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John M. Imbler

Phillips Theological Seminary, john.m.imbler@gmail.com

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Journalism's Deep Roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement

John M. Imbler

As the recently constituted nation was expanding beyond the settled northeast, information on a variety of subjects was carried by an increasing number of newly established local presses. Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin observes, "With few public entertainments in rural America (c. 1850s), villages and farmers regarded the spoken word and political debates as riveting spectator sports." She continues, "Following such debates, the dueling remarks were regularly printed in their entirety in newspapers then reprinted in pamphlet form...where they provoked discourse over a wide space and prolonged time."¹ While her analysis refers to the general population, it also reflects the character of the Stone-Campbell people who were heavily invested in publications.

This article intends to explore, through limited examples, the impact print journalism had on an American religious experiment formed in the first decade of the nineteenth century from Scots-Irish Presbyterian roots with Baptist influences. Familiarly known as Disciples, this movement was Bible-based and non-creedal. A host of preachers and evangelists followed by editors sought to restore the scriptures to their dominant place, that is over denominational rules, human innovations, and hierarchical systems. They were located predominately in rural areas and county seat towns throughout western Pennsylvania and Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky then on into Tennessee, Indiana, and Illinois. They found the press to be an effective way to connect people and spread the message.

Prolific author and popular columnist Martin Marty raised the question, "*Is there a Protestant press?*"² Accordingly the answer must certainly be yes. "Furious activity, competition, zeal, energy, and staggering financial investments are directed toward the publication of religious periodicals."³

Nineteenth-century America saw the press explode as an agent and as a product of separation of church and state and its corollaries: religious voluntarism, associationalism, competition, denominationalism.... Henry Smith Stroupe, in his study of the South Atlantic states' religious press (1802-65) lists sixty-four Baptist periodicals in this region alone. Presbyterians were second, Methodists third, and Disciples of Christ fourth, and at least ten other denominations were represented....Long battles over religious viewpoints (that is, baptism of infants, immersion) were waged between them, and some news of the expansion of the churches is present.⁴

¹ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership in Turbulent Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 113.

² Martin E. Marty, et al., *The Religious Press in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 11.

³ Marty, 11.

⁴ Marty, 40.

An interesting aside regards the letters the evangelists, church planters, and circuit preachers sent to their various churches. Relating their stories and experiences on the road and with people, these ultimately became what Disciples now know as regional newsletters, currently distributed either by ground mail or electronically.

The emerging Stone-Campbell Movement concentrated on its primary mission of planting churches. Secondly, the movement built schools intended to serve the broad range of education from kindergartens to colleges. Each of the four founders had some level of formal education, and each prized literacy as necessary and foundational to biblical understanding and the movement's development.

Even though fourth in a list of at least fourteen religious groups along the South Atlantic, the number of Disciples churches grew in the northern states and territories, throughout the western frontier, and initially into eastern Canada. Alongside efforts of the traveling evangelists and circuit preachers, the proliferation of publications – journals, newsletters, pamphlets, and circulars – promoted the Plea – the restoration of the ancient order of things, a return to simple (or Primitive) New Testament Christianity.

In a research project entitled *Periodicals of the Disciples of Christ and Related Religious Groups*, founding curator of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Claude Spencer catalogued periodicals published between 1823 and 1943. He began by explaining "...it is the first attempt at a comprehensive list of the periodicals of the Disciples of Christ, the Christian church, and the churches of Christ. In this work I have attempted to list the title of every periodical designed for more than individual church circulation. Although over 1100 titles are listed, I know there must be many others as yet unknown to me."⁵ This catalog identified those published in the United States and Canada and included bulletins, regular newsletters, and alumni/ae magazines of the related higher education institutions. Some were substantial; some were of local limited focus and short-lived; others merged with other independent or school publications; and only a very few maintained an ongoing life.

Nineteenth century Disciples literature was essentially confined within the movement what historians Winifred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot called "cultural isolation."⁶ They were referring to books which had limited circulation except among the movement's adherents, although I suspect this could have been said of periodicals as well, at least through the first sixty or so years. Disciples journalism tended to focus primarily on reinforcing beliefs and practices (hardly the cutting edge of religious thought) rather than as a means of converting – although conversion occasionally took place. Books and periodicals provided some readers an initiation into the thought and purposes of this emerging movement. The books mostly provided biblical expositories or biog-

⁵ Claude E. Spencer, comp., *Periodicals of the Disciples of Christ and Related Religious Groups* (Canton, MO: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1943), iii.

⁶ Winifred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), 533.

raphies of the founders and other notable leaders of the movement, and some covered Alexander Campbell's numerous debates.

W.T. Moore, pastor, historian, and editor claimed "During their early history they had very little use for books of a general character. They were most concerned with *the Book*."⁷ The second watershed of Disciples literature came about around 1900 when a more extensive publication of books took on a more scholarly tone and appealed to broader audiences. With the expansion of both land grant as well as religious colleges, universities, and graduate schools, books became the publications of choice, even though periodicals still retained strong circulation.

Editors as Influencers

It is rare to find a journalist, historian, or student of the Stone-Campbell Movement who does not recognize the tongue-in-cheek aphorism attributed to Moore, "Disciples don't have bishops, we have editors." More accurately in his descriptive Table of Contents Moore wrote, "The Disciples have no Diocesan Bishops, and consequently their leading religious periodicals have occupied that place —"⁸ He clearly distinguished the diocesan bishop from the lay bishops or elders identified in the Pastoral Epistles who were well regarded throughout the movement. He believed the commonality of diocesan bishops and journal editors resided in their power and influence. W.E. Garrison commented "The editor's chair has come nearer to being a throne of power than any other position among Disciples."⁹ Diocesan bishops derived their authority from the Church; editors derived theirs from the people, although during the nineteenth century, critics occasionally referred to editors like Alexander Campbell, Benjamin Franklin, David Lipscomb, Isaac Errett, and others as editor-bishops or more derisively "newspaper popes."¹⁰

Similarly, but perhaps less well-known, John T. Brown preceded Moore by five years in writing, "The Disciples have no trial court for the adjustment of matters of general interest but the court of public opinion, and the most efficient means of pleading before that court is the religious journal."¹¹ There is more than passing truth contained in these statements for editors had, indeed, been shapers of opinion and definers of doctrine — clearly in the first generation, into the second, and even into the third. "From the beginning of the movement to the present time (a full century), the chief authority in regard to all important questions has been the Disciples press."¹² A reading of Brown's and Moore's statements increased awareness of the influential role of early Disciples editors.

⁷ W.T. Moore, *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909), 689.

⁸ Moore, 12.

⁹ Winfred Ernest Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), 210.

¹⁰ Garrison, 210.

¹¹ John T. Brown, *Churches of Christ: A Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in the United States, Australasia, England and Canada* (Louisville: John P. Morton and Company, 1904), 96.

¹² Moore, 699.

A majority of editors, usually also serving as preachers and evangelists, acted as the theologians and acknowledged leaders within the movement and among its factions. “[Alexander] Campbell’s periodical, *The Christian Baptist*, lifted him from comparative obscurity to the position of leadership of a movement, and the lesson was not lost on him or on other Disciples preachers. The religious press, in periodical form, became the keystone in the propagation of the Disciples message.”¹³ Editors did not necessarily pay attention to style and structure for they were not intent on producing enduring literature. They intended to present information, provide a forum for the collection and dissemination of ideas, and promote how each understood the distinctive Plea.

Early Disciples possessed world views much different from ours and expressed themselves in language and meanings we find difficult to understand. As each generation or era is influenced by and responds to its own culture, it is difficult to appropriate a “thus saith the Lord” for all times and places. Disciples value understanding through *sensus communis* rather than ecclesial authority. This does not take scripture out of the movement but rather plants the Bible more firmly within it. When a church has multiple founders or people of critical influence along with a host of adherents and companions, no one central theme defines or even connects those people together. Rather they tend to find loose agreement in a series of ideas or propositions through which beliefs, practices, and even theologies emerge. The resistance to a central authority reflects the character of the nineteenth century Disciples movement, and ultimately contributed to its separation into three distinctive churches in the twentieth century.

Both Alexander Campbell and Barton Warren Stone, two principals of the movement, always related their expressions to scripture but certainly approached the Bible in different ways; in fact, each found support for his theological and ecclesial positions from different sections of the Bible. Campbell received the Bible as a whole but focused on the post-Pentecost passages as a model for church and a path to salvation. Acts and the Epistles were his canon-within-the-canon-within-the canon with Hebrews serving as his primary text.¹⁴ Given Stone’s disposition towards understanding God as love and his preference for the moral imperatives taught by Jesus, he depended primarily on the gospels, particularly the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of John.

The indexes to such periodicals as Campbell’s *Millennial Harbinger* and Stone’s *Christian Messenger* display an incredible array of theological, social, political, and ecclesial subjects plus perspectives on the history of the faith, including divergent views on the popular topic of millennialism. Editorials contained a variety of biblical interpretations, but most included Campbell’s and Stone’s common plea of restoration – promotion of simple evangelical Christianity along with the causes of unity and liberty. These jour-

¹³ James B. Major, “The Role of Periodicals in the Development of the Disciples of Christ, 1850-1910.” Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University for Doctor of Philosophy in Religion, June 1966 (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 5-6.

¹⁴ M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997), 72.

nals, too, carried news of events, people, and churches along with letters to the editor and responses.

With the rapid growth of the movement, especially after the 1832 merger of Campbell's Disciples and Stone's Christians in Lexington, Kentucky, the proliferation of journals deeply concerned Campbell – too much time, he argued, was spent in writing rather than preaching and planting churches. Stone's position was that there should be only one journal carrying the plea as there is only one gospel. This was similar to their agreement that there should be but one hymnal, thus exhibiting unity and avoiding any inference of sectarianism. However, neither would relinquish his own journal.¹⁵ On the other hand, it seems presenting contrasting views among multiple journals would offer topics for discussion and some balance to theological and ecclesial arguments. Indeed, that was the case, particularly after the mid-part of the nineteenth century as the movement structured itself more formally and as it became more diverse theologically and geographically. On page one of No. 1, Vol. I of the *Gospel Advocate* (July 1855), the editors unapologetically wrote: “While we sincerely rejoice that there are several able journals published by the brotherhood, we are happy in believing, ‘there still is room’ for many more.” Extra-congregational organizations, the structure of local churches, and the question of slavery were among the issues that increasingly separated the southern and northern churches with all parties relying on the Bible as each interpreted it.

A problem was which journals or hymnals should be retained and which discarded since there was no authoritative body to decide. James Major said it this way, “So far, the editor spoke only for himself and was responsible to no one, yet he sought the patronage of the entire brotherhood.”¹⁶ This was a period marked by free journalism unencumbered by any controls save goodwill. There was no structure to connect the churches of the movement until the first missionary convention in 1849 established the American Christian Missionary Society which initiated a less than successful cooperative publication venture – the Christian Publication Society. The loosely affiliated ACMS was not well-received by a vocal segment of leaders and adherents as not authorized in scripture,¹⁷ and it would have been soundly rejected by Stone had he still been alive.

It is important to note that even in the post-nineteenth century there has been no official written organ of the major streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement. *The Disciple* until its demise in 2002, then followed briefly by *Disciples World* (2010) was a vehicle of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the *Christian Standard* relates to the Christian churches and churches of Christ, and *The Christian Chronicle* to the Churches of Christ. These magazines contain editorials, opinions, news, articles, book reviews, and

¹⁵ Interestingly, though, they did come to an uneasy agreement on a common hymnal while Walter Scott retained the one he compiled.

¹⁶ Major, 26.

¹⁷ James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962), 150.

congregational and individual resources. No one journal, however, speaks for the churches but rather to the people from specific religious perspectives.

As there was no centralized authority, the editors, who in the early days were also primary writers, by and large decided what they would include and how it would be written. Editorial control was easily managed when one had what amounted to a “one man” operation. Not only were they editors and authors, they often were the publishers overseeing their own presses. Furthermore, the quality of these publications varied with the editors’ journalistic skills, management acumen, and sufficient capital to underwrite their operations. Setting the *Millennial Harbinger* alongside the *Christian Messenger*, it is easy to distinguish Campbell’s solid financial resources compared to Stone’s.

Three Founders’ Journals

A look at a few of the notable journals of the nineteenth century is informative. In the first generation, *The Christian Baptist* (1823-1829), the *Millennial Harbinger* (1830-1870), the *Christian Messenger* (1826-1845), and *The Evangelist* (1832-1844) were the most prominent and influential because, one might surmise, they were edited by the primary movers of the Disciples. That supposition is debatable based on the expansion of the movement and popularity of subsequent publications.

Alexander Campbell closed *The Christian Baptist* when his affiliation with the Redstone Baptist Association dissolved occasioned by a new phase of his ministry and his thinking. The *Millennial Harbinger* continued after his death (1866) under the editorship of his son-in-law W.K. Pendleton and C.L. Loos until 1870. The *Christian Messenger* survived Stone’s death (1844) for a few issues under the editorial leadership of Jacob Creath, Jr., T.M. Allen, and finally D.P. Henderson after Stone had moved the operation from Georgetown, Kentucky to Jacksonville, Illinois. Like Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott edited two: *The Evangelist* (1832-1844) and *The Protestant Unionist* from (1844-1847). Thomas Campbell, Alexander’s father and the senior member of the four founders, did not edit a journal but contributed regularly to the *Harbinger*.¹⁸

The *Christian Baptist* was contentious at points displaying Alexander Campbell’s temperament and intensity at that time. In the preface to the first edition published July 4, 1823 at Buffalo Creek, Brooke County, Virginia, he opened with “No man can reasonably claim the attention of the public, unless he is fully persuaded that he has something of sufficient importance to offer.” He was persuaded he did have things of sufficient importance to offer in terms of reconnecting Christians to the Bible rather than denominational tenets. Even though widely traveled and an effective preacher, Campbell was convinced he could reach more people through a journal, so he began a publishing venture.

¹⁸ Thomas Campbell’s significant contribution was writing *The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington* (1809), one of the two nineteenth century foundational documents of the movement, the other being “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery” (1804) by Stone, et al.

The contents of the *Harbinger* were more conciliatory than the *Baptist* yet not without contentious entries, particularly against those who would violate what Campbell considered the movement's reforming spirit, and that included his disagreements with Stone and Scott, which were numerous. It was through the pages of the *Harbinger* and the *Messenger* that Campbell and Stone carried on some of their most vigorous and heated theological debates. At the same time, there were significant points of agreement which supported the Plea and argued against human innovations over the prescriptions of faith found in the Bible. Though *The Christian Baptist* was the first journal, it was the *Harbinger* and the *Messenger* which effectively promoted the post-1832 movement's message.

In the Prospectus on page 1 of the first issue of the *Harbinger* published Monday, January 4, 1830 in Bethany, Virginia, Campbell wrote, "This work shall be devoted to the destruction of Sectarianism, Infidelity, and Antichristian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development, and introduction of that political and religious order of society called THE MILLENNIUM, which will be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures." A postmillennialist and reformer, his tone for the journal, and essentially for restorationism, was made clear.

Stone's opening propositions in the *Messenger* published November 25, 1826 in Georgetown, Kentucky read, "To illustrate lengthily the importance of the object contemplated in this work, would be unnecessary. Of this the public will judge, to whom the work is now presented....That there are errors in the doctrines, as well as in the lives and practices of the various religious denominations now living, I presume, no Protestant will deny." He rejected Presbyterianism with its affirmation of creeds, structures, and predestination. Like the Campbells, Stone was a proponent of common-sense rationalism.¹⁹

Scott's *The Evangelist* was initiated January 2, 1832 in Cincinnati. As the chief evangelist of the movement, he tired of traveling and preaching for the Mahoning Baptist Association, essentially through Ohio, so decided to settle down to engage in writing. Through numerous books, a hymnal, and journals, he was a prolific author of the first generation of Disciples leaders. Consistent with his preaching, a central theme was promoting his plan of salvation as in his famous "five-finger exercise."

As an introduction to *The Evangelist*, Scott made clear that his evangelistic message of restorationism and Christian evidences had not changed, just taken a different approach as was made clear in his essay on the importance of the press. On page 18 under the heading of Circular Letter, he promoted his first edition with the following statement:

Brethren, I have as you are aware, been engaged in the late endeavors to restore ancient Christianity, from the beginning; know how much of all that has been doing; have witnessed the blessed effects of administering the gospel according to the apostolic plan, and have watched over its progress through the land, with intense interest. This cause is still

¹⁹ Boring, 23.

advancing and I am persuaded that nothing but more zeal in our labors... necessary to make it triumph among men. Being anxious to disseminate the principles and advance the science of eternal life, I have resolved, with the help of the Lord, to avail myself of the advantages afforded by the press.

Scott's *The Protestant Unionist* was co-published with Thomas Jefferson Melish in Pittsburgh and had a much different cast than *The Evangelist*. As the name implied, this journal argued against Roman Catholicism as anti-biblical with a plea for advancing Protestant Christianity.

Second and Third Generations

There were sectionalisms and factions of the movement that produced journals and newsletters promoting their particular ministries and theological propositions. "In a religious group which had neither bishop nor presbytery, and which was still suspicious of organization on any scale larger than a county cooperation, periodicals were an immensely important means of creating a common mind and developing leadership."²⁰ Through the nineteenth century there were three waves of journalistic emphases. The first was setting a standard, identifying the message of simple evangelical Christianity, and reconstituting the church. The second was counter-cultural challenging religious and political advances thereby imposing a strict interpretation of the scriptures. After the Civil War, the third wave promoted missions and cooperation. It was an era of expansion both at home and in foreign fields. The journals named below are samples of those which appealed to different strains of the movement.

Because of its longevity of publication and influence of Campbell's long editorship, at least in name, the *Millennial Harbinger* was recognized as the premier journal of the movement until the advent of Tolbert Fanning's *Gospel Advocate* (1855, Nashville). Resulting from the 1849 missionary convention, a pattern of church cooperation and extra-congregational organizations was becoming more acceptable, yet that acceptance was not widespread, particularly in the South. Historian David Edward Harrell commented, "Stubborn, caustic, and plodding the editors of the *Advocate* virtually defined conservative Disciples orthodoxy."²¹ Suspended during the Civil War, it was revived in 1866 under David Lipscomb's editorship. Upon Fanning's retirement Elisha G. Sewell joined Lipscomb and continued with the journal until 1924. The *Advocate* continued publication until 1978 due to its popularity and respect under a succession of editors.

The masthead on Benjamin Franklin's, *American Christian Review* (1856-1887, Cincinnati) stated "Dedicated to the Defense, Maintenance and Propagation of Christiani-

²⁰ Garrison, *Religion Follows the Frontier*, 210.

²¹ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ 1865-1900: A Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Volume 2*. (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 21.

ty, Religious News and General Intelligence.” General intelligence manifested itself in strong support of education and educational institutions. The title page of Moses Lard’s *Lard’s Quarterly* (1863-1868, Georgetown, KY) similarly declared that its purpose was “Dedicated to the Propagation and Defense of the Gospel.” The *Review* was considered the conservative voice of the North and while Franklin was anti-slavery, the journal reflected a neutral position over the war. Still published in Cincinnati, in later years, John F. Rowe became editor and Geo. W. Rice was listed as co-editor and publisher. It never maintained the appeal under Rowe that it enjoyed under Franklin, but statistically the *American Christian Review* exceeded the *Millennial Harbinger* in its number of subscriptions prior to its demise. This increase might be attributed to the growth of adherents; it may have been the content; it may be both. It is notable that the *Quarterly* and the *Review* carry the language of propagation and defense. Propagation and defense language was used in other periodicals as anti-denominationalism. The *Advocate* and the *Review* appeared to be theological companions across North-South borders.

Isaac Errett was the first editor of the *Christian Standard* (1866- present) which was published in Cleveland then moved to Cincinnati in 1869. The journal was founded by a group of individuals which included James A. Garfield. The inaugural issue carried Alexander Campbell’s obituary. While adhering to the restoration of biblical principles and unity, Errett favored musical instruments in worship and was a strong proponent of church cooperation for missionary work. The *Standard*, during Errett’s editorial life, expressed a moderate view in contrast to Fanning’s conservative efforts to reclaim the Bible and re-interpret the Plea – the re-envisioning of the apostolic faith. The *Advocate* and the *Standard* served as points and counterpoints on issues related to the movement such as missionary societies, the nature of ministry, extra-congregational organizations, and biblical authority. John Brown characterized Errett as “conservatively progressive.”²² He served as corresponding secretary of the American Christian Missionary Society then president of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. After a shaky start in Cincinnati, the *Standard* was considered by many measures the movement’s most influential weekly and probably the most financially secure under the auspices of the Standard Publishing Company. By the end of the 1800s the *Standard* had assumed predominance among the many journals still in existence.

James Harvey Garrison’s *The Christian-Evangelist* (1882) was preceded by Elijah L. Craig’s *The Gospel Echo* (1863, Carrollton, IL).²³ The above-named journals and many more appealed to different strains of the movement. Due to interpretations of the goals and geographically oriented perspectives within the movement, there were over a dozen publications called *The Christian*. It was a specific journal in Kansas City that Garrison merged with *The Evangelist* (Oskaloosa, IA) edited by B.W. Johnson and Francis

²² Brown, 96.

²³ The lineage was *The Gospel Echo* – *The Christian* and *The Evangelist* – *The Christian-Evangelist* – *World Call* (and *Tidings*) – *The Disciple* magazine which closed in 2002 – *Disciples World* to 2010.

M. McCall. This *Evangelist* was not related to the one edited by Scott. After the merger, Garrison and Johnson became co-editors with Garrison moving it to a more liberal posture and being accused of being a theological modernist. “By its conservatively progressive policy, it became a powerful force in leading the Disciples out of the age of sterile controversy and into a wider conception of religion and more active work of its promotion.”²⁴ J.H. Garrison and Errett were kindred spirits as exhibited by John Brown and W.E. Garrison both applying “conservative progressivism” to their editorial philosophies.

Journals reflecting “minority” and international interests were few but important for the movement’s progress. Marcia Goodwin’s *The American Housewife* (1869-1872), the *Christian Companion* (1863-1888), and *The Christian Monitor* (1866-?) focused on the women and their leadership in the movement. Acclaimed as the first and most notable of women editors, Goodwin also assumed the editorship of *Missionary Tidings* (1883-1918) which began as a brief newsletter then expanded into a monthly magazine. The voice of the Christian Woman’s Board of Missions, *Tidings*, was merged into *World Call* at the creation of the United Christian Missionary Society in 1919. As was the publishing pattern, these journals ran the theological, political, and cultural gamut, and some were established to counter the prevailing views of journals that devalued the roles and positions of women among Disciples.

From the beginning African Americans were part of the movement, although in varying levels of acceptance and leadership. After Emancipation opportunities expanded the growth of self-determinative black churches then shortly organizations including schools. However, there was not a significant publication effort beyond newsletters. In 1879 the *Christian Standard* offered a specific column – “Our Colored Brethren.” While periodically reporting work of the black churches and schools, the effort was not successful. In 1892 J.T. Pettigrew introduced the *Assembly Standard* (North Carolina) and D.R. Wilkins offered the *Christian Soldier* (Kentucky). Both were short-lived. Joel Lehman produced the *Gospel Plea* in 1896 under the auspices of the Southern Christian Institute, a black educational institution in Mississippi. Interestingly, Lehman was white.

As the Stone-Campbell people were moving west in the United States, their influence was also moving north across the U.S.-Canadian border settling early on from Ontario east into the Maritimes. Subsequently the Canadian Disciples did not lack their own publications: “Despite small numbers, Stone-Campbell churches in Canada produced a plethora of journals, partly because of the size of the country and their relatively localized circulation.”²⁵ And while not comparable in numbers or circulation to those in the United States, these journals also ranged from conservative to progressive. Notable among the conservative publications was the *Bible Index* (1872-1892) initially edited by John Trout and James Beatty, Jr. Similar to the *Gospel Advocate*, the *Index* eschewed hiring clergy,

²⁴ Winfred Ernest Garrison, *An American Religious Movement: A Brief History of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1945), 127.

²⁵ D. Newell Williams, Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, gen. eds. *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013), 107.

instruments and choirs in worship, and cooperative work. On the opposing theological side was *The Christian Worker* (1881-1886), a publication of the Georgian Bay Co-operation under the leadership of H.B. Sherman. As the name implies, it fostered cooperative efforts and supported the Foreign Christian Missionary Society and the Christian Woman's Board of Missions.

Entering a New Century

Not subject to debate is the proposition that the editors as opinion shapers and definers of doctrine contributed to the large divisions and small factions the movement has experienced. "Even though they [the Disciples] grew for a while, at Campbell's death (1866) they immediately began to fall apart. No one succeeded him, for his leadership was charismatic not official, and the leaders (we can also read editors) who came after had diverse spirits."²⁶ There certainly were diverse spirits in Campbell's lifetime but in far greater numbers as the movement continued to grow. While there was civil discourse in the nineteenth century Disciples press, it was not widespread as church leaders sought to stake their positions and influence their readers, even if at the expense of other journals.

In his closing remarks during the 1986 Forrest Reed Lectures of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Howard Short, retired editor of *The Christian* remarked, "We can't expect one big, happy family of readers any more than a local congregation is of one mind. But we can hope for peace, cooperation, good will, Christian principles of living and personal friendships such as I enjoyed with Edwin Hayden of the *Christian Standard*, [and] B.C. Goodpasture of the *Gospel Advocate* [and] a hundred others in the broader field of religious journalism."²⁷

Assessing the power of the press in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the journalism continues through the twentieth into the twenty-first centuries. Podcasts; blogs; e-books; online magazines, journals, newsletters; and other formats have changed the way information is disseminated and the speed by which it is transmitted in both secular and religious life. And unlike an earlier era, the publication of books has far exceeded that of Disciples journals. A survey of college, university, and theological school libraries exhibits decreasing shelf space for journals other than for research in dusty historic volumes. Access to such publications is now computer based. Although fewer in number by far, the intent and broad distribution of Stone-Campbell publications nationally and internationally retain in no small measure the "zeal and energy" Marty described in *The Religious Press in America* well before the electronic explosion.

²⁶ Ronald E. Osborn, "Dogmatically Absolute, Historically Relative" in *The Reformation of Tradition*, ed. Ronald E. Osborn (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1963), 279.

²⁷ Howard E. Short, "The Editor-Bishop: The Power of Persuasion," in *The Power of the Press* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1986), 81.

Postscript

Congratulations and appreciation to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society for reviving *Discipliana* as the *Journal of Discipliana* in an electronic format with a 2021 inauguration date.