pale and ghastly death.” Morrison credited McIntyre

¹⁸ A Christian Connection church met on Fifteen Mile Creek in Louth Township, ten miles from Wiers’ home, and McIntyre may have heard about Wiers there. (*Christian Palladium* [April 1833]: 315; [September 15, 1835]: 154.) David Marks, a Freewill Baptist preacher, heard about Wiers while 100 miles from Beamsville (*Morning Star* [August 25, 1830]).

¹⁹ Joseph Ash, *Reminiscences* (Beamsville, Ontario: Gospel Herald Foundation, 1998): 1-3. This book is a reprint of twenty-one articles that first appeared in the *Christian Worker* (Meaford, Ontario, 1882-1884).

²⁰ *Christian Palladium* (November 1832): 183; “From Joseph Ash, Cobourg, Dec. 25, 1832” (March 1833): p. 282.

²¹ *Christian Palladium*, (May 1833): 37; Joseph Badger, “Our Visit to Canada” (July 1833): 102-103.

with thousands of miles of travel during his thirteen or fourteen years in Upper Canada, when he “spared no pains, faced all weathers, braved all dangers, and...either subdued or scattered your enemies before you.” He blamed his failing health on “frequent and hard speaking, exposures by night and day, frequent fastings, irregular meals, and irregular sleep, and sometimes an actual want of suitable raiment to keep his body warm and comfortable.” Morrison remonstrated with his Canadian brothers for failing to support McIntyre and other preachers as they should: “It is not enough, my brethren, that you feed and lodge your preachers when they call on you, nor that you give them money enough to help them through the tollgates &c. They must have a horse to ride, and that costs money – clothes to wear &c., and if they have a family, that family must have a support.”²² But despite his health problems, McIntyre continued to travel and preach in Canada another four years.

Although McIntyre did much to introduce others to the writings of Alexander Campbell, he never accepted several of Campbell’s distinctive views. However, Ash names five preachers who eventually left the Christian Connection to join the Reformers, as those working with Campbell often called themselves. They were Solomon B. Rose, Elijah Gleason, Marshall B. Stone, Robert Barrie, and G. W. Colston.²³ The best known was Rose, who was from New York and whose parents lived in Orleans County, west of Rochester.²⁴ He was in Canada as early as 1827, when he organized a church at West Dumfries, near Paris, Ontario, January 1, 1828, after preaching in that vicinity for awhile.²⁵ In 1829 adversaries provoked his arrest, but when he was brought to trial he was acquitted.²⁶ He and some others considered publishing a paper in 1832, but they dropped the idea when Joseph Badger began the *Christian Palladium* in Rochester, New York the same year and the Upper Canada conference encouraged everyone to subscribe to it.²⁷ It is not known where he lived during his first few years in Canada, but in 1832 he moved to Newmarket.²⁸ For several years he was the clerk at the annual conference until he resigned in 1833.²⁹ Two years later, at the annual Christian Conference at Trafalgar in October, he was expelled from the conference. The following year, when the conference met at Saltfleet, he made a confession and acknowledgment, asking to be restored to standing, but it is not known whether this had any connection with his eventually going with the Reformers.³⁰ Elijah Gleason’s name also appears frequently in reports in the *Gospel Luminary* and the *Christian Palladium*, beginning in 1827. Like Rose, he originally came from New York. He sometimes had difficulties in his relationships with other people, but these were worked out satisfactorily. In 1834 the conference decided that he was innocent of the charges brought against him by Daniel Stump, and in 1837 it was reported that the problem between Gleason and his home congregation in Trafalgar Township had been removed.³¹ Less is known about Stone, Barrie, and Colston. Stone left by 1834, and frequently worked alongside Ash.³² Barrie did not leave the Christian Connection until 1850, and Colston may have also defected at a later date.³³

The Controversy Between the Reformers and the Christians

²² A. C. Morrison, “A Tour to Canada,” *Christian Palladium* (December 15, 1837): 242-244.

²³ Ash: 22-23, 38.

²⁴ “From Elder S. B. Rose, Saltfleet, U. C., Dec. 1833,” *Christian Palladium* (February 1834): 318.

²⁵ “From Elder Newcomb Godfrey, Dumfries, U. C., August 11th, 1832,” *Christian Palladium* (September 1832): 110-111.

²⁶ “Extract of a letter from Elder John M’Intyer (sic) Whitney (sic), Upper Canada, April 7, 1830,” *Christian Messenger* (June 1830): 167-168; *Gospel Luminary* (October 1830): 25-27.

²⁷ “From Elder Thomas Henery, Whitby, Upper Canada, June 10th, 1832,” *Christian Palladium* (July 1832): 56; “Upper Canada Conference” (July 1832): 72.

²⁸ *Christian Palladium* (August 1832): 99.

²⁹ Joseph Badger, “Our Visit to Canada,” *Christian Palladium* (July 1833): 102.

³⁰ *Christian Palladium* (October 1, 1836): 178.

³¹ *Christian Palladium* (August 16, 1834): 131; (March 15, 1837): 350.

³² *Millennial Harbinger* (December 1834): 606; Ash: 19, 23, 27, 30, 61f.

³³ Ash: 23, 38.

By 1834 Ash and several others in the Christian Connection were reading the *Millennial Harbinger* and the *Christian Messenger*, and they were well aware that in 1832 in Kentucky and elsewhere Christians working with Barton W. Stone had united with the Reformers working with Campbell. Many years later Ash recalled, “I became enthusiastic over the bright prospect of union, supposing the union would embrace all America.” Meanwhile, on June 4, 1833 he attended the annual Christian conference, held that year in Newmarket, where he was appointed assistant clerk. He learned that the conference was made up of ministers and church delegates, and that, at least in his view, the conference claimed legislative powers. He believed that this contradicted what he had learned from Campbell and the *Millennial Harbinger* about the independence of the local church and its ability to manage its own affairs. Because of this he said, “I could see no place for a Conference, or any other appendage to the church, and spoke out boldly against it. Some were pleased with me and some were not. I had the Great Kentucky union in mind and working to extend it to Canada.”³⁴

Ash was only twenty-five years old in 1833, had been in the Christian Connection less than three years, and was attending his first conference. The opportunity to speak out was afforded, in part, by a larger discussion that year over whether the Christian Connection should have a general convention (or conference), and those present at Newmarket voted against this.³⁵ The backdrop for this was action taken a year earlier at Milan, New York when a convention met and voted to dissolve the United States General Christian Conference forever. Then beginning June 4, 1833 an informal convention was held in New York City to arrange to hold a General Convention in Union Mills, New York in 1834. While there was not time for those at Newmarket to know about the decision in New York City less than a week earlier, they were undoubtedly aware that the national conference had been dissolved, and Joseph Badger, who was present at Newmarket, knew that a move was underway to form a new one, for one of the objectives was to establish what came to be the Christian General Book Association to take over publication of the *Christian Palladium*. When this finally happened in 1834, Badger was asked to continue as editor.³⁶ While all this was complicated, the question before the Newmarket conference was whether to go on record in favor of a national conference (or international, if Upper Canada and New Brunswick were included). Some favored doing this, and the motion was put to a vote. Ash, on the other hand, not only opposed this but also spoke in favor of abolishing regional conferences like the one in Newmarket. The majority favored a middle course that maintained the *status quo*.

Meanwhile, an unexpected visitor muddied the waters. Benjamin Howard, a deposed Christian Connection preacher, crossed Lake Ontario from Rochester, New York and began preaching on the streets of Cobourg in the spring of 1833. In June 1825 the New York Eastern Christian Conference had ceased accepting him either as a Christian or as a minister of the gospel because of “immoral and unchristian conduct.” For awhile thereafter he was engaged in tavern-keeping and boat-building, but by 1830 he had moved to the Rochester area, where he resumed preaching. When he misrepresented his credentials, several ministers befriended him. But when his past became known and he refused to make matters right with the Eastern Conference, Joseph Badger published that conference’s notice of his exclusion in the *Palladium* in January 1833. This angered Howard greatly, and he began verbally attacking those who opposed him and also began criticizing the conferences. After Badger published more about him in March 1833 he left the Rochester area for Upper Canada.³⁷ Ash had read these reports about Howard, and when he discovered Howard was in

³⁴ Ash: 2-3.

³⁵ Joseph Badger, “Our Visit to Canada.”

³⁶ Barrett: 459-463; 571-573.

³⁷ “Benjamin Howard’s Exclusion,” *Christian Palladium* (January 1833): 227-228; “Benjamin Howard, again,” *Christian Palladium* (March 1833): 288-290.

Canada and was preaching in Ash's home area, he tried to warn others about him. Thomas McIntyre also opposed him and wrote to Badger in May, telling him, "Benjamin Howard has made his appearance here, and has gone to preaching; he slanders you all he can, and misrepresents the proceedings of the Conference. In as much (sic) as you have driven him into Canada, I want you to come over and drive him back again." Badger published this letter and added his own comment: "We are glad to find our brethren in Canada on their guard, relative to this man, who is so well calculated to deceive them, and make division. Yet we expect his vociferous manners, and apparent sanctity, will deceive some."³⁸

Rather than leave Ontario, Howard recruited another disgraced Christian Connection minister from the Rochester area, Zephon F. Green, to join him in Ontario. Green had lived in western New York a few years earlier, where he was listed as a licentiate in the minutes of the 1827 Western New York Annual Conference.³⁹ Green later moved to central New York, where in September 1832 he had been excluded from fellowship, both as a minister and as a Christian, by the Central Christian Conference in New York. Charges against him included a spurious ordination, obtained in a clandestine manner from men who were not authorized to ordain an elder, as well as accusations of financial improprieties. Green then moved to the Rochester area, where the Western Christian Conference confirmed the earlier action taken against him. Green's response was to move once again, and by July 1833 he was spending most of his time in Upper Canada.⁴⁰ Howard and Green were both talented and persuasive preachers and baptized large numbers of people in Canada. According to Ash, Howard would sometimes represent himself as a member of the Christian Connection and sometimes as a Disciple, or Reformer.⁴¹

Soon after his arrival Howard either began preaching for an existing church or began a new one in the Township of Hamilton, about five miles from Cobourg, where he persuaded them to align themselves with at least some of Alexander Campbell's reform views. After reading what Ash had said about Howard in the *Millennial Harbinger*, the church had its clerk, George Grosvenor, send the editor a testimonial about Howard: "Elder Benjamin Howard came into this place in April from Rochester, well recommended with letters from several churches, certifying his character to be unimpeachable. He commenced preaching the ancient gospel, and declared himself to be a disciple decidedly in sentiment with Alexander Campbell. The signs of reformation visibly appeared, which raised the indignation of some of the sectarians. The people that call themselves Christians, in a special manner, opposed him." Grosvenor said that in three months Howard and Green baptized between seventy and eighty people in that vicinity.⁴² Soon after this both men moved on to two nearby communities, Baltimore and Brighton, where Ash said that although they baptized a number of people and organized churches, the latter were short-lived, because the people were taught only about baptism.⁴³

Alexander Campbell's Growing Influence in New York and Ontario

³⁸ "From Elder Thomas McIntyre, Holdemand (sic), U.C., May 10, 1833," *Christian Palladium* (June 1833): 61f; Ash: 3f.

³⁹ *Gospel Luminary* (October 1827): 251-255.

⁴⁰ "Zephon F. Green Exposed," *Christian Palladium* (January 1833): 226-227; "Zephon F. Green," *Christian Palladium* (August 1833): 127-128.

⁴¹ *Millennial Harbinger* (September 1833): 472. Ash's report is dated July 6, 1833. His name appears at "Jas. Ash, Jun." at the end of the report, but rather obviously his handwritten "Jos." was read as "Jas."

⁴² "Elders Green and Howard," *Millennial Harbinger* (March 1834): 144.

⁴³ Ash: 3-4. A report from Brighton in 1834 credited these men with 157 baptisms within about a year. "Brighton, Upper Canada, June 24, 1834," *Millennial Harbinger* (August 1834): 381.

The influence of Howard and Green may have been neutralized quickly, had it not been for other important developments. In the latter part of 1832, about two and one-half years after Daniel Wiers was expelled by the Baptists, he began preaching restoration principles in his neighborhood in Clinton Township where he had lived all his life. Soon he baptized fifteen people for the remission of sins, and before the year ended he formed a church of sixteen members. Wiers was soon assisted in Clinton by a former Free Will Baptist preacher in New York, Freeborn W. Straight, as well as some other ministers who had recently left the Free Will Baptists in the same state.⁴⁴ When J. J. Moss and William Hayden, ministers from Ohio's Western Reserve who were Reformers, heard about some of these men, they met with them in November 1833 while they were visiting in New York. Not only did Wiers travel to Batavia, New York to meet with the Ohio visitors and the former Free Will Baptists; Benjamin Howard and Zenon F. Green were also there. What all of them had in common was their sympathy with the restoration views of Campbell. Hayden wrote Campbell and told him that to his knowledge the charges Ash had made against Howard were false.⁴⁵ Campbell at first said that Ash must have been mistaken in his accusations, but the following June he acknowledged that there may have been validity to the charges against Howard and Green. However, the damage had been done, and endorsement of these preachers who had been repudiated by the Christian Connection later proved fatal to the unity efforts Ash and others made in 1834.⁴⁶

In the spring of 1834 Moss, Straight, and another former Free Will Baptist preacher, Porter Thomas, visited Ash at his home in Cobourg. Straight surely talked to Ash about the work he and Wiers had been doing in Clinton Township, but more importantly Ash must have been encouraged by Moss' visit to put his own new views into practice, for after telling about this visit he said, "The church to which I have the honor to be a member, met on the first day of the week to break bread, a practice we intend to continue as long as we live."⁴⁷ (Campbell was insistent that the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper was essential to the restoration of the first century church.)

The 1834 Upper Canada Conference

Ash may have been both apprehensive and optimistic as the time for the next conference drew near – apprehensive because his opposition to conferences the previous year was not as widely accepted as he had hoped, but optimistic because he believed large numbers of people in the Christian Connection agreed with him. He had written to Campbell in July 1833, "The most of the Christian preachers of my acquaintance are decidedly in favor of the principles you write upon, and ever have been since their conversion."⁴⁸

The Upper Canada Conference convened at Whitby that year on Monday, the 23rd of June. Frederick J. Whitfield, who preached at Stoney Creek, was chosen as moderator, and Joseph Ash was selected as clerk. Considerable time was devoted to Daniel Stump, who "has been repeatedly disguised with liquor, and is now labouring to injure those Elders who took an active part in bringing him to trial and exposing his conduct." The conference also exonerated Elijah Gleason of charges Stump had sworn against him. (These men had once been close co-workers in evangelism, and Stump had been a witness at Gleason's wedding in Pelham Township, on the Niagara peninsula.) In other business Thomas McIntyre and Joseph Ash were named as a committee to draft and

⁴⁴ "Clinton, Nov. 27, 1832 – Canada," *Christian Messenger* (January 1833): 28. For an account of Wiers, see the author's "Daniel Wiers in the Maelstrom of the Early Restoration Movement on the Niagara Frontier."

⁴⁵ *Millennial Harbinger* (December 1833): 616

⁴⁶ See the author's "Daniel Wiers in the Maelstrom of the Early Restoration Movement on the Niagara Frontier."

⁴⁷ *Millennial Harbinger* (July 1834): 333; "Cobourg, Upper Canada, June 13, 1834" (August 1834): 381-382.

⁴⁸ "Cobourg, Canada, July 6, 1833," *Millennial Harbinger* (September 1833): 472.

have printed a petition to obtain rights equal to what some other churches had. This was to be circulated for signatures and presented to Parliament. The question of equal rights came up frequently, for Christian Connection ministers wanted authority to perform marriage ceremonies.

No mention was made in Ash's own official report of the conference, sent to the *Christian Palladium*, of the vote to abolish the annual conference. But in his *Reminiscences*, Ash said that near the close of the conference one of his friends moved a resolution which was promptly seconded. Its intent was to replace the conferences with yearly meetings like those the Reformers were then holding in Ohio. Ash believed this would leave local congregations with complete power to direct their own affairs. He said that if this had passed, other resolutions would have followed until all the needed changes could be made. But when the vote was called for, it ended in a tie. After some delay Whitfield, as moderator, cast his vote against the resolution. Ash recalled a half century later, "There was a great confusion for some time and the Conference broke up quite abruptly for that year."⁴⁹

Oftentimes, what happened at Whitby has been described as a failure to unite the Christian Connection and the Reformers in Canada as they were united in Kentucky in 1832. If by this is meant uniting congregations, this could not have been what Ash had in mind. The only congregations in Ontario at that time that could be described as having anything close to full sympathy with Campbell's distinct views were two or three led by Benjamin Howard and Zenon F. Green and one that Wiers had recently established on the Niagara peninsula. But Ash states emphatically that he and others in the Cobourg area "did not recognize any of Howard and Green's work as legitimate," and they had supposed at that time that "Wiers and his friends in Clinton were operating among and with the 'Christian Connexion church,' for union."⁵⁰ After his disappointment at Whitby, Ash said, "My friends and I clearly saw that all the union we could expect was individual; that they as a body would never *come into the reformation*" (emphasis mine – EB).⁵¹ In Ash's mind, the first thing the Christian Connection needed to do was to give up their annual conference.

But the resolution did not fail because Ash was unrealistic or too demanding in his approach. Only one more vote was needed, and this surely would have been found had it not been for Benjamin Howard and Zenon F. Green. In the minds of those in the Christian Connection, the expulsion of these two men from the ministry was totally justified. It must have galled many of them when some of the Reformers embraced them, and it may well have left them wondering how the church could protect itself from men like these if there were no conferences to examine them. There were also other circumstances which, had they been different, may have changed the outcome of the vote. More mature leadership among the Reformers may have helped. Ash was a good man, but he was only twenty-six years old in 1834. One of the more influential persons on the other side of the question was Joseph Badger, but he was no Barton W. Stone. Stone had a passion for unity that Badger never seemed to have. This is not so much to criticize Badger as it is to praise Stone.

Aftermath of the Whitby Conference

Seven days after the Upper Canada Conference ended, Joseph Ash wrote a letter to Stone and his fellow editor, John T. Johnson. He hardly seemed discouraged in the first part of the letter, although he may have been fulfilling part of his responsibilities as clerk to file a report with the *Christian Messenger*. After some introductory remarks, he said,

⁴⁹ "Upper Canada Conference," *Christian Palladium* (August 16, 1834): 131; Ash: 4-5.

⁵⁰ Ash: 50.

⁵¹ Ash: 7.

Our annual conference has just broken up, and we found the cause in a prosperous state. There is in the part of U. C. extending from the bay of Quinty to Niagara 27 churches; 17 travelling elders, and about 12 who are not ordained. There were 4 or 5 Churches planted during the last year, and there is a greater door open in this country for the spread of truth, than there ever has been before. Our evangelists are generally poor, and almost worn out in the service already, so that it is quite a drawback upon us at present. We very much want 2 or 3 competent evangelists to travel through this province together, and hold 2, 3, or 4 days meeting in a place, so that the public mind may be disabused of wrong impressions, and be taught the Ancient Gospel in its purity.

Then he added,

I do not recollect ever seeing any thing from either of your pens on the subject of annual conference. It has become a subject of considerable moment here at present. It was investigated at our late con., and it had like to have been totally abandoned, and general meetings substituted in its stead. Now, Brethren, if you think it expedient, we should like to have your views on this subject, or at least, what your practice is in your enlightened land. The majority of the christian body in Canada, are decidedly (at least the preachers) in favour of the sentiments and doctrine advocated by you, bro. Campbell, Scott, &c. &c. consequently are not backward to teach them.⁵²

He by no means seemed ready to give up on the Christian Connection when he wrote this, for he hoped the editors might help them properly decide the conference question. Yet, before the year was up, he left the Christian Connection. He recalled a half century later, “My course was clear before me, to stay with them, be insulted and do nothing, violate my conscience or leave their connexion and work for the lost as best I could. I chose the latter...” He resigned his membership at the church at Bradley Hollow (also known as Haldimand, for it was located in that township, near the village of Eddystone). He said his decision “was very reluctantly accepted” and that he was “dismissed with honor,” as was recorded in their church book. He described himself as “a christian (sic) out in the world alone.”

Soon, however, Ash was helped by his association with a young man who had come from Ireland, John Ford.⁵³ Ford had come to Bradley Hollow shortly before the Whitby Conference, and he apparently left that church when Ash did.⁵⁴ Ford had been a Baptist in Ireland, but he and Ash discussed their differences, and soon, as Ash said, “He embraced the reformation fully.” Ford proposed that they begin holding meetings in Cobourg, and after he found a school room they began meeting. Fifteen or sixteen attended the first Sunday. Soon some were baptized, and before long there were about forty people attending. In 1836 the church organized with Ash and Ford as elders. They were also able to form a church near Port Hope the following year.⁵⁵

Ash recalled a half century later that after the formation of the church in Cobourg they continued to have friendly relations with the Christian Connection, although he said that Joseph Badger and David Millard were not only opposed to what he and Ford were doing, but that at times “they were bitter and untruthful in their opposition” and “dictated to preachers and members.”⁵⁶ How soon the opposition began, Ash did not say. On a visit to Ontario about a year later, David Millard and another minister sailed across Lake Ontario to visit Canada. They arrived at Cobourg at sunrise on August 12th and paid an unannounced visit at the home of Ash, who lived only a mile and one-half from where the boat docked. Millard said, “We were very kindly received.”⁵⁷ The following year,

⁵² “Cobourg U. C. 30th June, 1834,” *Christian Messenger* (August 1834): 241-243.

⁵³ Ash: 7.

⁵⁴ “Cobourg, Upper Canada, June 13, 1834,” *Millennial Harbinger* (August 1834): 381-382.

⁵⁵ Ash: 7-10.

⁵⁶ Ash: 17.

⁵⁷ “D. Millard’s Letter, No. XXVI,” *Christian Palladium* (September 1, 1835): 140.

Thomas Henry, minister at Darlington and an opponent of “Campbellism,” and “a number of other brethren” stayed at Ash’s house after returning from the annual conference at Saltfleet.⁵⁸

Points of Controversy

Although Ash and others tried to maintain old friendships, it is evident from the *Christian Palladium* that relationships were often strained. Reports in that journal tell of trouble in several places – in Ash’s old home church near Cobourg, in Murray Township thirty miles east of there, in Oshawa thirty-five miles west of Cobourg, in East Gwillimbury north of Toronto, and on the Niagara peninsula. Some of the most serious trouble was at Oshawa, where difficulties began in the latter part of 1834. According to Benjamin J. Rogers, who preached there, “These things have caused a division, and those who have embraced this new doctrine, stand in a body by themselves, unconnected with the church.”⁵⁹ The church at Fifteen Mile Creek in Louth Township on the Niagara peninsula seems to have been taken over bodily, for after John Earl visited there in 1836 he reported that the church had “embraced that system which rejects spiritual influence.”⁶⁰ This was likely the reason the 1835 conference demanded the letters of Daniel Brown, the minister at Louth.⁶¹

David Millard was one of the more informed ministers with the Christian Connection in New York. He wrote frequently in the *Palladium* and also made preaching tours in Upper Canada. He named three points of what he called “a strange new doctrine”: (1) “There is no influence of the Holy Spirit except what is contained in the word.” (2) “That no unbaptized person has a right to pray.” (3) “That the design of water baptism is to clear the sinner from sin.” While Alexander Campbell would not have stated some of these points in this way, it may well be that some of those who claimed to espouse his views in Canada held all these positions.⁶²

The year after Badger and Millard began criticizing Campbell and the Reformers in the *Palladium* in 1834, some of the preachers in Ontario, in their reports to the paper, began voicing their own objections to the Reformers. At least two of them called their teaching a “spiritless doctrine.” Another spoke of “strange” and “new doctrines,” and still another charged that the teaching had a “deadening influence” – comments that suggested that the main point of difference at that time was over the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Many were optimistic, however, about the ultimate outcome; for example, a writer in Newmarket said, “Campbellism is going down.”⁶³

All three points of controversy identified by Millard were related to conversion, for there was agreement within the Christian Connection in the eastern United States and in Upper Canada that sinners needed a valid “experience” before being baptized. This was often sought with intense prayer and was accepted as evidence of divine pardon. Since baptism followed this experience, baptism was not designed to “clear the sinner from sin.”

Missing from the controversy between Reformers and Christians in Upper Canada at that time were questions being raised in parts of the United States about the Christian Connection’s alleged

⁵⁸ Henry: 72.

⁵⁹ *Christian Palladium* (January 16, 1835): 286; “From the 2d Christian Church in Murray, U. C., April 12, 1835,” (June 1, 1835): 38; “From Elder Benjamin J. Rogers, Whitby, U. C., June 9, 1835” (July 15, 1835): 93; “Elder Joel Richards, Cobourg, U. C., June 25, 1835” (August 15, 1835): 121.

⁶⁰ *Christian Palladium* (October 1, 1836): 175.

⁶¹ *Christian Palladium* (January 1, 1836): 263. Brown’s neighbor, Samuel Haight of St. Catherines, was appointed to visit Brown in behalf of the conference. By 1840 the Reformers had a church at Jordan in Louth Township as an outgrowth of the work Daniel Wiers had begun in neighboring Clinton Township in 1832.

⁶² “D. Millard’s Letter No. XXVI,” August 19, 1835, *Christian Palladium* (September 1, 1835): 140.

⁶³ *Christian Palladium* (January 15, 1835): 286; (March 2, 1835): 337; (July 15, 1835): 93; (December 15, 1835): 255.

tendency toward unitarianism. The Christians were frequently embroiled in disagreements with the Methodists in Upper Canada over the Trinity, and because of these differences Methodists sometimes refused to commune with them. Joseph Ash, however, had no dispute with the Christians over this question, at least in his younger days. He wrote the editors of the *Christian Messenger* in 1834:

We have dropped the old injurious question of the trinity. We think that it is enough for us to know that there is a *Jehovah*, and that he has spoken to man, and given them a law, and that this *Jehovah* has a *Son*, and that he sent him into the world to open a new and living way for men to be saved; that in order to effect this it was necessary for him to offer himself a sacrifice; and that his blood cleanses from all sin through faith, repentance, and immersion. We know that Christ exists; but how we do not know. Neither do we care, only that we may live so on earth, that we may receive Glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, after death.⁶⁴

Joseph Badger apparently spoke publicly against the Reformers sooner than Millard after the 1834 Whitby Conference. H. H. Wilson, who preached in West Gwillimbury, said in November 1834 that he and some others had been shaken by “Mr. Campbell’s spiritless doctrine,” but that something Badger had written the previous July “seemed to call my wandering mind home.” Badger’s subtle pressure on preachers is found in his commendation of a young minister in Murray Township: “Elder John Earl of Upper Canada...has given us a pleasing account of his deliverance from the *dark* and *cold* theory of Mr. A. Campbell.” He then added, “Our brethren who have the misfortune to be bewildered with any system of *vain philosophy* will, when they come to themselves, like the prodigal, weep when they remember their Father’s house where there is *bread* enough and to spare.” (The emphases are Badger’s.)⁶⁵ Not long afterward, the church where Earl preached sent a report to Badger, telling about their troubles with “the theory of A. Campbell” and then adding that Earl “is in good standing.”⁶⁶

An incisive critique of some of the preachers in Upper Canada who claimed to be Reformers was made by Lewis Taylor in June 1835. He had come to Ontario to visit relatives near Smithville on the Niagara peninsula, and he also visited nearby Christian Connection churches in Louth Township and at Stoney Creek. He said, “Since I have been in this country, I have become acquainted with the doctrine of Alexander Campbell.” As we have already noted, the Fifteen Mile Creek Church in Louth was one place he could have learned about Campbell. Taylor said he had seen the doctrine’s fruit and that he was acquainted with a half dozen of their preachers. He charged, “They have the form, yet certainly deny the power of religion,” and he said that their teaching “poisons and withers the strength of those who receive it.”⁶⁷ If Zenon F. Green and Benjamin Howard were among the ministers Taylor met, he had reason for his conclusions.

Joseph Ash and others in the Cobourg area responded to increasing opposition by launching a religious journal, the *Gospel Vindicator*, in June 1837. Ash later remembered it as “a spicy little monthly” that “created quite a stir among the opposers.” Joseph Badger wrote in the *Christian Palladium* that the monthly periodical published by a committee “professes to be a liberal religious Journal; but it is evidently devoted to what is called the ‘reformation’ – the ‘ancient Gospel’ – the ‘good confession’ – the ‘ancient order’ – and all such good things. We know not who its Editor is. We candidly think this little work is a snare set for the feet of our liberal friends in Canada.” He added this warning: “We hope all our brethren in Canada who are not disorganizers, will be on their

⁶⁴ *Christian Messenger* (August 1834):241-243.

⁶⁵ *Christian Palladium* (March 2, 1835): 337.

⁶⁶ “From the 2d Christian Church in Murray, April 12, 1835,” *Christian Palladium* (June 1, 1835): 38.

⁶⁷ “From Elder Lewis Taylor, Salt Fleet (sic), U. C., June 17, 1835,” *Christian Palladium* (September 15, 1835): 154.

guard.” The paper had to cease publication after ten months when its printer left, possibly because of the civil unrest during the Mackenzie Rebellion in late 1837.⁶⁸

Joseph Ash, Thomas Henry, and Division in Oshawa

Controversy between the Reformers and the Christians continued as long in Oshawa as at any other place in Ontario. As already noted, Benjamin Rogers, who was preaching there in 1834, said that the church had divided that year. Thomas Henry’s daughter-in-law wrote many years later that “1834 was remarkable in the Oshawa church, for the beginning of that long and tedious controversy which arose between those who embraced the views of Alexander Campbell, and those who adhered to the original platform.”⁶⁹ For awhile the two sides reunited, but in 1840, after Thomas McIntyre had resigned as minister, the “warring controversy on Mr. Campbell’s theories, still continued unabated,” and the “warring elements” found it almost impossible to agree on a man to fill his place. Since Thomas Henry had the confidence of both parties, he was selected at the compromise candidate.⁷⁰ Henry said, “I preached to both parties, and did all in my power to prevent a division, by kind words and gentle dealing, and in preaching always strove to give a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for whatever I advanced.”⁷¹

In 1841 Joseph Ash moved to Oshawa. Many of his old friends were there who had fought alongside him at the conference in 1834, but they still held membership in the Christian Connection. When Thomas Henry moved there, the church reorganized, and when this was done many of Ash’s friends refused to go back to the church unless Henry adopted what they called “the ancient order of worship,” with the Lord’s Supper and the contribution every Sunday. Ash says that Henry promised to do this, prompting these people to return to the church. But weeks passed by and nothing was done. This was the state of affairs when Ash moved there.⁷² Ash and Henry had known each other about a decade. Henry was ten years older and had been immersed in 1825, five years before Ash’s baptism. At one time Ash believed Henry had accepted reformation principles, and he said that Henry had preached these for awhile until Joseph Badger “whipped him back and then praised and flattered him to keep him there.”⁷³ The two men were destined to interact with one another about a quarter century before Ash moved from Oshawa after his wife died.

About three or four months after Ash moved to Oshawa, several of his friends came to see him and asked him to help them form “a church after the Apostolic pattern, where we can worship the Lord acceptably.” After carefully considering their proposal, Ash agreed to work with them, and they soon organized a church, with Ash as one of the overseers. Several from the old church joined them, and when this happened Henry proposed that they all unite. They decided to try, but weeks went by without any “preaching of the ancient gospel.” Ash said that when Henry laughed at them for giving up, he and his friends concluded that they had been tricked and resumed their separate meetings on a permanent basis.⁷⁴

From what we know about Ash and Henry, both were both well-intentioned men. Both lived long lives (Henry until 1879 and Ash until 1895) and served faithfully until death the cause they

⁶⁸ Ash: 131-132; *Christian Palladium* (August 1, 1837): 107. Ash, in a memory lapse, called the paper the *Christian Investigator* in his *Reminiscences* a half century later. He identified himself as one of the members of the committee publishing the paper.

⁶⁹ Henry: 70.

⁷⁰ Henry: 93. The description of the situation in 1840 is that of Henry’s daughter-in-law, who edited his *Memoir*.

⁷¹ Henry: 71.

⁷² Ash: 19.

⁷³ Ash: 19-20.

⁷⁴ Ash: 20-21.

believed in. But one gave primary emphasis to following the apostolic pattern and the other to a more experiential faith. Henry continued to adhere to what the Christians called “the old platform,” which made piety and the profession of Christian faith the basis for admission into fellowship and which eschewed what Himes had called “prescribed modes and forms.” Ash and Henry found no way to bridge the gap. What happened between them epitomizes what transpired between the Reformers and the Christians in Ontario during the 1830s and 1840s, and consequently unity efforts failed. Henry’s daughter-in-law expressed what must have been the sentiments of many:

It is an episode in the history of the church, of which I can never think of with other feeling than that of profound sadness. Whatever may have been the motives of those who introduced these vexing questions, the result is deplorable, in that we have in Oshawa, and in other parts of Canada, two weak bodies of Christians, both professing to take the Bible alone for their creed, while neither is strong enough to make much headway against creeds and sectarianism.⁷⁵

The Christian Connection in Ontario after 1834

In 1834 the Christian Connection in Upper Canada had twenty-seven churches and 1200 members – an impressive growth in the thirteen years after their first church was organized in 1821, especially when one considers their limited resources.⁷⁶ By comparison, the Reformers had but three or four churches, and some Reformers refused to recognize them. Daniel Wiers began a work in 1832 in Clinton, and Benjamin Howard and Zenon F. Green started two or three by 1834. However, several factors hampered the growth of the Christian Connection beginning in 1834.

The first hindrance was the controversy over the distinctive restoration views of Alexander Campbell. Ash, five preachers, and an untold number of members eventually left the Christian Connection after 1834, and numerous congregations experienced controversy and sometimes even division. Asa C. Morrison, after his preaching tour in Upper Canada in 1837, attributed the apathy he found in some churches largely to “the prevalence of A. Campbell’s system of reform,” and he said that “where this fatal doctrine had obtained and exerted an influence, the chills of approaching dissolution were felt.”⁷⁷ David Call also toured Canada in the fall of 1837, and he wrote, “What brother Morrison said about Campbellism is true. ...disunion and distraction has been the effect.”⁷⁸

A second difficulty resulted from external political circumstances. In December 1837 William Lyon Mackenzie of Toronto led an abortive rebellion against the government. Mackenzie fled to the United States, and many of the authorities in Canada thought the Americans were somehow involved. While the Christian Connection, *per se*, was not involved in the rebellion, so many of their preachers and other members were Americans that the church became suspect. Many of these Americans, including Thomas McIntyre, returned to the United States, and some of the churches, especially in southwestern Ontario, were left without leaders. In February 1839 Phebe Dean of Mount Pleasant said that she and others were being “denied the privileges of any meetings of the Christian order; our earthly shepherds and nearly all our brethren, having moved from this land of trouble.”⁷⁹ Thomas Henry described the situation in a letter to Joseph Badger:

The rebellion has been very much against us, as it has caused many of our preachers to leave this country for the States. Besides this, a great many of our brethren do not believe in fighting at all with

⁷⁵ Henry: 70.

⁷⁶ “Upper Canada Conference,” *Christian Palladium* (August 16, 1834): 131; Ash: 4. The membership total is from Ash many years later (Ash: 4), while the number for churches is from contemporary reports.

⁷⁷ A. C. Morrison, “A Tour of Canada,” *Christian Palladium* (December 15, 1837): 242-244.

⁷⁸ David Call, “Elder D. Call’s Journal,” *Christian Palladium* (February 15, 1838): 310-312.

⁷⁹ *Christian Palladium* (April 15, 1839): 375.

carnal weapons; therefore certain persons whose loyalty is a trade, have represented that we were disaffected with the Government; thereby preventing us from obtaining our legal rights.⁸⁰

A third problem was a substantial loss of members to William Miller's advent movement. Miller predicted that Christ would return in 1843, and when this did not materialize, some revised the date to 1844. Miller lived in New York, and many members of the Christian Connection there and in nearby Ontario accepted his views. In fact, Joshua Himes, who was mentioned earlier and who was one of the Christians' more thoughtful ministers, defected to the Adventist movement. He became Miller's publicist and preached at his funeral.⁸¹

A fourth obstacle to growth became increasingly significant as the century wore on. On one hand fewer preachers were coming to Ontario from New York and elsewhere in the United States, and on the other hand more Canadian members of their church were going to the United States for training and then staying there. This situation was in due large part to the fact that the Christian Connection had no colleges or training schools in Canada.⁸²

Meanwhile, the churches that had emerged from the work of Joseph Ash soon found common cause with the work of James Beaty, Sr. and others in Toronto, with the efforts of Daniel Wiers and his colleagues on the Niagara peninsula, and, most significant of all, with the churches from a Scottish background east of Guelph, Ontario and near Lake Erie that had, under the leadership of James Black, David Oliphant, Sr., John Menzies, and Dugald Sinclair, accepted Restoration principles. Sixteen Ontario churches, including some from all these backgrounds, were listed in a report to the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1843. Seven or eight other churches were in existence by the end of 1843, and the combined membership of all these congregations was more than five hundred.⁸³

Contributions of the Christian Connection to the Restoration Movement

Having examined the early history of the Christian Connection in Ontario and its interactions with those who espoused the restoration Alexander Campbell envisioned, we need to summarize the contributions of the Christians to the Restoration Movement in the province.

Mention has already been made of what Thomas McIntyre and some others did to introduce many in Upper Canada to the writings of Campbell and Barton W. Stone. While Joseph Ash is the most notable example of those who first heard about the teachings of these leaders in this way, others were also similarly influenced. As already noted, Ash was able to name five preachers who eventually left the Christian Connection to work with the Reformers. Two of them, Solomon Rose and Elijah Gleason, had come to Ontario from New York by 1827 and had worked effectively with the Christian Connection for many years in Upper Canada. It is difficult to determine how many members of the Christian Connection defected, but there were enough to help the Reformers significantly, especially along the shore of Lake Ontario east of Toronto, where five of the sixteen churches listed in 1843 in the *Millennial Harbinger* were located.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Henry: 91-93. Henry expressed similar sentiments in a report in the *Christian Palladium* (May 15, 1839): 28. In this letter he also identified "a scourge of Campbellism" as another source of difficulty.

⁸¹ Thomas H. Olbricht, "Christian Connection," Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnavant & D. Newell Williams, editors, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004): 90-91.

⁸² Fletcher: 581-589.

⁸³ Claude E. Cox, "The Movement in Canada (2. The Movement in Ontario)," *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*: 155; personal communication with Geoffrey H. Ellis. Some of the churches named by Ellis did not identify themselves fully with the Reformers until shortly after 1843, but by then they were well on their way to this position.

⁸⁴ These five churches were Hillier, Hallowell, Cobourg, Whitby, and Port Hope. Benjamin Howard and Zenon F. Green were at least partly responsible for some of these, but even their work, in a perverse kind of way, would not have taken

Harder to assess is the extent to which some of the emphases of the Christians aided the cause of the Reformers. Surely the emphasis on rejection of human creeds and the right of each person to interpret the Bible for himself helped pave the way for the Reformers. Recognition of immersion as scriptural baptism was also beneficial. Finally, the evangelistic fervor of many of the Christians, especially their traveling evangelists, set a noble example for the Reformers.

Also difficult to assess is the impact of disagreements between the two groups that may have hardened opposing positions. Two points of difference in particular stand out: (1) the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion, and (2) the relative importance of restoration and Christian unity. The case is sometimes made that long after the 1830s many heirs of the Reformers left the Spirit with no role other than through the influence of the word, and it is only in more recent years that there have been correctives to this conclusion. As to the second point, to be sure the Reformers and their more conservative heirs have given lip service to Christian unity, but the emphasis has long been on restoration, particularly of the outward essentials of the church, and the ideal has often seemed to be that of Ash in 1834, who placed the onus on others to “come into the reformation.” It is not our purpose to debate either question in this study, but only to observe that differences between the Christians and the Reformers over these issues may have hardened each in their own positions.

Thus, the contributions of the Christian Connection to the cause of restoration in Ontario were likely both positive and negative. Whatever the case, these contributions were more significant than many of their beneficiaries have realized, and the beginnings of the Restoration Movement in Ontario cannot be adequately understood without knowing something of the influence of the Christian Connection.

place had it not been for the Christian Connection.

Christian Connection Churches Started in Upper Canada from 1821 to 1834

The report at the 1834 Upper Canada Conference of the Christian Connection claimed twenty-seven churches in the province that year. These can be identified from reports in the *Gospel Luminary* the *Christian Palladium* from 1825 to 1834. Churches marked with asterisk no longer existed in 1834.

1. Lake Simcoe (Keswick, North Gwillimbury Township, York Co.). 1821.
2. Newmarket (East Gwillimbury Township, York Co.). 1822.
3. *Markham Township, York Co. (north part of township – later merged with Union-Street). 1824.
4. *Markham Township, York Co. (south part of township – not listed after 1830). 1824.
5. Brougham (Pickering Township, Ontario Co.). 1824/25.
6. Darlington Township (also oversaw church in Oshawa in Whitby Township until 1831). 1825.
7. *Hope Township (Northumberland-Durham Co. (not listed after 1830). 1826.
8. Bradley Hollow, or Eddystone (Haldimand Township, Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1826.
9. Cramahe Township (Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1826.
10. Union-Street (Whitchurch Township, York Co.). 1826/27.
11. *Vaughan Township (York Co.). 1826/27.
12. *Credit River (Toronto Township, Peel Co.). 1826/27.
13. Stoney Creek (Saltfleet Township, Wentworth Co.). 1827.
14. Fifteen Mile Creek (Louth Township, Lincoln Co.). 1827-29.
15. Dundas Street (Trafalgar Township, Halton Co.). 1827-29.
16. Trafalgar Township (Halton Co., possibly in Oakville). 1827-29.
17. Trafalgar Township (Halton Co. possibly in northeastern part of township). 1827-29.
18. *Middleton (Norfolk Co.). 1827-29.
19. West Dumfries (South Dumfries Township, Brant Co., on Grand River near Paris). 1828.
20. Murray Township (Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1829/30.
21. Zorra Township (Oxford, Co., on Thames River, near Woodstock). 1829/30.
22. West Dumfries (North Dumfries Township, in or near Ayr, Waterloo Co.). 1830/31.
23. Georgiana Township (York Co.). 1830/31.
24. Nissouri Township (Oxford Co.). 1830/31.
25. Oshawa (Whitby Township, Ontario Co. – previously overseen by Darlington Church). 1831.
26. West Gwillimbury Township (west of Newmarket,, Simcoe Co.). 1831-33.
27. Orono, near Newcastle (Clarke Township, Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1831-33..
28. Consecon (on Weller's Bay, Prince Edward Co.). 1831-33.
29. Percy Township (north of Colbourne, Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1831-33.
30. Mount Pleasant (Brantford Township, Brantford Co.). 1833.
31. Van Wickler's Hill (Cramahe Township, Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1833/34.
32. King Township (west of Newmarket, York Co.).
33. Cobourg (Haldimand Township, Northumberland-Durham Co.). 1833/34.