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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## -From the Editor's Desk

Thomas and Alexander Campbell understood themselves as reformers of American Christianity. Though Presbyterian in background, their adoption of believer's immersion as baptism and subsequent identification with the Baptists resulted in their having their greatest influence among Baptists. In this issue, Mark Toulouse traces how a North Carolina Baptist congregation became one of the first congregations of the Disciples of Christ in that state. Toulouse also notes the role of this congregation in extending the influence of the Campbells to other Baptists in North Carolina.

This study was possible because of the conscientious record keeping of the Rountrees congregation, the oldest surviving Disciples of Christ congregation in North Carolina. Records exist from the founding of the congregation as a Baptist church in 1827 through 1840. After a gap of ten years, records resume for most of the period from 1850-1892.

Toulouse's review of the history of the Rountrees congregation shows that there were developments in the congregation that prepared the way for its later identification with the Campbells. By examining the congregation's records in regard to distinctive Disciples beliefs and practices, Toulouse also shows that even after formal identification with the Campbells in 1834, the transition from Baptists to Disciples of Christ did not happen overnight. In addition, Toulouse shows that the influence of the reforms advocated by the Campbells and the existing Baptist ethos did not flow in only one direction.

The value of this detailed study of one Baptist-turned-Disciples congregation—a congregation that in many respects may be considered the "Mother" church of North Carolina Disciples—is that it helps to flesh out what it means to say that the background of many nineteenth century Disciples of Christ was Baptist and sheds light on the remarkable growth of the Disciples of Christ movement among nineteenth-century American Christians.

- D. Newell Williams

## -From the President's Desk

I was on a pilgrimage. In January 2000 I made my way to Canton, Missouri, to preach for the sesquicentennial of the Canton congregation and to visit Culver Stockton College.

This “earthy” faith of ours affirms the importance of geography. We travel to Israel to walk where Jesus walked and to feel the wind in our faces, as He did, on Galilee. We sail the Aegean to step ashore at the ports of call visited by Paul. We gaze over the hills of Bethany and Brush Run. We walk the grounds of old Cane Ridge. Pilgrimages to “earthy places” let us walk on holy ground and we hear the saints whisper their “welcome.” And we rejoice.

The Historical Society, looking back over 59 years of its own history, has lived long enough to now perceive Canton, Missouri, as holy ground. I was a pilgrim in prayer as I preached from the pulpit of the church that eighty years ago nurtured Claude Spencer, our visionary founder, in his student days at Culver Stockton College. I walked the campus and imagined and wondered and prayed. I felt the same earth under my feet that Spencer, at 24 years, felt under his feet when he became librarian of the college. I look upon the vista he saw: the Mississippi River and fertile fields of Illinois. I saw the buildings he saw that honored those Disciples educator/dreamers, James Shannon and D. Pat Henderson. I went by the old library and imaged Spencer penning his vision for our Historical Society back in 1932—a free-standing library of Stone-Campbell literature serving all branches of the Movement.

You go on pilgrimage to be renewed. You come from pilgrimage to be transforming in the work you are called to do. So, as Claude Spencer was sent out from Culver Stockton to Nashville I made my way from Canton to Nashville. As I drove out of town I remembered his tribute to this place I now deem as holy ground.

“Culver Stockton has made a major contribution to brotherhood scholarship and research that has not been matched by any other Disciple institution.” (In James M. Seale’s *Forward from the Past*, p. 28) And I was one with Claude Spencer; a visionary of earthly faith who was committed to letting his life make a difference.

- Peter M. Morgan

**Once Baptists, Now Disciples:  
A Case Study of Rountrees Meeting House,  
North Carolina  
Mark G. Toulouse**

In 1830, there was not a single person living in North Carolina formally associated with the Disciples of Christ. At least not one today's historians know about. In the neighborhood of that time frame, according to research uncovered by Charles Crossfield Ware, the prolific Disciples historian who often wrote about affairs in that state, North Carolina possessed a population of some 750,000 residents. 500,000 of these residents were white, of which "only about forty thousand were members of any church." Together, the Baptists (15,530) and the Methodists (12,641) dominated about 75% of the church membership.<sup>1</sup> Even though there were no Disciples, there were some Christians in North Carolina who shared religious sentiments in common with them.

First, it is important to note that several reformers later known as Disciples of Christ had some early association with North Carolina. Barton Stone, of course, attended classes in the home of Dr. David Caldwell in Guilford County, North Carolina during the early 1790s. He became a Christian during those years under the influence of the preaching of so-called "New Light Presbyterians," evangelical Presbyterians who had been influenced by the revivals of the First Great Awakening. In 1796, he worked briefly among the small number of Presbyterians located within the Orange Presbytery in the state. But soon he headed toward Kentucky where his work at Cane Ridge soon contributed to one of the biggest events of the Second Great Awakening. For some months during early 1805, David Purviance, one of the earliest Christian Movement preachers associated with Stone, preached his message in North Carolina. He preached themes related to the importance of taking the name Christian and accepting the sole authority of the Bible for all matters of Christian life. The extent and end of his work in North Carolina is not really known.

Beyond these early contacts with the nascent Christian movement of Barton Stone, there were a number of preachers associated with James O'Kelly's Republican Methodist Church who operated in North Carolina in the early 1800s. James O'Kelly broke with the Methodist Church in 1792 because he did not approve of the authority of the bishop over congregations and their ministers. Upon the advice of Rice Haggard, a future colleague of Stone's, O'Kelly eventually chose to call his churches simply Christian Churches. His movement eventually became known as the Christian Connection. Ministers and churches associated with O'Kelly experienced some success in North Carolina in the first decades of the 1800s. But none of these congregations ever connected with the Disciples movement.<sup>2</sup>

So we are back where we started. Before 1830, there were no ministers or congregations in North Carolina formally identified with the Disciples of Christ. Today there are roughly 43,000 Disciples in North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> Where did they come from? Are they all transplants to the state from other states. Some of them today no doubt are, but many of them are born and bred North Carolinian Disciples.

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\*Mark Toulouse is Dean and Professor of American Religious History at Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas.

Actually, they are descendents of ancestors who were transplants from another denomination. Put most simply, nearly all of the early Disciples of North Carolina were originally Baptists. Over a period of years, several congregations of at least three different kinds of Baptists became associated with Campbell's Disciples. In many of these cases, they did so without much thinking about it, without analyzing major differences between being Baptist and being Disciple. They moved fairly easily from one to the other. As W.E. Garrison and A.T. DeGroot once put it, some Baptist congregations "became 'Churches of Christ' without being conscious of any great change."<sup>4</sup>

Through a marvelous stroke of historical luck, today's Disciples can actually examine the process firsthand through the recorded experience of one of these congregations. The records of one of the earliest Baptist-turned-Disciples congregations, the Rountrees Meeting House (RMH) were found in an old tin box on February 2, 1947 in the North Carolina home of the descendents of Caleb Cannon, Sr., an early church clerk. These church records cover the first years of the congregation's existence, from 1827-1840. When combined with later records from the congregation, also extant, covering most of the period from 1850-1892, they help to give shape and content to the story of the birth of Disciples in North Carolina.<sup>5</sup>

#### **I. Rountrees Meeting House: A Regular Baptist Church, 1827-1834**

The RMH, located in Pitt County, near the Little Cotentnea Creek, four miles west of Ayden, had 29 original members. It is an historically significant congregation because it is the oldest surviving Disciples of Christ congregation existing in North Carolina today. In many ways, it could be considered the "Mother" congregation among Disciples in North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> The congregation has played some role in the formation of at least eight other Disciples congregations in the state, though not all of these continue to exist today.<sup>7</sup> Involved from the beginning of Disciples work in North Carolina, the congregation is the only one that can claim close ties, at the time, with all three of the major Baptist ministers leading the movement toward Disciples reform in the state. Named after one of the founding families, the family of Jesse Rountree (1765-1831), the "s" in the original name probably denoted the possessive, as in Rountree's Meeting House.

#### **Baptists at Birth**

Though the Rountrees founding "church covenant," dated April 1827, does not mention a denominational affiliation, RMH began as a congregation of Regular Baptists. Most of the Regular Baptists in North Carolina in the early 1800s were Calvinistic in orientation, adhering to the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. They believed in election. They considered human beings to be depraved; people could not save themselves or contribute to their salvation. God elected certain sinners to be saved, and through God's total redeeming grace, God redeemed them through no merit or activity of their own. Each Christian who experienced this unmerited favor had to testify about it, to relate the nature of this Christian experience, and to stand for examination of the facts of that experience. Church membership depended upon it. The early years of the church record at RMH illustrated the practice: "After preaching a door opened for Expearence a black Br. Came forward and after examination was Received to be Baptised next meeting."<sup>8</sup> A few of the Baptist ministers, particularly those serving at Rountrees, soon began to take issue with this

strong Calvinism. That fact helped to turn the congregation toward the Disciples by 1834. As this reference also indicates, RMH received black members into membership without any special distinctions. However, worship was segregated, and, after the Civil War, black Disciples in North Carolina were encouraged to form their own congregations and associations.

There is nothing particularly unusual about the Rountrees church covenant. In fact, many early Disciples congregations might have subscribed to most of its points. Its opening statement does, however, sound typically Regular Baptist:

For as much as Almighty God by his grace has been pleased to call us out of darkness into his marvelous light and having been regularly baptized upon profession of our faith in Christ Jesus and have given up ourselves to the Lord and to one another in a gospel church way to be governed and guided by a proper discipline agreeable to the word of God we do therefore in the name of the Lord Jesus and by his assistance Covenant and agree to keep up the discipline of the church we are members of in the most brotherly affection toward each other . . .<sup>9</sup>

One should note here the stress on the grace of God, on the Christian's profession of faith, and on "regular" baptism, meaning baptism by immersion. Also present is the characteristic emphasis found among Regular Baptist congregations on church discipline, a characteristic often expressed in the records of RMH. Throughout the nineteenth century, Rountrees regularly excommunicated members for a variety of reasons. For example, John Vindson, a regular delegate representing the congregation at various Baptist association meetings during the first few years of its existence, was excommunicated in November of 1830 after being charged with "drunkenness and riot." He had in August been reprimanded for being in a "bar fight," but claimed self-defense and had been exonerated. His innocence only lasted a few months. Rigorous enforcement of congregational discipline did not change once the congregation identified itself with Disciples. Members were excommunicated for everything from missing too many business meetings to various forms of "unchristian conduct." As an example of the former, at least three descendents of the primary founding family, the Rountrees, were excommunicated for nonattendance (1858, 1859, and 1860). As an example of the latter, Sister Atthia Phagens was excommunicated in 1851 for "attending balls and dancings which the church deemed not in accordance with Christian conduct."<sup>10</sup>

When the church began in 1827, meetings were held on the third Saturday and third Sunday of each month. Most of these small rural Baptist congregations were partnered with other congregations holding services on other Saturdays and Sundays of the month. Therefore, they only held services one weekend per month. These congregations shared, and jointly supported the ministry provided by, their pastors. These small congregations of Baptists held regular union meetings, usually on the fifth Sundays of the month. Each congregation sent delegates to these meetings, a letter, and an offering (usually, for RMH, anywhere from one to two dollars) to help pay for publishing the letter in the minutes of the meeting. Rountrees, from the very beginning of its existence, recorded its motions to "send delligates to the union meeting."<sup>11</sup> These "union" gatherings were important to both the social and business life of these Baptists. They also provided fertile ground for seeds of discontent about Calvinism.

RMH often took a tag-team approach to preaching. Throughout the nineteenth century, two different elders often preached sermons on the same morning. The first entry in the congregation record provides an example: "Sermon by Brother [Irwin]

Moye followed by Brother [Abraham] Congleton.” Though Congleton had primary pastoral duties that first year, preaching was distributed among several men, including Thomas D. Mason, W.P. Biddle, a “Brother Moor,” William J. Newborn, Brother James L. Warren, and even a man described as “Coulord Br. Taborn.” Sermons were preached on every third Saturday of the month, just before the business conference, and again on the third Sunday. The congregation called Elder Thomas D. Mason “to the pastoral Charge of the church” in March 1828, but Elder Congleton and others continued to preach regularly throughout the year. In May 1828, most likely for purposes of adjusting their schedule to coordinate with other congregations sharing their preacher, Rountrees shifted to meeting every fourth weekend. Though Mason served as the “cald pastor” from March 1828 through December 1830, Congleton’s influence ultimately assumed more importance. He briefly took over primary pastoral duties again when Mason left. Congleton and two other men, William Clark and John P. Dunn, were largely responsible for leading this congregation into the Disciples fold.

### **RMH and Baptist Associations**

To understand how this shift took place, it is important to provide a bit of the Baptist background. In this area of North Carolina, there were two Regular Baptist Associations operating. The Kehukee Association included the nearby congregations named Old Ford and Tranters Creek. The Neuse Association included nearby Grindle Creek. Rountrees’ church records of August 1827 reflect the agreement to “petition by letter” for membership in the association. A “brother Clark” [presumably William Clark, an acquaintance of Congleton and who is first mentioned by full name two years later] was to write the petition. Ware assumed RMH sent this petition to the Neuse Association. That may have been the case. But Rountrees did not join the Neuse Association until three years later. There is no mention of the petition or action related to it after this first mention. Yet, RMH recorded sending voting delegates to association meetings during this three-year period.<sup>12</sup>

There is a remote possibility that Rountrees applied for membership in the Kehukee Association in 1827, was accepted, and after three years, left it for membership in the Neuse Association.<sup>13</sup> In 1827, the year Rountrees first petitioned an association for membership, William Clark operated as the clerk for the Kehukee Association. It made sense to ask this friend of Abraham Congleton to write a petition on behalf of RMH. Most Baptists knew of Clark’s hefty involvement in the matters of the Kehukee Association.

Clark’s participation, in the two years after the RMH petition, turned somewhat controversial. He wrote the prominent circular letter for the meeting of 1828, and he preached the annual introductory sermon at the Association meeting in 1829. His theme for the sermon was “The Great Commission.” He chose the theme for a reason. The members of the Kehukee Association were debating the merit of theological seminaries and organized missions. Throughout these years, Clark argued in favor of vigorous missionary efforts to reach the lost. The Kehukee Association eventually affirmed an anti-missionary position, refusing to countenance ministers who sought to raise funds to support a missionary society or seminary. Clark’s last meeting with Kehukee was the annual meeting at Morattock in 1830. He published a pamphlet in 1833 entitled “Clark’s Defense and Justification to the Kehuky Association.” Unfortunately, no copy of this pamphlet is available to us

today. It is possible that, if the RMH were associated with the Kehukee Association during these years, the congregation left the Kehukee after that association denounced missionary societies in October 1829.<sup>14</sup>

Meeting two weeks after Kehukee affirmed this anti-missionary position, the Neuse Association endorsed cooperative mission societies and voted "to suspend our correspondence with that body [the Kehukee Association]."<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the next month, in December 1829, Clark preached at RMH from Matthew 5:16: "let your light so shine before men that others may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven." In September 1830, less than a year later, members at RMH "agreed to join the Neuse Association." Three months later, in December, Abraham Congleton agreed to serve as the preacher for Rountrees until the March meeting, 1831. In March, the congregation renewed him for another year.<sup>16</sup>

Within five weeks or so after Congleton's December appointment, and before his March 1831 reappointment, an important union meeting took place at the Little Sister Meeting House. RMH had been influential in forming the congregation in August 1828 as a branch congregation, hence the name "little sister." RMH delegated seven members to start the mission in nearby Lenoir County. Something controversial must have taken place at that 1831 Baptist union meeting, held February 2 and 3. It is not entirely possible to reconstruct the topic from the church records of RMH, but several developments enable a good hypothesis. Most likely, Clark and others challenged the Baptist commitment to Calvinistic doctrine at this meeting, and urged the delegates to accept the Bible alone as sole authority for Christian life and practice.<sup>17</sup> The churches represented in this meeting were Tranters Creek and Old Ford, both of the Kehukee Association, and Rountrees, Grindle Creek and Little Sister. Delegates from RMH were Noah Tison, Gideon Fulford, and Abraham Congleton, the pastor. Delegates also included William Clark and John P. Dunn. Dunn would soon play a major role in the preaching ministry at RMH.

By April 1831, and for reasons connected with this meeting, friendly correspondence between Little Sister and RMH stopped. In June, the record contains the following entry:

Sermon by Br. Congleton after preaching Conference convened motion by Br. Congleton to renew our correspondence with the Church at Little Sister which was Rejected by Br. Tison, in consequence of which Br. Congleton Refused to attend as our Pastor any longer.<sup>18</sup>

Nothing else is recorded, but in July, Congleton was the one doing the preaching and the moderating for the church conference. Relations between the two congregations had been smoothed. Brother Noah Tison remained within the congregation as well, but within two years, he would decide to take his leave.

In order to understand this rift between Tison and the developments at Little Sister, and the growing rift between Tison and other members at RMH, a little more of the surrounding story needs to be told. The next step in the growing division between Tison and RMH came when the congregation called William Clark "to the pastoral care" of the congregation in January 1832. Though church records continue to show Congleton's regular attendance and preaching at RMH throughout 1832, records also indicate that Congleton became one of the pastors at Little Sister which met on a different weekend.<sup>19</sup> Baptists in eastern North Carolina at the time knew Clark to be a controversial figure, though many held him in high esteem.

Clark had served three terms in North Carolina's House of Representatives between 1820 and 1830.<sup>20</sup> He had already challenged the leadership of the Kehukee Association and had begun to preach the message that Christ died for all human beings, not just the elect.

Clark also held the distinction of being the first North Carolinian to subscribe to the *Millennial Harbinger*. He ordered his subscription in May of 1830, shortly after the journal began publication.<sup>21</sup> Now, about one and one-half years later, in January 1832, he served as the pastor of RMH. Clark also served as pastor for Grindle Creek. Of the two congregations, Grindle Creek was the larger with a membership approaching 100. It was at Grindle Creek, in the summer of 1832, a few months after he began his pastoral service at RMH, where Clark stood in the pulpit and made the confession "My brethren, I have been wrong." He renounced Calvinism and preached that Christ died for all people. He openly challenged the London, Philadelphia, and Kehukee Confessions, confessions valued by the Regular Baptists. Nineteen years later (1851), in the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger*, he described his experience for readers:

Finally, I resigned my pastoral office in the church where I had my membership... The church insisted that I should take the charge of them again. To this I agreed, upon the following condition: "That they should enter upon their church book a renunciation of everything of human origin, written since the close of the Sacred Scriptures, and that I should be permitted to preach what I understood the scriptures to teach, irrespective of the writings, or creeds, or confessions of faith, before alluded to." In other words, we renounced human authority of every description whatever, in matters of religion. We sent a copy of what we had done to some of the churches adjoining us, and I think seven adopted them.<sup>22</sup>

On August 25, 1832, the church records at RMH indicate that Clark's resolution had been received from "Grindal Creek." The church met in conference on this "Saturday before the fourth Lords day." There is no mention of Clark in the minutes. John P. Dunn and Abraham Congleton both preached before the conference convened. Dunn began preaching occasionally for RMH at the July meeting. The conference voted to refer consideration of the resolution to the next meeting, probably since none of the members had seen it before that meeting. In September, John Dunn preached again. The clerk's illness and resulting absence cancelled the conference meeting. Finally, the next Friday, on October 5, 1832, the church met in conference "to dispose of the letter which came to us from the Church at Grindill Creek." It is impossible to tell how long the debate lasted; the clerk simply stated "after considerable debate it was agreed to Send the letter back with an answer of which letter and answer the Clerk Retain a precise copy . . ." The precise answer is now lost, but the church did vote to support its minister and to pass the resolution proposed by the Grindle Creek congregation. The next statement of the church record is "in consequence as we believe of an honest difference of opinion Brother Noah Tison asked for a letter of dismissal for him Self and wife to which there was no objection though it was not granted at that time."

In November, William Clark returned to the pulpit of RMH; the minutes record that "Bro. Tisen deferred taking his dismissal for the present." Perhaps Clark and Tisen had been able to negotiate a brief truce. In January, the congregation asked Clark to serve as pastor for another year. Finally in May, 1833, Tisen "Cald on the Clerk for the letter he asked the Church for in Oct last . . . and the Clerk fild it out and Sent it to him on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1833."<sup>23</sup> With this action, Tisen left the

membership of the RMH. Clark, described by the clerk at RMH as “our beloved pastor,” had the full support of both Grindle Creek and Rountrees.<sup>24</sup> Before the end of October, seven congregations had adopted Clark’s resolution.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after these actions, the Neuse Association met at Southwest Church in Lenoir County. William Clark preached at the meeting from Romans 1:16 (“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”). Otherwise, Clark evidently remained fairly low profile in this meeting. Congleton and Dunn, listed as delegates from Little Sister, appeared to take more of the heat. Little Sister sought membership in the Neuse Association and its leadership had to be examined. Actually, they passed the examination and the gathered body approved the admission of Little Sister to membership. Their commitment to the Bible alone, along with that of Grindle Creek and Rountrees, was well-known by this time. Many Baptists associated with Neuse felt the same way. But others believed that specifics outlined by the denomination were important as well.

A highly respected Baptist leader and minister, Thomas Meredith, led the group desiring to express Calvinist convictions clearly, especially the belief in salvation by grace alone. Members of the Association following Meredith’s lead, approved a new draft of their creed of fifteen articles. The newly drafted ninth article read: “That the doctrine of election is contained in the Scriptures and that it is our duty to believe it upon the authority of Him who has revealed it.”<sup>26</sup> The minutes published by the Association included a misleading statement to the effect that the delegates from Little Sister “acceded” to the redrafted creed. The three delegates, including Dunn and Congleton, immediately issued a pamphlet categorically denying the truth of that statement. This denial brought the anti-Calvinist group head to head with the Calvinist group.

At the Neuse meeting held the next fall, October 20, 1833, at the Fort Barnwell Church, the delegates branded Clark, Dunn, and Congleton as heretics. The meeting approved the following resolution:

Whereas, Abraham Congleton, John P. Dunn, and William Clark, have embraced, and are now in the habit of preaching doctrines which are deemed not only heretical, but subversive of the peace and best interests of our Churches, vis: the fundamental views of a certain Mr. Campbell; it is therefore Resolved, That the Churches connected with this body are recommended to exclude from their pulpits, and from their churches the above named individuals, and all others professing the same and similar sentiments.<sup>27</sup>

In response to this Association Resolution, William Clark wrote a letter, dated November 17, 1833, to the *Millennial Harbinger*:

There are four or five of us in this section of country who are engaged in publishing the ancient gospel. I am told that the Neuse Association did, at its last session, exclude us and prohibit us the use of their pulpits, alleging that we were [Campbell]ites, I am on the eve of starting to Alabama and Mississippi, and wish you had the means of knowing my character and standing, so that you could recommend me to the brethren. The cause here is gaining ground, notwithstanding there is great persecution and proscription; but we are moved by none of those things. Allow me to mention as my fellow-laborers, Jeremiah Leggett, Abraham Congleton, and John P. Dunn, brethren of the most pure and unblemished religious character. After having stated the gospel facts, and laid open the plan of salvation as clearly as I could, I have heard them express their surprize at its simplicity, and to say that it was as plain as their hand, and that it must stand whilst the Bible stands.<sup>28</sup>

### **Visit of an "aged man:" Thomas Campbell Preaches at RMH**

Clark left for Jackson, Mississippi sometime within a year or so of writing this letter. There he became a prominent early Disciples leader, founding the Jackson Church in 1835. True to his missionary stance, he served as one of the first Vice-Presidents of the American Christian Missionary Society when Disciples formed it in 1849. But before he left North Carolina, he hosted a visit from none other than Thomas Campbell himself. Though Clark did not know it at the time, Thomas Campbell was already in Edenton, North Carolina when he submitted his letter to the younger Campbell's journal.

Thomas Meredith had been the pastor of the Baptist church in Edenton, but decided to decline the church's invitation to continue. As an editor of an influential Baptist newspaper, Meredith decided, nonetheless, to keep his membership in the church. In the summer of 1833, the congregation invited a touring evangelist, B.F. Hall, to preach in the church. B.F. Hall was a Disciples minister and close colleague of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. After Hall preached, Meredith used his Baptist paper to attack him. His accusations ring true, primarily because he claimed Hall attacked articles of faith and covenants, denied the need for giving an accounting of a religious experience before one is received into church membership, and stated that anyone could become a candidate for baptism by simply declaring belief in Christ and a desire to be baptized. All these statements were Disciples hallmarks. Contrary to the feelings expressed by Meredith, their former pastor, members of the congregation at Edenton appreciated Hall's preaching and invited him back.

In early October 1833, Thomas Campbell, over seventy years of age, left Bethany, Virginia in the company of Hall. They intended to visit congregations sympathetic with reform principles in Eastern Virginia that had recently been excluded from the Dover Baptist Association. After the two of them concluded their Virginia visit, they rode on to Edenton. Dr. Hall preached again in the Baptist congregation in Edenton on November 3. In addition, Hall and Campbell published an advertisement informing readers that Thomas Campbell would speak at 2:30 pm in the Baptist church "on the All Important Subject of the Religious Reformation, which he with a goodly number of his contemporaries, has been humbly and earnestly recommending to the reception of the Christian public, for upwards of twenty years."<sup>29</sup> Though Hall left Edenton after two weeks, Campbell stayed for nearly three months in the home of a local Baptist minister.

In December, the Union Meeting for the area, under Meredith's direction, excluded supporters of Hall and Campbell from all privileges and relations with the area churches. "Resolved," these members wrote, "That we, the members of the Yeopim Union Meeting, will receive none known or suspected to be Campbellite teachers into our pulpits . . . That it is considered due to the cause of truth and Christian concord to guard our brethren against the ministrations of one, Thomas Campbell, a teacher of Campbellism, who has been for some time visiting among our brethren. . . ."<sup>30</sup>

Campbell finally left Edenton in February, 1834. He next visited the home of William Clark. No one knows why. Maybe he had heard about Clark from Baptists in Edenton. Or, perhaps the elder Campbell had seen Clark's letter published in the *Millennial Harbinger* in January 1834. When he arrived at Clark's home in Greenville, Clark was not at home. His wife, whose maiden name was Louisa Pearce

Janier, hosted Campbell in Clark's absence. An intelligent woman, she discussed Campbell's ideas with him and quickly became an advocate. When Clark returned, he brought with him both Dunn and Congleton. Evidently, the four of them agreed in many things. To his wife's consternation, however, Clark, at this time, did not accept all the Disciples principles. For example, he had difficulty with the regular occurrence of the Lord's Supper. His 1851 recollection of events, published in the *Millennial Harbinger*, summed up the meeting this way: "We rejected him, (for which I have heartily repented,) and refused to come into the Reformation."<sup>31</sup> But his disagreements with Thomas Campbell did not prevent him from inviting him to preach at RMH. Campbell obliged and preached there on Saturday, February 22, 1834. The entry in the church record reads simply "Sermon today by Elder Campbell an aged man . . ." During the business conference that followed, since Clark intended to move to Mississippi, the congregation elected John P. Dunn to serve as the pastor for the current year.<sup>32</sup>

Campbell wrote several letters home from North Carolina. In one to his wife, dated March 7, he conceded that "I may almost say that I commenced my labors in this State about the beginning of February, three months after my arrival." He felt frustrated about the three months he spent in Edenton, but he was energized by his conversations with Clark and his friends. "I have been very much engaged since my arrival in this part of the State," he wrote. But he spoke of the "very low ebb" of religion in eastern North Carolina, "both with regard to its exhibition and effects." He anticipated participating in a "meeting of the few friends of reform – I mean the preachers – on the last Lord's day of this month, and the two preceding days, not far from this place, for the purpose of concert concerning our future proceedings . . ."<sup>33</sup> Since this meeting took place on March 28-30, 1834 at Little Sister, after the three Baptist ministers (Clark, Dunn, and Congleton) had all been declared heretics by the Neuse Association, one is tempted to claim this meeting represents the first organized meeting of the Disciples of Christ in North Carolina. It may well be true, but none of these congregations had yet taken the name Disciples for themselves.

### **From Baptists to Disciples**

In the published record of the Little Sister meeting, six congregations are listed as having delegates represent them ("Old Ford, Tranter's Creek, Smithwick's Creek, Grindale Creek, Rountree's, and Little Sister").<sup>34</sup> Thomas Campbell's name is not listed, though he was most likely present. As Ware suggested, perhaps the omission of his name resulted from the recognition that publicizing Campbell's presence would add unneeded controversy. The published record of this meeting began:<sup>35</sup>

In consequence of the anti-christian course, most rigorously pursued towards us, by those with whom we have, heretofore, been associated, we met in conversation . . . After some explanatory remarks, relative to the necessity and object of the meeting, by Elder William Clark, Elder Abram Congleton was called on to preside . . .

The document named those present and then continued:

After mature deliberation, the above named brethren agreed to unite, taking for their bond of union, the word of God, recorded in the Old and New Testaments: in which is revealed, the only legitimate foundation for the faith and obedience of the disciples of Jesus Christ. They also concurred in rejecting every thing written since the canonical books of the new Testament, as of any authority in the kingdom of God, . . . of which kingdom our Immanuel is the rightful Sovereign, and for the proper government of which, the New Testament contains the only wholesome laws. By

these, alone, they are willing to be governed in all things pertaining to their holy religion.

Appended to these minutes is a circular letter written by William Clark, Abraham Congleton, and J.P. Dunn to the "Brethren in Christ." This lengthy letter may certainly be considered a Disciples manifesto, even though its authors do not declare any intention to join the Disciples or Christians anywhere within it. At this time, these congregations, evidently, intended to go it alone without formally joining the Disciples movement. The letter written by these three ministers is too long to quote in its entirety here, but a lengthy quote is needed to provide a sampling of its Disciples style and flavor:

Feeling the responsibility necessarily connected with teaching the holy religion of our Redeemer, and knowing, at the same time, the calumny and abuse which have been aimed at our religious character, by denouncing us as hereticks, Campbellites, &c., we would beg leave to disabuse your minds . . . of the influences of all such unfounded and unhallowed charges . . . Together with a few other brethren, we have expressed . . . our determination to be governed in future, in matters of religion, solely by god's holy and precious word. . . . whatever, therefore, others may think themselves justified in saying, by way of slander and abuse, for the purpose of weaning your christian affections from us, and thereby destroying our usefulness among you, it shall be our highest aim to make known nothing among you save "Christ and him crucified." . . . [several pages of biblical quotation and presentation follow and then this conclusion] In conclusion, dear brethren, we utterly deny being the disciples or followers of any human being on earth, in matter pertaining to the christian religion; but on the contrary, take Christ and his holy apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, for our holy instructors and teachers under the direction of the Holy Spirit; entirely discarding every thing, as making any part of it, which we cannot find expressly written on the face of the sacred pages. We humbly recommend the same course to our beloved brethren, and all others into whose hands these few lines may happen to fall, earnestly praying that God may add a divine blessing for the Redeemer's sake - *Amen*.<sup>36</sup>

The combination of this manifesto, composed by these three ministers associated with the RMH, and the minutes of this important meeting attached to it, does, in essence, act as the formal birth announcement of Disciples in the state of North Carolina. There is no notice of a new affiliation in the church records of RMH. Business took place as usual, with Dunn and Congleton doing most of the preaching, accompanied occasionally by Willie P. Nobles who was licensed by the congregation to preach the week before the meeting at Little Sister. Campbell's last letter from North Carolina is dated April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1834 in which he tells his wife "I am now about to leave the State, without having found a strong attachment but to a very few."<sup>37</sup> But Campbell's visit proved more influential than he might have imagined at the time.

The trend toward a more open identification with the Disciples of Christ movement for RMH was no doubt furthered by the fact that the Neuse Association, at its annual meeting of 1834, took formal action to remove any association with the three congregations of Rountrees, Little Sister, and Grindle Creek. The Kehukee Association took similar action a year earlier against both Tranters Creek and Grindle Creek (which evidently held membership in both associations). Kehukee also censured congregations at Old Ford and Smithwicks Creek. By December of 1834, all these congregations had were each other, and a growing understanding that Baptist congregations in other parts of the country, those identifying themselves in some way or another with the same reform principles preached by Alexander Campbell, were going through similar trials and travails. As Clark stated it in 1851, "At this period the *Harbinger* became more generally read by us, and we profited greatly by it."<sup>38</sup>

## II. RMH and Disciples Beliefs, 1834-1892

Shortly after RMH took this turn toward the Disciples, the congregation nearly died. The two developments are probably related. Thomas Meredith remained, during this period, vocal about the dangers of Campbellism, and clearly identified the Baptist congregations infected with it. The Associations, both the Kehukee and the Neuse, were also vocal about why these congregations should be avoided. John P. Dunn and Willie P. Nobles did what they could to keep things going. There is record of only one new member joining RMH between 1834 and 1838, and that member had been denied a letter of recommendation from the church of previous membership.<sup>39</sup> Records also reveal that a few members asked for letters "of dismissal," especially right around the time of the Neuse decision to disfellowship the RMH. By 1838, only a few members remained. The minutes for that year are a brief few lines, beginning with the statement that "meetings have been so thinly attended through the year 1838 that we have Seldom held a Conference."<sup>40</sup>

The struggle to keep things going was not one RMH went through alone. By May 1839, the Little Sister congregation had closed its doors. John P. Dunn, and his wife Treacy, who had held their membership in Little Sister (he was pastor of both congregations), moved their membership to RMH. I have been unable to find any record of Grindle Creek, Smithwicks Creek, or Unity after 1840. These original congregations of the Post-Neuse and Post-Kehukee union meeting must have disappeared fairly early. Tranter's Creek and Old Ford continued on for a time, but of the original seven congregations, only Rountrees history continued unbroken from 1832 until today.

It is interesting to examine how RMH looked in comparison to various Disciples beliefs that were present in the nineteenth century. It is only natural that this congregation, born and bred among the Baptists, might carry on several Baptist qualities and characteristics. But there are a few Disciples ideas and qualities that, over time, began to emerge in the church record of its meetings and worship services.

### **The "Christian," "Disciples," or "Church of Christ" Name**

Unfortunately, the church records from May 1840 through January 1850 are unavailable to today's historians. Perhaps some day these records will be found in someone's attic, but currently those years are a blank to us. As already noted, before 1840, there is no record anywhere of the members or ministers of the RMH owning or using the name of "Christian" (in the Barton Stone use of the word), "Disciples," or "Church of Christ." However, the first line of the church record in February 1850 (the first date we have after the missing decade) is "The disciples of Christ met at Rountrees M.H. on Saturday before the 4 Lord's day in February." Explicit identification with the Disciples had occurred during the decade. Sometime before 1850, the phrase the "Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House" had become common.<sup>41</sup>

John P. Dunn and perhaps most of the few members of RMH, had probably understood themselves to be with the Disciples of Christ shortly after the break with Baptists in 1834. The congregations that met at Little Sister in March of 1834, continued to meet quarterly together in their "Union Meeting." The quarterly Union Meeting was a Baptist practice and it usually took place on the fifth Sunday when a month had five Sundays. From other records, we do know that, by 1843, the

congregations were collectively referred to as the “Christian Association,” and, by at least 1845, the quarterly meeting of these congregations had the name of the “Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ.”<sup>42</sup>

### **The Good Confession and Church Membership**

One place where the shift from Baptist to Disciples identity is most readily apparent in the church records has to do with how the clerks described the invitation to join RMH. In the period between 1828 and 1832, phrases like “opened a door for the reception of members” began to appear occasionally, though most of the time the clerk used language like “a door opened for expearence.” The last time the phrase containing “expearence” was used in the church records is in January 1833, about one year after Clark became the pastor at RMH and ten months before the Neuse Association took action against him. There happened to be a guest preacher, an Elder R.M. Whitman, that Saturday in January 1833. That may be why the clerk used that wording after nearly six months using some form of “reception of members.” It seems significant that, from 1833 on, the Baptist word “expearence” is never used in the church records again.

When the record picks up again in 1850, the phrase being used is still “reception of members.” During a revival being preached by John P. Dunn on a Tuesday night in late August or early September 1852, according to the clerk:

The door of reception being opened, Winnifred Jackson, Sarah Dixon, S.E. Cannon, Celia Cannon, Winnifred Blount presented themselves to the church, professed faith in Christ & demanded Baptism.

The next night, “Invitations being extended, Jesse Rountree<sup>43</sup> & Rebecca Ann Elizabeth Jenkins came forward, professed faith in Christ and requested baptism.” Even though the converts on Wednesday night might have been more polite about their need for baptism than those on Tuesday night, the fact is that this process had become the standard practice within the congregation. To become a member, one confessed belief in Christ, without need to provide any other testimony as to the “experience” of faith, and then was baptized. This process, of course, represented standard Disciples practice. In September 1855, a new phrasing entered the record:

The moderator taking his [chair] gave notice that the brethren were ready to hear the petitions of any who had made the good confession + been baptised and wished to unite with the members composing this church. Sisters Jane and Sandy Kittrel came forward as petitioners. The moderator wished to know if there was any objection to these being received - there being no objection - They were received as members of this church. The moderator and brethren giving the right hand of fellowship.

From this time on, the words “good confession” were used often.<sup>44</sup> Occasionally, especially after a new clerk took over following the Civil War, the phrase found a fuller expression, as in the case (September 1869) “when two other young men came forward and made the good confession that Jesus is the Christ – the son of the Living God.” Phrases such as these are about as full-fledged Disciples as one can get.

### **The Role of Reason in Salvation**

Interesting as well is the way that this clerk after the Civil War emphasized the role of human reason in salvation. This first appeared in September 1870, when the clerk offered this analysis of the invitation: “After thro preaching a door was again open for the reception. Sang a hymn, with warm harts in our Master cause, among the small congregation present, there was some who seamed to think that they would like to be safe on the Lords Side, but could not get the consent of their minds.”<sup>45</sup> This

clerk expressed the role of human reason in a variety of ways. For example, in April 1871, he wrote: "Elder Wilson preached to alarg congregation, the House was crowded. And they all seamed anxious to hear what he had to say. And we trust his sound + plain reasoning conveyed the truth to the harts of many, and that it may bring fourth much fruit to the honor of Saviours Kingdom." Or, again in October 1884: "... we hope much good will be the result from his sound logical reasoning to the members; also those that have not made the good confession that Jesus is the Christ."

These examples illustrate well Campbell's belief that preachers should simply present the facts of the gospel in sound and reasoned ways, and the people will be convinced in their minds that these facts are true. Once they are persuaded, they will become Christian. For Disciples, emotional revivals were very rare; they preferred the protracted meeting where the reasonable aspects of Christian faith could be discussed for longer periods of time. Disciples much preferred gaining the "consent of the mind" to experiencing "jolting" or emotional conversions, though when people responded, "warm feelings" were abundant. The Church of Christ meeting at RMH modeled these elements of Disciples belief quite regularly.

### **Ecumenical Spirit**

It really is too bad we have lost a decade of the RMH records because one major ecumenical development for Disciples in North Carolina took place during those years. In 1845, the Union Meeting of Disciples participated in a major ecumenical endeavor that brought an infusion of new identity and strength for these early Disciples in North Carolina. The pastor of RMH, John P. Dunn, played a crucial role in this process. It would be interesting to see what notice the Rountrees' church records gave to the ecumenical spirit evident in the 1840s activities of its minister. By 1841, Dunn was taking ecumenical steps toward producing a union with a much larger group of Free Will Baptist congregations and ministers that had consciously adopted similar Christian principles. This merger, completed in 1845, breathed new life into the Disciples movement in North Carolina.

The Free Will Baptists, as a group, had some small connections with Christian Connection ministers of the James O'Kelly movement. Occasionally, as noted by Ware, ministers from O'Kelly's movement were invited to preach in Free Will Baptist congregations.<sup>46</sup> In 1830, Free Will Baptists formed a new association. Called the Bethel Conference, this group of Baptist congregations moved toward a conscious dependence on the Bible alone, slowly arriving at a position of rejecting both the Creed (composed and accepted in 1812) and Discipline of the Free Will Baptist Church. Unlike the Regular Baptists, the Free Will Baptists took an Arminian, rather than Calvinist, view of salvation. From this stance, they received their name. They emphasized the free will of human beings to accept the salvation offered in Christ. In very many ways, their doctrinal understandings already resembled the program of reform set forth by both O'Kelly and Campbell. They were, however, much closer to Campbell's reforms than O'Kelly's because the Free Will Baptists always emphasized baptism by immersion.

The role of the Creed and Discipline within the church had been discussed by the Conference throughout the middle to late 1830s. Conflict in the Bethel Conference came to a head when Jeremiah Heath, a Free Will minister and member of the Conference, moved at the 1839 annual meeting that all ministers must confess their

loyalty to Free Will Baptist principles as expressed in church documents. He lost the vote, 20-8. One of the acknowledged leaders of the Bethel Conference was a minister named Thomas Latham. By 1841, he and John P. Dunn had become friends. Even more interesting is the fact that, in 1834, after Thomas Campbell left the Clark home and before he returned to Bethany, he stopped for a short visit in the town of Pantego where, on April 9, he visited briefly in the home of Thomas Latham.<sup>47</sup>

I can find no record of how Campbell met Latham, who in 1834 was a 37 year old school-teacher and church clerk in the Free Will Baptist congregation (Concord Church) located there. Campbell did preach in that congregation, and that might have been their first meeting. Later, Latham became pastor of the Concord Church (in 1839) and served until 1855. In his history of North Carolina Disciples, Ware described Latham as the second North Carolinian (second to William Clark) to subscribe to the *Millennial Harbinger*. He paid for a subscription in December of 1830.<sup>48</sup> The elder Campbell probably knew this fact about Latham before he visited Pantego. Evidently, the ideas of both Campbells exercised a major impact upon Latham. By the time seven years had passed, we meet Latham again, clearly preaching principles shared by the Disciples. Obviously, Thomas Campbell's visit to North Carolina paid larger dividends than he ever knew. Also illustrated by this history is the important role Campbell's journals, both the *Christian Baptist* and the *Millennial Harbinger*, played in early Disciples history. Campbell's early identification with Baptists provided him with a later automatic entry with some of them when his movement ventured off on its own.

The minutes of the 1841 Bethel Conference meeting reveal that Dunn was in attendance, and even read scripture at the meeting. Latham preached at the conference on a solid Disciples passage, Acts 2: 41-42 ("Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; . . . And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"). His sermon emphasized Christian union among churches through a reliance on the Bible alone. This, he argued, was the "practice of primitive Christians" who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." The whole sermon was filled with Disciples themes.<sup>49</sup>

Dunn attended the 1842 meeting of the Baptist Conference as well. Even though he was not listed as a member or a delegate, the Conference invited him to preach twice. His sermon on November 12 took Matthew 7: 21-23 as its text ("Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father . . ."). On Sunday, November 13, he preached on I Timothy 4:10 ("For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe"). Evidently, his sermons hit home. At the 1843 meeting, the Baptist Association seated him as a delegate from the "Christian Association," the "only . . . present from said association."<sup>50</sup> The 1843 meeting also passed a resolution offered by Thomas Latham:

Whereas: Division among Christians is a promiscuous evil – antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ, as if he were divided against himself, . . . Antiscriptural, as being strictly prohibited by . . . His express command . . . And where as this Conference is desirous of removing every difficulty from the minds of such members of the church of Christ as are wishful to unite on the "faith once delivered to the saints." Therefore: Resolved that this Conference consider each

church of Christ, composed of its Elders, Deacons, and other members, as the highest ecclesiastical tribunal recognized in the New Testament, and therefore disclaims any ecclesiastical or controlling power over the churches of Christ as are willing to unite with us, on the Holy Scriptures . . .<sup>51</sup>

In 1844, the conference invited Dunn to a seat as a delegate and, again, the membership invited him to preach. Latham acted as the Moderator of the Conference. The membership unanimously adopted another resolution:

Whereas union among the Disciples of Christ is desirable, . . . and whereas the Conference believes there is a number of churches of Christ in this state, that, with us, take the Holy Scriptures alone, as their infallible guide in religion: Wherefore, Resolved: That this conference propose a Convention for the purpose of effecting a union between the Churches of Christ represented in this Conference, and such other Churches of Christ as are willing to unite on "The Faith once delivered to the Saints."<sup>52</sup>

The union conference met in Hookerton on May 2, 1845. The minutes of the October Conference contain the following reference to that meeting:

Delegates met in Hookerton . . . from the Bethel Conference and also from the Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ; and taking into consideration the importance of Christian Union in order to the conversion of the world to pure and undefiled religion, after a free interchange of views on both sides, agreed, that the Bethel Conference and Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ should unite and form one body . . . That the annual meeting shall be known by the name of "The Bethel Conference and Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ"; that the Churches composing said [meeting] shall claim no other name than that of Churches of Christ; and that they shall take the Bible alone as their only Rule of Faith and Practice, and discard as entirely useless, all human creeds, traditions, or commandments of uninspired men.

The minutes of the October conference also noted the request that the names of John P. Dunn and Willie T. Nobles "be entered on our list of preachers." The Union Meeting of Disciples of Christ brought three congregations into this union: Rountrees (40 members), Chinquapin Chapel (formerly a Regular Baptist congregation that joined the Disciples sometime after 1834 and had 46 members in 1845),<sup>53</sup> and Kinston (a congregation of 43 members, which Rountrees had helped to start in 1843). The earlier Disciples in the state, therefore, brought a total of 131 members to the union. The former Free Will Baptists brought 1728 members in 27 congregations.

The next year, the Disciples added congregations to the union from Oak Grove (in Greene County) and Old Ford. In the next few years, the Disciples side of the union also added Oak Grove (in Pitt County, 1848), Tranters Creek (1851), and Tyson's (1851). These congregations accounted for another 363 members. In 1851, the older Disciples movement accounted for about one-fifth the total number of members associated with the Disciples in North Carolina.<sup>54</sup> Dunn's connections with Thomas Latham, and his persistent attendance at these Bethel Conference meetings paid off in a church union that is much more significant for North Carolina Disciples than the union that took place in 1832 between the Stone and Campbell movements.

A connection Alexander Campbell made with another group of Baptists in Virginia also paid off, in an ecumenical sort of way, in North Carolina. In April 1845, Campbell visited in the home of James W. Hunnicutt of Lunenburg, Virginia. Hunnicutt had founded a group of Baptists known as Union Baptists and had established his reputation based upon a pamphlet he published in 1843. In that publication, Hunnicutt argued for open-communion between Christians. "We

believe and maintain," he wrote, "that it is the scriptural privilege and Christian duty, of all Christians . . . to unite in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, regardless of any sectarian or denominational distinction."<sup>55</sup> No doubt Hunnicutt's pamphlet led to Campbell's visit. Throughout these years, Hunnicutt organized churches in eastern North Carolina, some fifty congregations with over 4,000 members in ten counties by 1858.

Union Baptists expressed a desire to unite all denominations in North Carolina that practiced baptism by immersion in the late 1860s. Disciples leaders readily embraced the proposal. They passed a resolution at the annual meeting in 1867 "That we hail with joy every movement having for its object the union of all Christians, and cordially invite the faithful everywhere to unite with that faithful band of Disciples now numbering over half a million in this country."<sup>56</sup> Amos J. Battle, a former Missionary Baptist member who joined Rountrees in 1852 and had that congregation sponsor his ministry,<sup>57</sup> met with the Free Will Conference of Baptists during 1867 to promote the proposed "Union Convention." The convention to unite Free Will Baptists, Union Baptists, and Disciples in North Carolina met on December 27, 1867 and elected Battle as the moderator. Gideon Allen, the current pastor of the RMH (he served at RMH for most of the years between late-1850 to mid-1888), arrived the next day and took his seat as a delegate.

The convention wrote eight resolutions pertaining to belief, all of which the Disciples could affirm. The Free Will Baptists opposed the resolution stating that footwashing was not an ordinance, but was, instead, a good work. Most of their congregations practiced footwashing as an ordinance. In fact, black Disciples in North Carolina carried the practice into the twentieth century. Both the Union Baptists and Free Will Baptists opposed the resolution denouncing denominational names and calling for use of the name Christian only. They also both opposed the resolution defining creeds, disciplines, and confessions of faith as "not only unnecessary" but divisive. The discussion was respectful and frank; the convention ended urging "increased love and affection toward each other," but without formal union.<sup>58</sup>

By 1870, however, a large number of Union Baptist ministers decided to affiliate with the Disciples. James Latham Winfield, one of the more prominent of these ministers, concluded happily in 1872, "It is conceded by all who have knowledge of what has transpired, that a union has been effected between the Disciples of Christ and the most prominent Union Baptist Churches in North Carolina."<sup>59</sup> This union with the Union Baptist Churches, besides accomplishing a hefty boosting of Disciples memberships (numbering just less than 7,000 members in the state by 1893),<sup>60</sup> especially affected events at RMH. At least four of these ministers served stints as pastors at RMH: Jesse T. Davis (October 1874 – January 1876, and November 1881 – October 1882), Isaac Lamar Chestnutt (October 1882 – sometime in 1883, and again in 1896), and James L. Winfield (September 1888 – to sometime in 1893), and Sam W. Sumrell (1900 – 1902). The most prominent of these men was Winfield.

In July of 1888, Gideon Allen invited Winfield and another Union Baptist-turned-Disciples minister, Jesse Davis, to preach a protracted revival at RMH. Winfield's "appeals to the sinner were very strong and resulted in the confession and baptism of seventeen souls and one Sister who had been baptizd came forward and took membership."<sup>61</sup> In September, out of several men whose names were set forward

by the congregation for the position of pastor, Winfield was elected. By November, he had reorganized the governance of RMH, appointing an official executive board composed of eight lay members of the congregation.<sup>62</sup>

His pastorate built upon a new sense of purpose within the congregation that had begun with the completion of the new building in October 1883. Gideon Allen had talked about a new building for decades. The topic first appears in the records in March 1858, reappears in September 1860 and again in July and August of 1874. Finally in April 1880, the congregation got serious about it. The clerk recorded the following decision at the church conference:

On motion the church by unanimous . . . vote agreed to unite their powers to build a church at this place. . . . [The next words are probably Gideon Allen's as he exhorted the congregation to action] Brothers and Sisters I appeal to you , will you cast in your mite, and all together build a church, at this place, for all admit it is to be fixed fact, it ought to be done, or will you set still do nothing, but when the time comes for preaching, continue to meet in this old church house our fathers or grandfathers built many years ago. Will you do it?

When Winfield arrived some five years later, he came preaching the virtues of church unity, against predestination and election, and for Christian liberty.<sup>63</sup> The records point out he spoke to large crowds of people every fourth week-end at the church. Somehow, Winfield seemed to bring the best out in people. His influence, for example, quickly helped to solve a longstanding feud between two prominent families in the congregation. The minutes record the letters they wrote, through the church board, to one another. The first letter, written by Caleb and Martha Cannon reads in part:

You are familiar with the difficulty between brother Jenkins and family and also ourselves. We are satisfied that the cause of Christ and the church have suffered long and enough and the time has come when the hatchet should be buried and we should all live as the Gospel requires. We are satisfied that, in our haste we have acted wrong at times and for all the wrong we have done brother Jenkins and family, we hereby ask the forgiveness of him and his and also the church of our Lord.

The Jenkins responded in a letter to the board:

It is for the good of our beloved cause at Rountrees that we address you this letter. The trouble that has been in existence for so long a time between Bro. Caleb Cannon's family and our own has been a great mortification to us. The church has been the sufferer as well as our own immediate families and we believe that it is our duty to forget and forgive the past and live in the future . . . If we have wronged Bro. Cannon by word or deed we hereby make all Christian amends and ask that our Father in heaven will pardon all of our offenses and make our lives like his. The statement of Bro. Cannon is all we can ask. We hope you brethren will accept this and may God speed the day when this matter has been reconciled and we all be as we once have been.

The clerk noted that the "above documents were accepted by the official Board and copied on this book by request of Pastor."<sup>64</sup>

Winfield possessed the evangelistic touch as well. Membership grew though annual revivals preached each summer (sixteen new members in 1890, fourteen by baptism, and twenty-three new baptisms in the summer of 1891). The peak of its membership during these few years reached at least 152 members (70 women and 82 men).<sup>65</sup> The board also supported Winfield's regular preaching outings on fourth Sunday nights at the Ellis School house beginning in 1892. An editor of the State paper, the *Watch Tower* for eighteen years, Winfield had a strong reputation for his support of education. He had attended Lexington College of the Bible in 1873-1874 and hoped to establish Disciples higher education in North Carolina. He was

instrumental in 1891 in taking steps toward the founding of Carolina Christian College for Disciples at Ayden, finally established in 1893.<sup>66</sup> By 1901, the school had combined with another small school at Kinsey and moved to Wilson to become Atlantic Christian College (today's Barton College).<sup>67</sup> When Winfield died an untimely death at the age of 45 in 1897, he was chair of the Beaufort Country Board of Education.

### **The Lord's Supper**

From the very beginning, through its charter document, RMH members pledged "[we should] not absent ourselves from the Communion of the Lord's supper without a lawful excuse." Following the Regular Baptist schedule, Rountrees observed the Lord's Supper on a quarterly calendar. Occasionally, they had to miss it, as represented in the minutes for October 1831 which record "it is our time in course for quarterly meeting but having no Preacher we can have no Communion."<sup>68</sup> The Baptist practice of needing a minister to serve at the table remained pretty much ingrained in this congregation, even long after they had become Disciples. There are only two instances recorded throughout the fifty-seven years of these extant church records where a layperson served at table. In both cases (October 1852, and April 1853) Jesse Jackson, a deacon, stepped in and administered the supper in the absence of the pastor. Every other time the minister was absent, the congregation did not celebrate at the table; in fact, in the vast majority of cases, they cancelled worship altogether.

The church records in the early years (1827-1840) do not keep track of Sunday worship. Instead, they cover only the monthly business meetings held on the Saturday before monthly worship. This being the case, it is impossible to tell how often RMH met around the table between 1834 and 1840, the years after the break with the Regular Baptists. There is the poignant mention in July 1839 that the small congregation met at the home of "our aged Sister Rountree" (Jesse's widow) in order to enable her "to partake with us at the Lords table." Most likely, RMH continued on the quarterly pattern through this period. This is evident because in February, the records reveal that the congregation "agreed in Conference that we commemorate the death and Resurrection of the Lord by braking the bread and wine more freckquent." For these three months, before the records disappear for a decade, RMH celebrated the Lord's Supper every time they met (once per month). It may be regarded as somewhat significant that the scripture readings for March and April were from Acts 1&2, and Acts 3&4 respectively (good Disciples texts). By 1840, it appears the congregation had taken on a more serious Disciples demeanor with respect to the Lord's Supper. A "circular letter" written by Thomas Latham in 1847 for the combined Bethel Conference and Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ stressed the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, its place in apostolic Christianity, and urged the congregations to become more regular in this regard.<sup>69</sup> John P. Dunn, pastor of RMH at the time, was present at that meeting.

When the church records pick up again in 1850, the ministry for the church remained the same as it was in 1840, when the records had stopped. John P. Dunn and Willie Nobles were still the regular preachers, with Dunn being the pastor. Yet the Lord's Supper is not mentioned until eight months after the record picks up again. In June 1851, the word "sacrament" is used for the first time. Disciples

elsewhere in the country, at least regular readers of Campbell, preferred the word "ordinance" to "sacrament." Campbell preferred the biblical word, even though ordinance, though used in the Bible, was actually never used to refer to the table. But the word ordinance does not appear at all in these church records. There are occasional uses of the words "broke the loaf," or "the Lord's Supper," or phrases like "partook of the emblems of the Broken body and Spilt blood of our Saviour," but throughout these years, RMH regularly used "sacrament" to denote the activities around the table. There is one instance (May 1855) where the record gives some idea of how the congregation actually celebrated the supper:

Fourth Lord's Day in May the Disciples met and being assembled, Dr [John Tomline] Walsh Proceeded to breake the loaf, and after returning thanks for the same it was handed round by the Deacons, when in like manner the wine was administered. This part of the service being ended – Dr. Walsh preached from the first chapter of Galations entreated the Brethren to be more zealous, etc.

The record of its administration, however, is quite erratic. The wording of the records would seem to indicate that when the congregation observed the Lord's Supper, the clerk recorded the fact. It almost seems as if, occasionally, the church slipped back into a quarterly pattern. Then, just as quickly, it would start observing the table monthly again. As might be expected, the Civil War really disrupted the church calendar. Records cease from January 1862 through September 1866. When they resume, the first thing they record is the resignation of the minister, Gideon Allen. Citing a lack of "mail members" the conference had to defer appointing a new minister (women obviously had no vote in business sessions).<sup>70</sup> The next entry, written in 1869, records that the members were able to talk Allen into returning for a brief time in 1866. "But," the clerk continued, "thro the coldness of the members caused by non attendance of church and strictly complying to their christian dutys, preaching at Rountrees Church ceased." Preaching began again in June 1869 as several earnest members talked Gideon Allen into returning again. The church reorganized, held a protracted revival meeting, and built up a substantial membership of just over one hundred members fairly quickly. The first time they celebrated the Lord's Supper together was November 1869. The table is not mentioned again until October 1872 when it became regular again.

Another interesting point about the Lord's Supper is the time in the service when the congregation celebrated it. Prior to November 1856, the services at RMH always followed the same pattern. Whether the meeting was a conference held on the fourth Saturday, or worship held on the fourth Sunday, the meeting always began with singing and prayer. Occasionally, scripture reading was noted at the beginning of the service. When the Supper was observed, it always came before the sermon. But on that Sunday in November 1856, the order suddenly changed. There is no mention of why. Gideon Allen preached a sermon from Ephesians on that Sunday, emphasizing the duty Christians have toward one another and toward God, and then "the Lords Supper was administered by Brother Allen – after which the brethren sang a him and went out." From this time on, through the conclusion of these records in 1892, the Supper always followed the preaching, and the records most always conclude (when the supper was observed) with words to the effect that the congregation "sang a hymn and all was dismissed." Evidently, the congregation had no fight about the order of the service; the change to this more appropriate order just happened.<sup>71</sup>

On a couple of instances, the church record states "not being prepared for the

communion, sang a hymn and all was dismissed” (June 1885). On one of these occasions (August 1881), the clerk writes that Allen preached from Romans 11:22 and contrasted “the goodness of God towards those who serving him with a humbled hart, and portraying the severity of God’s wrath on those who serve him not.” The next words are “Not being prepared, the church omitted to partake of Sacrament, Sang a hymn and all was dismissed.” Perhaps, rather than simply not preparing the elements, the congregation gathered there, after hearing that sermon, felt unprepared for the act itself.

Finally, there is one lone reference to a dismissing of visitors before serving the supper. An entry for March 1888 reads:

Eld Allen met the congregation promptly at the appointed hour [10:30 am] and preached a very interesting sermon from 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Gospel recorded by St. John, the house was well filled + they gave him their undivided attention, he then dismissed the spectators and proceeded to prepare the Lord’s Supper, after which we sang a song and all were off for home.

The term “spectators” presumably referred to persons who had not professed Christian faith. That explanation makes more sense than supposing that the congregation regularly reserved the table for members only. One of the reasons the Disciples and Union Baptists in North Carolina had joined one another had to do with their joint commitment to an open table.

### **Baptism**

For the most part, the distinction between North Carolina Baptists and Disciples on the question of baptism is difficult to make. There were obviously differences in how one became a candidate for baptism: is one required to testify to an “expearence” of God’s redeeming grace (the Regular Baptists) or simply to “make the good confession” (the Disciples)? But once the candidate’s status was settled, the baptisms looked very similar to one another. RMH, according to the clerk, would conclude worship in the church building and then head to the water for baptism: “After singing a Hymn all was dismissed to repair down to the water for the purpose of Baptism.” The service there (most likely alongside the Little Contentnea Creek) would begin with prayer and then turn to “the solemn ordinance of Baptism.”<sup>72</sup> The Baptist groups regularly performed baptisms with the same characteristics at rivers and lakes throughout North Carolina. Some Disciples in the country placed an emphasis on baptism “for remission of sins” about which some Baptists felt quite uncomfortable. The church record at RMH provides no evidence of such disagreements in North Carolina.

In September 1850, there is clear record of three new members uniting with RMH, “having previously been baptized in the Church of Christ.” Obviously, no one needed rebaptism if there had been a previous baptism in the Church of Christ. There is also record of receiving Baptists without rebaptism: (September 1872) “one good Brother and Lady from the Baptist came forward and united and rec’d the right hand of fellowship.” Throughout these years, Baptists regularly came forward, either by letter or by making the good confession. If they had been baptized in the Baptist church, they were simply received as members at RMH. In November 1891, there is one instance of what appears to be a rebaptism:

Sermon by Bro. J. L. Winfield. Text found in 10 ch. Acts 33 v. very large number present, one confessed + was baptized six others rec’d four by letter + 2 by baptism.

The way the clerk phrased the record of these additions is significant. One person

made the good confession and was baptized. Six others were received into membership. Four of these simply provided letters from other churches (Baptist or other Churches of Christ). Two others were received "by baptism." This phrasing presumably means they were already Christians (they were not recorded as new members making the good confession). In this case, they were either Christians who had never been baptized (remote possibility) or Christians who had been baptized by means other than immersion (more likely). If this latter situation was the case, they were received into the membership of RMH "by baptism." In the nineteenth century, most Disciples congregations did not recognize infant baptism or baptism by affusion as proper baptism. Rebaptism would have been the standard way of receiving Christians from Methodist or Presbyterian congregations into Disciples congregations most anywhere in the country.

### **Ministry**

From the very beginning, the members of RMH pledged themselves "to be Ready to Contribute to the defraying of the Church's expenses and for the Support of the Ministry."<sup>73</sup> Yet, through the nineteenth century, they never really got close to a decent wage for their ministers. Two years after their beginning, Jesse Rountree, the church treasurer asked what he should pay the minister. The business conference responded by telling him to use his own judgment.<sup>74</sup> The amount of money paid ministers is not discussed much through these years, though one reference indicates that Abraham Congleton was presented with \$10.00 in 1833, and this was while Clark was the pastor at RMH. In lean years, membership wise, the pastors were paid very lean wages. Wages varied considerably. In 1855, RMH pledged to pay \$45.00 for the support of the ministry the next year. In 1858, RMH agreed to pay Gideon Allen \$30.00 for the next year. The record revealed he was paid \$33.00 for the previous year. Twenty-two years later, in 1881, the clerk wrote that Allen received \$27.85 for all of 1880. By 1885, he received \$50.00. In the best days at RMH on record, in terms of numbers, the congregation paid J. L. Winfield \$150.00 for 1892<sup>75</sup>.

Even though ministers like Allen had multiple preaching appointments, up to four per month, they suffered financially and barely made ends meet. They traveled considerably and had expenses that took a good bit of the money they made preaching. Most had to work odd jobs during the week. Gideon Allen worked on a farm between week-ends. In an 1891 sketch of his life, written at the time of his death, Moses Moye wrote: "Like all the pioneer preachers of North Carolina, a mere pittance of remuneration was meted out to him. To patiently serve was rigidly demanded, but to remunerate, a mere matter of elective choice."<sup>76</sup> Ware's research has shown that most ministers suffered the same fate throughout North Carolina in the nineteenth century. In 1883, only two ministers in the State received up to \$600.00 annually for their ministerial work, "and they," wrote Winfield, "are giving their time and talent nearly exclusively to the work."<sup>77</sup>

Though ministers were paid poorly, members of congregations like RMH possessed a high degree of respect for the ministry in general, and the role of the minister in particular. During these years, this degree of respect for ordained ministry did not exist in many corners of Disciples life in other states. For these congregations, the respect had always been a part of their lives as Baptists. RMH comfortably used the title "Reverend" for its ministers throughout the 1850s. Large

numbers of Disciples in other states much preferred to avoid the title, afraid that it carried too much presumption. In addition to its respect for ministry, Baptist life generally respected the role lay people played in the congregations as well. But if the minister failed to show up, a regular occurrence at RMH and other small congregations due to terrible weather or other unforeseen circumstances, the congregation usually went without a sermon or the Lord's Supper. The clerk usually reported something like "had no services at church for want of a preacher to officiate."<sup>78</sup>

There are, within the records of RMH, four offices of ministry mentioned. Disciples, as a result of the teaching of Alexander Campbell, only recognized three. Those three were the elder, the deacon, and the evangelist. The presiding elder usually served as the pastor of the congregation. Early in Disciples history, Campbell expressed his desire that each congregation should have a plurality of elders. Congregations usually wanted more than one. When they had this luxury, they often could appoint one to preach and others to oversee discipline or officiate at the table. Through the nineteenth century, RMH often had more than one elder present at its services. The congregation always had a designated pastor, but the pastor did not always serve as the moderator of the conference meetings and did not always serve the Lord's Supper. Quite often, other elders would preach and the pastor would close the preaching part of the service with remarks of his own.

Deacons, for early Disciples, served the local congregation, assisting the elder where needed. RMH usually designated a couple of deacons to serve in this role and, most often, they led in the singing and praying preceding the sermons. The evangelist, the third office of ministry supported by Disciples, always traveled and preached to the unconverted. One of the evangelist's primary tasks involved the establishment of new congregations. Baptists also maintained the practice of congregations hiring evangelists. RMH expressed the desire to do so as early as 1829.

There is a fourth office of ministry that made its appearance in the church records at RMH in 1874, when Jesse T. Davis was the pastor. Davis might have brought the idea from the Union Baptists when he joined the Disciples, or he might have been familiar with Presbyterian polity. Shortly after he became the pastor, he nominated two lay persons in the congregation to become "ruling elders."<sup>79</sup> Barton Stone, following Presbyterian practice, had advocated the use of ruling elders by Christian congregations. They constituted the second office of ministry in the congregation and were ordained to serve as assistants to the elder, usually in roles of governance, but they never preached or officiated at the table. This seemed to be the role assumed by these two ruling elders at RMH. By the time J. L. Winfield became pastor in 1888, the "ruling" in the title had been dropped and these lay people were simply described as elders. They served much the same function as contemporary elders in Disciples congregations today.<sup>80</sup>

The congregation gathered at RMH, from its founding, worked cooperatively with other congregations to support the mission of the church as a whole. Throughout its life, it faithfully assigned delegates to travel to all Union Meetings, Conferences, Associations, and Conventions. Members attempted to raise money for traveling evangelists hired and supervised by the Union Meeting. It is obvious in the church records that this congregation always understood its ministers as serving the needs of all the congregations representing the Disciples name rather

than only the needs of RMH. Ordination to ministry contained a claim that had to be recognized by all sister congregations. This had been the case among the Baptists and remained the case when these church members became Disciples.

The significance of this point should not be missed. Prior to 1840, most Disciples, following Campbell, believed that a person was ordained only by the congregation that person served. If the person moved, the ordination no longer counted. The authority for ordination resided in the local congregation, and not in the office of ministry itself. Disciples in North Carolina took a different approach. Throughout the records of RMH, it is clear that ordination carried credentials that were to be respected within all Disciples congregations. In many respects, North Carolina Disciples used Baptist roots to define a new order of ministry for Disciples. Two pastors who served at RMH played major roles in these developments.

In 1854, the Bethel Conference and Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ had given way to an Annual Meeting of the Disciples of Christ, referred to as the "Conference." By 1857, the Conference had adopted a Constitution to govern proceedings. When one of their traveling evangelists began preaching beliefs contrary to Disciples understandings, the Annual Conference fired him. Because of this event, and other cases calling for the discipline of ministers, the Constitution was revised in 1859. The Conference appointed three committee members to complete the work of revision. John P. Dunn, a longtime minister at RMH, was one of the three chosen for the task. Shortly after the committee finished its work, he died. Right afterwards, a fellow minister wrote about Dunn's impeccable reputation as a minister:

He exercised his ministerial functions for twenty nine years, not only with honor to himself, but with satisfaction and delight to his congregations. . . . The reputation which he required in a ministerial capacity, was well sustained by the uprightness and goodness of his private life, which was distinguished by prudence, piety and dignified propriety of conduct. . . . He has passed away from earth, but his memory lives in indelible character upon the tablets of our hearts.<sup>81</sup>

The minutes at RMH record the fact that John Dunn had preached there about what it took to be a good minister. In a sermon preached in July 1853, he "spoke of 2 Extremes" represented in the approach taken by some ministers to the task of preaching.

1<sup>st</sup> that the Spirit will teach the servant what to say without any effort on his part. 2<sup>nd</sup> that we have the word and that will teach us with out asking God for any further assistance.

Dunn condemned both extremes. Using I Timothy 4, he told his listeners that ministers must study and must be responsible in their efforts to proclaim the word of God.

The committee of 1859, composed of Dunn and two other ministers, added three new articles to the Constitution that reinforced this concept of a responsible ministry. No preacher from "other religious parties" could preach among Disciples without first "exhibiting his credentials, and giving satisfactory evidence of his good moral character." Further, If any minister's standing as a minister was removed by the Conference because of bad conduct "it will be the duty of all the churches composing the Conference, to carry out the wishes of said Conference" in denying that preacher the right to preach among Disciples. Churches who did not follow these wishes "shall be expelled from this body." Finally, since "all the preachers

belonging to this body are . . . enrolled by the action and authority of the Conference; so it is not competent for any preacher to withdraw from this body except by a petition presented at its regular session.”<sup>82</sup>

These were bold moves for a state association of Disciples to take. They were unheard of anywhere else in the country among Disciples. Criticism was widespread, appearing especially in Benjamin Franklin’s *American Christian Review*. But the North Carolinians held fast to their belief that the integrity of ministry depended upon a clearly defined order of ministry. The Conference did not always make the right decisions when applying discipline. But, as John Tomline Walsh put it a decade or so later: “We do not claim for Conventions that they always do right, but we do say that local congregations err and do wrong, just as often, and we think more frequently.”<sup>83</sup>

One particular error made by the Conference in this regard affected a good friend of RMH. In 1857, Amos J. Battle, who joined Disciples through the RMH in 1852, and who had served as a traveling evangelist for the Conference for a number of years, was forced to return his credentials. He, like all other ministers, worked outside the ministry to help support himself. While working at the Adams Express Company, the company alleged that he had failed to return borrowed money. A committee of seven Disciples ministers decided that the charges made him unfit for exercising ministry. The February 1857 record at RMH reads as follows:

The credentials of A. J. Battle were handed in and a letter read from him by the Clerk in which after thanking the church for the confidence once reposed in him etc. Request that the credentials be returned if the brethren think they can do so consistently. But on motion agreed that the clerk take charge of the credentials + letter until further orders.

During his suspension, Battle found refuge in a small Christian church named Christian Hope Church where he regularly preached. As a result, the congregation was cast out. By 1866, the Conference had reinstated both the congregation and Battle, who continued to serve with the faithfulness that had always marked his ministry (the next year he became instrumental in ecumenical conversations with the Union Baptists). The fact that most leaders of the Conference eventually regretted the action they took against Battle did not keep them from exercising appropriate discipline in many other cases. Willie Nobles, for example, a longtime elder at RMH, one who was ordained there and who preached regularly there through the 1840s and early 1850s, was removed from the list of both members and ministers in 1857 due to “unreligious conduct or drink.”<sup>84</sup> His name is never mentioned again.

By 1872, Disciples leadership in North Carolina became convinced there needed to be a state committee charged with the supervision of candidates for ministry and with vested involvement in their ordination. The Annual Meeting formed an Examining Committee of six ministers (the first “Committee on Ministry” among Disciples). RMH again played a role because its current pastor, Gideon Allen, was among the six ministers appointed. The committee, after examining the first candidates, issued a report: “Hereafter . . . it will be seen and generally understood that all candidates for enrollment on our list shall undergo a rigid examination on the elements of the Gospel by the committee appointed for that purpose.” Interesting enough, with some relevance for Disciples today, the report continued: “It should

be understood, brethren, that your committee do not consider it a part of their function to instigate an inquisition into the moral character of applicants, considering that that essential prerequisite has been attended to by the congregations which accredit them to your body.”<sup>85</sup> With this action, the Disciples in North Carolina set a higher standard for the supervision of ministry. Further, they placed the authority for ordination in the ministry itself, rather than solely in the congregation recommending ordination. But they did so in a way that respected the congregation’s role in ordination. On these points, North Carolina blazed the trail, and eventually Disciples across the country followed it.

### Concluding Words

This brief rehearsal of the relationship between RMH and the Baptists, and between Disciples beliefs and Baptist beliefs during the nineteenth century, reveals a good bit about not only the birth of this new Disciples group, but about the work of the church itself. The influence generated by this give and take between Disciples beliefs and the former Baptists-now-turned-Disciples, represented in congregations like the one at Rountrees Meeting House, went both ways. In many instances, the Baptist life of these Christians meeting at RMH went through a Disciples style reformation in the years following the events of the early 1830s. As Clark, Congleton, and Dunn led them into an association with Disciples, their faith changed in subtle and important ways. In still other matters, the lingering Baptist ethos that surrounded them helped to transform Disciples in subtle ways, not only in North Carolina, but in other areas of the country as well. As should always be the case, the church among Disciples taught some things and, at the same time, modeled the willingness to learn from others.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Crossfield Ware, *North Carolina Disciples of Christ: A History of Their Rise and Progress, and of Their Contribution to Their General Brotherhood* (St. Louis, MO.: Christian Board of Publication, 1927), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> For details relating to the preceding three paragraphs, see *Ibid.*, pp. 25-51.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated from figures in *Yearbook & Directory, 1998, of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, p. 494.

<sup>4</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, *the Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948), p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Copies of these records were given to me to examine by Martha Rountree. She sparked my interest in this history by continually feeding me bits and pieces of it. Martha is married to Robert Rountree, a descendent of the original Rountree family who founded the Rountrees Meeting House.

<sup>6</sup> C. C. Ware gives it this designation in Charles Crossfield Ware, editor, *Rountree Chronicles, 1827-1840: Documentary Primer of a Tar Heel Faith* (hereafter *RC*) (Wilson: The North Carolina Christian Missionary Convention, 1947), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> The congregation had ties to the formation of Little Sister, Ayden, Antioch, Greenville, Grifton, Hookerton, Kinston, and Wilson.

<sup>8</sup> *RC*, p. 35, June 1832. This is one of the last examples of many such statements.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32 (November 1830); and *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, February 1858, November 1859, November 1860, and August 1851.

<sup>11</sup> *RC*, p. 20, July 1827.

<sup>12</sup> See *RC*, p. 24, September 1828, for example.

<sup>13</sup> *RC*, p. 31, September 1830: "We have agreed to join the Neuse association, and have appointed our Brethren Noah Tison and Charles J. Rountree as delligates . . ."

<sup>14</sup> The Kehukee Association, with this action, became synonymous with an anti-missionary stance. The term "Kehukeeism" among Baptists took on the meaning of "anti-missionary." The 1829 vote evidently reaffirmed an 1826 Kehukee Association decision to be "anti-missionary." See Robert A. Baker, *A Baptist Source Book: With Particular Reference to Southern Baptists*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> For details of these meetings see, *RC*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>16</sup> *RC*, p. 32 December 1830; and *RC*, p. 32, March 1831. I do not know where Brother Mason went, or why he left.

<sup>17</sup> In his earliest works, C.C. Ware described this meeting as the first Union Meeting of the Disciples of Christ in North Carolina (see *RC*, published in 1947, p. 12, and *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, published in 1927, p. 86. This is a highly questionable assertion. In his later work, he backed off of this belief and described the first union meeting of the Disciples as taking place in March 1834. This assertion is much more defensible: see Ware, *Hookerton History* (published in 1960 and hereafter referred to as *HH*), p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> *RC*, p. 33, June 1831.

<sup>19</sup> See *RC*, p. 45, where a copy of the "Neuse Register" for 1832 is shown. This register shows that the pastors of Little Sister are John P. Dunn and Abraham Congleton. This information may not be entirely reliable, as it also indicates that Noah Tison is the minister of RMH. The church records of the congregation, however, clearly show that Clark is the minister at RMH throughout all of 1832. Tison, so far as is known from these records, was not ordained as an elder and never preached at RMH.

<sup>20</sup> *HH*, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> His name is found on a list of new subscribers in *Millennial Harbinger* (May 1830), p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> "Testimony of the Venerable Brother, Elder Wm. Clark, of Mississippi," *Millennial Harbinger* (July 1851), p. 289.

<sup>23</sup> *RC*, p. 36, August 1832; September 1832; October 5, 1832; November 1832; see also p. 38, May 1833.

<sup>24</sup> See *RC*, p. 38, June 1833.

<sup>25</sup> The identity of these seven congregations is not absolutely certain; Ware hypothesizes that the seven were representative of four different counties, Tranters Creek, Old Ford, and Unity in Beaufort County; Little Sister in Lenoir County; and Grindle Creek and Rountrees Pitt County; and Smithwicks Creek in Martin County. See *HH*, p. 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *RC*, p. 14. Details of this event are also published in C.C. Ware, *A Carolina Landmark, 1762-1962: Bi-Centennial Southwest Church* (Wilson, N. C.: published by the author, October 21, 1962), pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1834), p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. Later, Alexander Campbell and Thomas Meredith carried on

extensive correspondence through their journals. Meredith developed a respect for the younger Campbell. As years passed, many Disciples preachers were welcomed by Meredith and other Regular Baptists, especially in the more liberal Chowan Association where Meredith and other Baptist friends of Campbells worked. Union talks with Disciples, through the encouragement of John P. Dunn and Thomas Latham, were carried on with the Chowan Association through the 1850s. Though they did not result in union, the friendships between these pastors remained. See *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, pp. 98-101.

<sup>31</sup> "Testimony," *MH* (July 1851), p. 290.

<sup>32</sup> *RC*, pp. 38-39, February 1834.

<sup>33</sup> The extant Campbell letters are reprinted in *RC*; see, particularly, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> The seventh congregation, Unity, evidently joined this group sometime before November 1834, as it hosted the Union Meeting held that month.

<sup>35</sup> See *HH*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> The entirety of this document is found in Ware, *HH*, pp. 76-79. This important historical document was discovered in 1951.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in *RC*, p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> "Testimony," *MH* (July 1851), p. 291.

<sup>39</sup> *RC*, p. 40, October 1834.

<sup>40</sup> *RC*, p. 43, 1838.

<sup>41</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, September 1850.

<sup>42</sup> The records of the Bethel Conference prove that these congregations were meeting under these names. See C.C. Ware, *Tar Heel Disciples, 1841-1852* (New Bern, N.C.: Owen G. Dunn, Co., printed for the North Carolina Christian Missionary Convention, 1942), pp. 25 and 34.

<sup>43</sup> Most likely this is the grandson of the patriarch, and son of Charles Jenkins Rountree and Susan Hart.

<sup>44</sup> From this point on, there is regular use of the phrase "good confession" throughout the church records.

<sup>45</sup> This phrase is also used in May 1873 and August 1882; this latter instance uses "good confession" as well: "Elder Davis continued to preach at night until Tuesday night, but the Interest manifested by the people seemed to become abated, and the meeting came to a close, after the members had enjoyed a warm and interesting meetings and trust that many who visited these meetings and did not get the consent of their minds to make the good confession may continue striving and working against the evil one, until they shall find Jesus precious to their souls."

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, p. 91.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. See *Millennial Harbinger* (December 1831), p. 46; see Ware's treatment of Concord congregation, *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, pp. 245-249.

- <sup>49</sup> The Sermon is reproduced as the “Circular Letter” adopted at the Conference in C.C. Ware, *Tar Heel Disciples*, pp. 14-17.
- <sup>50</sup> See *Tar Heel Disciples*, p. 25.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27-28.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- <sup>53</sup> *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, p. 270.
- <sup>54</sup> These details are provided in *RC*, p. 17.
- <sup>55</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- <sup>57</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, May 1852.
- <sup>58</sup> The resolutions and details are stated in *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- <sup>60</sup> C.C. Ware, *A History of Atlantic Christian College: Culture in Coastal Carolina* (Wilson: Atlantic Christian College, 1956), p. 50.
- <sup>61</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, July 1888.
- <sup>62</sup> Two elders were mentioned among these eight, men who had been designated elsewhere as “ruling elders.” It is obvious these elders were defined as lay persons, much like they are today, assigned to play key roles assisting the pastor.
- <sup>63</sup> For sermon topics, see *Ibid.*, December 1889, January 1890, and April 1891.
- <sup>64</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, July 1889.
- <sup>65</sup> See *Ibid.*, for membership lists at the end of the journal, dated 1889-1891.
- <sup>66</sup> An aside: Lewis T. Rightsell, the first principal at the school, was married to Jesse Rountree’s great-granddaughter, Willie Rountree.
- <sup>67</sup> See C.C. Ware, *A History of Atlantic Christian College*, especially pp. 47-59.
- <sup>68</sup> All these references are from the *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*. The dates given in the narrative indicate where the quote can be found. Therefore, hereafter, footnote references will not be used for these references unless the date is not indicated in the narrative.
- <sup>69</sup> *Tar Heel Disciples*, p. 59.
- <sup>70</sup> The lack of the presence of “mail members” also halted business on the fourth Saturday in July 1872.
- <sup>71</sup> On the order of the Lord’s Supper, and why it is more appropriately held after the sermon, see Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined In Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997), pp. 158-159.
- <sup>72</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, September 1869.
- <sup>73</sup> This statement is in the RMH Church Covenant, *RC*, p. 18.
- <sup>74</sup> *RC*, p. 25, January 1829.
- <sup>75</sup> For these numbers, see *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, September 1855, October 1858, January 1880, February 1886, and October 1891.
- <sup>76</sup> Quoted in *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, p. 282.
- <sup>77</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- <sup>78</sup> See, for example *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, December 1872. There are a few occasions, already mentioned, when Jesse Jackson served the Lord’s Supper, but examples of the preacher’s absence, and the congregation’s dismissal for home are present in large numbers throughout this material.

<sup>79</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, April 1874, and July 1874.

<sup>80</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, November 1888.

<sup>81</sup> *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>82</sup> These are quoted in *North Carolina Disciples of Christ*, pp. 176-178.

<sup>83</sup> For the criticism of the 1859 revisions, see *Ibid.*, pp. 127-129; for Walsh's quote, see p. 181.

<sup>84</sup> *Record of the Church of Christ at Rountrees Meeting House, Vol. 2*, September 1857.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**Mark Toulouse, Lecturer**

**Hosted by  
Christian Theological Seminary  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
October 25, 2000  
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**



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## — From the Editor's Desk

Late nineteenth century Stone-Campbell Christians represented a continuum on the church's relation to urban culture. At one pole were Christians who believed that the church must address urban issues and who championed new institutional strategies aimed at meliorating social ills. At the other pole were Christians who shunned urban culture, rejected the participation of Christians in government and viewed changes in the church as departures from the Apostolic order.

Ron M. Buck traces the career of Frank G. Tyrrell, who by the turn of the century was the Disciples' leading expert on social problems, municipal reform and urban evangelism. In 1904 he published a book arguing that if more careers, such as the law, were open to women, they would not be economically required to tolerate bad marriages. His concern for economic justice also led him to support the single tax proposal of Henry George and to run in 1896 for a seat in the House. Tyrrell taught that "New Testament" Christianity demands social righteousness and that the Campbells' plea for Christian unity was a call for "social solidarity." A participant in citywide ecumenical evangelistic crusades, Tyrrell was also a staunch supporter of organizational developments among the Disciples to make evangelism and benevolent work more efficient.

Kent Ellett locates the origins of the Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ among turn of the century Christians who resisted "innovations" which they saw as "citified, elitist and controlling." Among those innovations was the Sunday School. During World War I non-class churches were distinguished by their allegiance to the pacifism and non-participation in government doctrine of David Lipscomb. Recently, non-class churches have been distinguished by their growing ecumenism. Ellett accounts for this transformation by reference to social factors and the leadership of individuals, who disgusted by the divisiveness in their tradition, discovered in their Stone-Campbell heritage a commitment to Christian unity.

These stimulating essays confirm that the relation of Stone-Campbell Christians to culture and their own distinctive traditions is a rich field for further study.

## — From the President's Desk

Church history can be viewed from many angles: denominations (Disciples), regions (southern), biography (A. Campbell). Ultimately in North America the story of the church is told in the history of congregations. In those communities of believers we hear the gospel preached and taught, and sometimes distorted. We praise God in ways that sometimes bring joy, other times discord. We feel loved and sometimes under-appreciated. Our spirits fly to the heights of fulfillment in ministry, and descend to wallow in the trough of fulfilled low expectation, frustration and disappointment. We are God's very human community. It sounds like the stories we read in the Bible! Historians tell the continuing scriptural story.

The Historical Society will honor local historians on September 14-16 in Nashville. Our accolades come in the opportunity we offer at the Society's inaugural Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Local Church Historians' Seminar. Our aim is to support and equip historians' ministries of celebrating church anniversaries, especially through writing histories. A network of local historians will be created that promises on-going support, exchange of ideas, and encouragement.

I invite you to come join us for the learning, the renewal and the fun. Bring others from your congregation who share your interest. Enrollment is limited; sign up now. (For more information see page 64 of this issue.)

- Peter M. Morgan

# Frank Gill Tyrrell: Urban Minister and Social Reformer 1865-1950

by Ron M. Buck\*

## Introduction

The Rev. Frank Gill Tyrrell had a multifaceted career: a decade and a half as a Disciples of Christ minister in middle America, about the same length of service as a municipal court judge in Los Angeles, and woven in and around these other endeavors, he was a practicing attorney for over a decade.<sup>1</sup> He was also a prolific writer, publishing in Disciples journals from just after his ordination in 1889 until shortly before his death in 1950. His writings were eclectic. Some were on decidedly non-controversial subjects such as the need for regular bible study, frequent reports on local or regional church activities, and a forward for a hymnal. Others involved explosive issues, including the defense of liberal biblical critics in Disciples colleges and seminaries, scathing rebukes of the church's lack of response to social evils, and vocal support for the emerging social gospel. He often criticized his denomination's resistance to effective organizational development, which he thought resulted from the Disciples "bogie"—an irrational fear of "ecclesiasticism."<sup>2</sup> *Brimstone Bargains in the Marriage Market: or The Traffic in Sex*,<sup>3</sup> his only full-length monograph, was a call for economic justice for women. The book was shaped by the stereotypes of his period. For example, he suggested that all women possessed "a happy freedom from sexual desire," and only occasionally (and apparently under duress) does she "submit to the amorous embraces of a husband...."<sup>4</sup> In addition his tone throughout the book is rather patronizing, and he stops short of a call for full equality. Despite such shortcomings, *Brimstone Bargains* contained a remarkably progressive argument for occupational opportunities for women. Tyrrell also lectured frequently in ecclesiastical as well as secular settings, on the topics of municipal reform and social problems.

After his retirement from the law and the ministry, he continued to influence his denomination through frequent contributions on a wide array of topics in Disciples periodicals, and by participation in denominational politics and assemblies. Unafraid of controversy, he was a bold voice during a time in Disciples history that was wracked with controversy. From this period the Disciples emerged not as a united church, but as a former unity movement that was fragmented into three distinct branches.

## Biographical Sketch

When Central Christian Church in St. Louis, Missouri, called the young, recently ordained Frank G. Tyrrell to be its pastor in September 1890, the Disciples of Christ in general, and Central Christian in particular, were no strangers to controversy. Tyrrell followed the rather unorthodox Robert C.

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Cave, who was, perhaps, “the first pronounced ‘modernist’ among the Disciples.”<sup>5</sup> While the influence of liberal biblical criticism would not be evident in Disciples’ colleges and seminaries for almost a decade, Cave called into question biblical accuracy and authority, rejected divine inspiration in the activities of biblical characters such as Abraham and Moses, and challenged orthodox doctrines, including the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Dismissed from Central Christian Church, Cave led a St. Louis group called the “Nonsectarian Church,” while his successor, Tyrrell, was pastor at Central.<sup>7</sup>

Tyrrell was young, barely twenty-five, and had relatively little experience as a minister when he was hired by the prestigious Central Christian Church in St. Louis, in September, 1890. He was born in Eureka, California on August 21, 1865,<sup>8</sup> and after moving to Missouri to study law in the late 1880s, was admitted to the Missouri bar in 1887.<sup>9</sup> As a child in California he was raised in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and upon moving to Harrisonville, Missouri to establish a law practice in 1887, he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. His affiliation with that congregation was short-lived, however, as he was baptized by the Rev. S. W. Crutcher (by immersion as Disciples required for membership at that time) and became a member of the Christian Church in Harrisonville. Within a month he was ordained to the ministry in the same church, by the same pastor.<sup>10</sup> Not one to waste time, Tyrrell preached his first sermon at Harrisonville on the evening of his ordination, July 23, 1888. *The Christian-Evangelist* reported that the sermon was delivered “to an immense audience, including members of all the religious bodies in the city.”<sup>11</sup> However, one wonders how many guests from the Methodist Church South attended the event.

1888 was a busy year for the newly ordained minister. On September 5 he was married to Edna Burford Scott at a private home near Harrisonville. Again, the Rev. Crutcher officiated.<sup>12</sup>

Tyrrell quickly closed his law office and was hired as pastor of First Christian Church in Cameron, Missouri, where he began his official ministerial career on January 1, 1889.<sup>13</sup> He remained there until sometime during the summer of 1890.<sup>14</sup> While at Cameron his first child was born on July 12, 1889.<sup>15</sup>

Soon after joining the Disciples, Tyrrell began contributing reports and articles to the denomination’s two major periodicals, the *Christian Standard* and *The Christian-Evangelist*. “From the Field” was a regular feature of the former journal, and it provided reports on church activities from around the country. In the December 28, 1889 issue, Tyrrell penned the report for a portion of Northwest Missouri—including his church at Cameron, as well as neighboring congregations at Gallatin and Deer Creek.<sup>16</sup> The next month the *Christian Standard* published a sermon by Tyrrell entitled “Forward March.”<sup>17</sup> In 1891 his contributions began to appear in the other major denominational journal, *The Christian-Evangelist*, on a variety of topics, but especially in regard to Christian Endeavor societies, Sunday-schools, and missions.<sup>18</sup>

Tyrrell was a committed social reformer. The publisher’s preface to *Brimstone Bargains* asserted that he was “possessed by an absolute passion for human rights.”<sup>9</sup> That passion for human rights and social causes was honed during his years as a pastor in St. Louis. This was a result, at least in part, of

his contact in that city with W. W. Hopkins, one of the leading Disciples' proponents of the Social Gospel.<sup>21</sup> During the 1890s Tyrrell became increasingly vocal about the role of the church in solving social ills. Even before his move to the Disciples and his subsequent ordination, he was involved in reform efforts as superintendent of the Children's Temperance work in Harrisonville. Through his ecumenical work with the Evangelical Alliance in St. Louis, he was also influential in the agitation for blue laws.<sup>22</sup>

In 1892 Tyrrell delivered a lengthy (and occasionally rambling) address to the Missouri State Christian Convention that called the Disciples to "city evangelization" and set forth a list of urban problems that required the church's immediate attention. The address was then printed as a two part article in the *Christian Standard*.<sup>23</sup> The young minister from St. Louis, who had been a pastor for less than four years and in an urban area for less than three, was about to become the denomination's recognized expert on social problems, municipal reform, and urban evangelism.

### **Tyrrell, the Urban Church, and Social Reform**

As the formerly rural Disciples of Christ began establishing churches in cities in the late 19th century, Tyrrell participated with other urban ministers in symposia on urban evangelism. The first national conference of Disciples devoted to the topic was held in St. Louis in 1894.<sup>24</sup> The St. Louis pastor had some expertise in the field: by 1897 his congregation at Central Christian had grown to over five hundred members—one of only a handful of Disciples churches of that size.<sup>25</sup> He quickly came to be in demand as the Disciples' spokesperson on the urban church and issues involving church growth in cities, as well as on social problems and the church's role in social activism.

During the mid-1890s he spoke frequently on social justice issues at Disciples' conventions, ministers' seminars, and at Disciples colleges and seminaries, as well as at ecumenical events. February through June of 1896 offers an example of his busy schedule and his recognized expertise in this area. In February he spoke on "Social Reform and the Church" to a group of Methodist ministers in St. Louis.<sup>26</sup> In May he delivered a similar lecture to St. Louis area Disciples ministers.<sup>27</sup> During the same month he traveled to Fulton, Missouri, where he delivered a lecture on work in the "slums" to an ecumenical gathering of Christian Endeavor at First Presbyterian Church.<sup>28</sup> In May he also presented a series of lectures on "sociological issues" at Drake University, in Des Moines, Iowa.<sup>29</sup> While there he delivered the 1896 commencement address to Drake's 120 graduates. Although the topic is not reported, one might assume it had to do with the social responsibilities of the church. Because of this flurry of activities and his single-minded devotion to the subject of the urban church, historian David Edwin Harrell Jr. called Tyrrell the "Parkhurst of St. Louis"—comparing him to the famous Presbyterian reformer, the Rev. Charles Parkhurst.<sup>30</sup>

In his 1892 address to the Missouri Christian Convention on the topic of "American Missions," Tyrrell suggested that "evangelization" alone would not fulfill the responsibility of the church to the social order. There were evils that he found in urban life that called for more practical solutions. One of the chief evils was poverty, a severe poverty of which many church members were

unaware, and which divided the church along economic lines:

I wish [God] would send them on an errand into some homes that are to be found in this city. I wish they would tramp down into the tenement house region, down into the corners where naked poverty hides her shame and loathsomeness, and look around.<sup>31</sup>

One of the reasons his parishioners, and other St. Louis area Disciples, were unfamiliar with the poverty of the city, was the westward migration of the affluent churches and members—a flight that Tyrrell deplored. From his bully pulpit in the *Christian Standard* he told his readers that “the drift of population in the city to the West End is bringing about...ruinful results.”<sup>32</sup> It was his opinion “that the rich and poor should meet together . . .,” and not just for the benefit of the poor. “The rich need the poor to soften their hearts and develop them in sympathy, as much as the poor need the rich to guide them and encourage them in the struggle for existence.”<sup>33</sup> He even promoted the ecclesiastical equivalent of busing: “it seems to me that the West Side should move bodily over to the East Side to worship God. Let us build our finest churches in the poorest and wickedest (sic) sections....”<sup>34</sup>

While Disciples around the country read Tyrrell’s critique of the church’s disregard for the poor in poverty-stricken and crime-ridden areas, his congregation heard it from the pulpit. In an 1896 sermon at Central he called attention to “the churchless condition of the 150,000 people of this city who reside between Twelfth Street and the river [i.e., the East Side].”<sup>35</sup> He told his listeners that the district in question had “over three hundred saloons, fifteen theatres, houses of ill-fame without number, and only twelve places where the gospel is preached.”<sup>36</sup> Just two or three decades before the city’s leading churches had been located in that area, but, Tyrrell complained, they had all “moved westward to the more aristocratic regions....”<sup>37</sup> Central’s members apparently accepted his criticism of the church without taking offense. According to a brief report shortly after this 1896 sermon, Central Christian was forced to use additional chairs in the sanctuary “in order to accommodate the people who now crowd to [the] services both morning and evening each Lord’s day.”<sup>38</sup>

For Tyrrell, poverty not only brought about segregation in the church, it also gave birth to the vices that would destroy the human soul. Again, in his address to the Missouri Missionary Convention in 1892, he described the connection between poverty and vice:

It is said sometimes that poverty leads to vice, and it does lead to vice. It is said that poverty leads to crime, and it does lead to crime. Go to the jail, and you will find men whom poverty sent there. Go to the house of ill-fame and you will find loathsome, leprous creatures whom poverty sent there. Go to the grave and you will find mouldering human forms that poverty sent there. Go to hell and you will find writhing souls whom poverty sent there.<sup>39</sup>

The idea that poverty caused crime (rather than crime causing poverty) was unusual in the evangelical Protestantism of the 1890s. Success was connected with righteousness, and, according to Samuel Hays, success in the late 19th century implied material prosperity.<sup>40</sup> Famous preachers of the period, including Henry Ward Beecher, believed that the poor, even the working poor, were responsible for their own poverty.<sup>41</sup>

Leading Disciples ministers and theologians were no different. Typical of Disciples thought was B. A. Hinsdale, President of Hiram College and a Disciples minister. He suggested that poverty was not a result of the abuses of

capital, but of the lack of responsibility, integrity, and discipline on the part of the poor.<sup>42</sup> Tyrrell's assessment of poverty and responsibility reflects more closely the Social Gospel of Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch than the thought of his evangelical colleagues.

Tyrrell's solution to social ills such as poverty was also different from that of most evangelicals in the period. The work of the church was not completed by offering people spiritual assistance; tangible needs had to be recognized and addressed as well. He reported a conversation with a "poor fellow" who had been redeemed from the life of a "debauched, besotted drunkard....," only to find himself unemployed. After fruitlessly searching for work, he was forced to take a job as a bartender. According to Tyrrell, the man was frustrated in his new-found faith: "it's all well enough to talk about Christ, but when a fellow is out of work and hungry, Jesus Christ isn't going to come down and feed him." Tyrrell's response: "my heart ached as I thought of the apathy and neglect of the followers of Christ."<sup>43</sup>

Not only did the church have a responsibility to evangelize, and thus change the individual, Tyrrell taught that the church's responsibility extended to the transformation of society itself. Several years later, as the Disciples of Christ experienced a growing rift between liberal and conservative factions, he described the efficient minister in the increasingly conservative *Christian Standard*:

He [the efficient minister] must know not only what is necessary to save the individual, but also to save society. ...society is more than an aggregation of individuals, although it is composed of them. We are to make the individual like Christ; and to make society like the group about the throne of God—the kingdom of God.<sup>44</sup>

When he promoted the elevation of society in the pages of the *Christian Standard*, Tyrrell knew that he was not preaching to the already converted. He and other liberal Disciples had long endured criticism, often in the pages of the *Christian Standard*, for focusing on the social aspects of Christianity. In 1896 Lyman Abbott, a Disciples minister, was attacked by the conservative Disciples professor J. W. McGarvey for suggesting that the primary object of Jesus was "to teach men to live in relations with one another. For McGarvey and other theological conservatives, that statement smacked of the Social Gospel. Despite the fact that it was perhaps his busiest year in St. Louis, Tyrrell was the first to come to Abbott's defense: "Men do not perish hereafter by the arbitrary decree of an outraged God; if they are to perish then, they are perishing now."<sup>46</sup> He told the readers of the *Christian Standard* (among whom McGarvey was very popular): "I would rather a writer or preacher emphasize too strongly, even to the point of exaggeration, the socialism of Jesus, than to neglect it for a musty theology, which belongs only to scribes and pharisees."<sup>47</sup>

While some Disciples viewed their theological emphasis on the restoration of the church according to the biblical pattern as antithetical to social activism, Tyrrell perceived what he believed to be special opportunities for the denomination because of its unique structure and special interest in apostolic traditions.<sup>48</sup> For him the type of Christianity described in the Christian Scriptures was inextricably tied to social reform. In Tyrrell's assessment, Alexander Campbell and the Disciples had tried to rise above religious traditions and transform human life, through the building of social, business,

and familial relationships—a transformation that was inherently social.<sup>49</sup> Unlike some Disciples, he taught that an ideal Christianity was never achieved in the churches described in the New Testament, and thus it could never be restored by following their pattern. Instead, he suggested that the “[restoration] plea includes and demands social righteousness; it calls for the only Christianity the New Testament knows—applied Christianity.”<sup>50</sup>

In the same article he addressed several other features of his denomination that he thought beneficial in the “social struggle.” One such feature he touted was “absolute intellectual freedom.”<sup>51</sup> While some of the ideological struggles over volatile issues within the Disciples from the time of the slavery question in the 1840s to the controversy over the role of the church in society, seemed to argue against the existence of “absolute intellectual freedom,” Tyrrell thought it to be an inalienable right of Disciples. He also suggested that since Disciples viewed themselves as reformers of religion, they were uniquely qualified to be reformers in the realm of politics as well.<sup>52</sup>

Tyrrell argued that the plea for Christian unity, the “brotherhood of all believers” proposed by Disciples’ founders Thomas and Alexander Campbell, was really “a plea for social solidarity.”<sup>53</sup> That solidarity should extend beyond barriers of race and social class.<sup>54</sup> Recognition of such a call to unity “ought to make every Disciple of Christ an enthusiastic supporter of every wise reform, and everywhere the fearless champion of the oppressed.”<sup>55</sup>

Tyrrell was also strongly influenced by the tenets of socialism. As mentioned above, he viewed poverty as a major cause of crime. But it was not simply poverty that was the culprit; it was extreme poverty against a backdrop of fabulous, burgeoning wealth:

Is it any wonder that crime is rampant in the great city, where...side by side are to be seen the wretchedness of extreme poverty, and the splendor of gigantic wealth. Wealth is proud and cruel and merciless; is it any wonder if poverty becomes savage, socialistic, and criminal?<sup>56</sup>

Tyrrell was very suspicious of wealth, and the way in which wealth was produced. In an 1896 sermon he warned his congregation that “there is blood on every dollar you handle, and the cries of the widows and the orphans whose substances they have devoured reach the ears of God in heaven.”<sup>57</sup> In the same sermon he compared “driving a hard bargain with a man because he...is in a pinch...,” to common burglary.<sup>58</sup> He was also convinced that the stock market, particularly the speculative futures market, was an evil to be avoided. He said that it brought profit without effort, robbed from farmers and laborers, and was no better than any other form of gambling.<sup>59</sup> “Of the many unjust, unmanly, dishonest methods of acquiring wealth,” he said of gambling in futures, “this is the worst.”<sup>60</sup>

Economic justice continued to be a major concern for Tyrrell throughout his career. In his 1904 book, *Brimstone Bargains*, he argued that marriage was often an unhappy necessity for women, and that bad marriages were frequently tolerated because of economic necessity. He suggested that if more careers, such as the law, were open to women, they would not be dependent on bad marriages and unworthy husbands.<sup>61</sup> It was also this concern for economic opportunity for women and the working classes that informed many of his political opinions, such as his support for the single tax.<sup>62</sup>

### **Ecclesiastical Structure**

Not all Disciples congregations and ministers were interested in Tyrrell, American missions, economic justice, or the social gospel. Despite an increase in urban membership and the number of urban churches, the Disciples were still predominantly rural in nature. There was a vast chasm between the social liberals such as Tyrrell, and more conservative leaders in the West and South. Harrell suggests that “the intellectual worlds of Frank G. Tyrrell and David Lipscomb [an influential Disciples minister from Tennessee] were different in every way; neither would have seriously troubled himself about the social ideas of the other.”<sup>63</sup> The methods of evangelism and the role of the church espoused by Tyrrell made no sense to a vast number of Disciples.

From the beginning of the Disciples of Christ in the opening years of the 19th century there was a tendency to treat as suspect any agency or authority outside the local congregation. That was due in part to the environment in which the movement was born. The church grew up on the frontier in a period of fierce political independence, and for several decades celebrated complete congregational autonomy with very little cooperative work. From the end of the Civil War to the 1920s, controversy frequently erupted over organizations such as missionary boards and societies that existed outside the local congregation.

For most conservative Disciples, local church autonomy and individual piety were more important than addressing social evils. In the view of leaders such as Lipscomb, and increasingly, the editors of the *Christian Standard*, political and social action on the part of church leaders in the name of the church, was highly questionable. They were also suspicious of the motives of the missionary societies and boards springing up around the country. Apparently there was fear that such organizations would wrest the control of missions from local congregations. For liberals, including Tyrrell, the pressing need for evangelism, municipal reform, temperance, etc., demanded the creation of and support for useful structures that would make the work of the church more efficient.

Another barrier to ecclesiastical structure was the movement’s emphasis on the restoration of the primitive (i.e. New Testament) church. For many Disciples, practicality was less important than biblical precedent. The missionary organizations and boards, benevolent associations, and other structures beyond the local congregation were not mentioned in scripture, and were therefore to be assiduously avoided. There were relatively few voices calling out for cooperative work that would enhance new church establishment, evangelism, Sunday school efforts, and missions. One of those rare voices belonged to Tyrrell.

In his early years as a minister in St. Louis Tyrrell discovered the importance of cooperative efforts. The task of city evangelism was overwhelming, and he realized that one minister or one congregation could accomplish only a small portion of what needed to be done. Through participation in the city’s Evangelical Alliance, Tyrrell was an activist for municipal reform.<sup>64</sup> By working with other Disciples congregations, as well as Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Reformed Episcopalians, he supported city-wide ecumenical crusades.<sup>65</sup> Seeing the benefits of such cooperative efforts, he

became a staunch supporter of organizational improvements within his denomination that would make mission work, benevolent work, and evangelism more efficient. During the years of controversy over ecclesiastical institutions, he was frequently called upon to explain the work of and defend Disciples groups such as the Benevolent Association of the Christian Church, the Christian Woman's Board of Missions, and the American Christian Missionary Society.<sup>66</sup>

### **Tyrrell, the Disciples and Politics**

In 1896, a year in which St. Louis was immersed in political rhetoric, hosting both the Republican and the Populist National Conventions, the editor of *The Christian-Evangelist* penned a scathing rebuke of clerics who spoke out on political issues. "The priest in politics is an unmitigated nuisance; so is the preacher. It is all right for [ministers] to advise, but not as 'Father' or as 'the Rev. Dr.'"<sup>67</sup> While the statement betrays an anti-Catholic sentiment (priests are named first, and the specific issue about which the editor was agitated involved parochial schools), it also points to a widely held opinion among Disciples at the time: politics and pulpit should remain segregated.

During the summer of 1896 political news filled both secular and religious publications, including *The Christian-Evangelist*.<sup>68</sup> While the editors of *The Christian-Evangelist* conceded the right of ministers to discuss, from the pulpit, questions of morality (even if those issues are political in nature) it announced a "very wide-spread sentiment against the discussion in the pulpit of purely partisan issues...."<sup>69</sup> Ministers who failed to exercise restraint in this area were warned that they would soon find themselves without influence.<sup>70</sup> The *Christian Standard* attempted to stay above the fray, however, and avoided not only specific political endorsements, but almost completely ignored news about politics in general. Once again, Tyrrell seemed to run against the grain of Disciples thought.

For Tyrrell, political involvement was a part of the religious task, part of the redemption of society that was as important to him as the redemption of individuals. When he felt that St. Louis needed more stringent closing laws (blue laws), he used his pulpit, his pen, and his influence in the community to agitate for such laws.<sup>71</sup> He was also an outspoken proponent of prohibition, participating in both religious and secular activities to support that cause.<sup>72</sup>

Because of his interest in economic justice, Tyrrell was fascinated with the political and economic theories of Henry George—the single tax in particular.<sup>73</sup> As a result of his political involvement, his interest in reform, and presumably, his popular appeal, Tyrrell was drafted in 1896 by both the People's Party and the Prohibition Party to be their candidate for the House of Representatives from Missouri's Eleventh Congressional District.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, because of the intense interest in the presidential campaign that year, little was recorded in the secular papers or the religious publications about that congressional race. The *Christian Standard* ignored his candidacy entirely, despite its readers familiarity with Tyrrell through his frequent contributions. *The Christian-Evangelist* announced his choice as candidate, suggesting that "the Single Taxers and other reform elements, including the Christian voters, will almost certainly rally to his standard."<sup>75</sup> In fact the editors thought that, given the

three way race, Tyrrell's victory was almost certain. Instead, the winner was the Democratic candidate, John T. Hunt.<sup>76</sup> While details are sketchy, it is likely that Tyrrell withdrew from the race when the Populists in St. Louis decided to support the Democratic ticket.<sup>77</sup>

For the remainder of the 1890s, Tyrrell stayed in St. Louis at Central Christian Church, worked with area Disciples groups as well as other evangelical denominations, and contributed frequently to denominational journals. In May 1899 he moved to Chicago to work with First Church of Christ, another urban Disciples congregation.<sup>78</sup> Information about his service there, which lasted only two years, is missing. Certainly his interest in urban problems and urban evangelism sparked his interest in Chicago.

In May 1901 he left Chicago, and moved back to St. Louis to serve Mt. Cabanne Christian Church.<sup>79</sup> During his three years there he was instrumental in the merger of his former congregation, Central Christian, with Mt. Cabanne, forming Union Avenue Christian Church. In 1904, the year in which his book *Brimstone Bargains* was published, he left St. Louis for the last time. It was also his exit from the ministry. The reasons for this change are the subject of continued research. Perhaps the hectic pace of ecclesiastical and political reform during his years in St. Louis led to burn-out. Or, it may be that he became disillusioned with the progress in social change that could be brought about through the pulpit in a denomination that was deeply divided over its social responsibility. He never lost interest in his church, nor respect for the ministry.<sup>80</sup>

He moved back to his native California, to the city of Los Angeles, and set up a law practice. In the late 1920s he was appointed Circuit Court Judge, and continued in that capacity until his retirement in the mid-1940s. During his years in Los Angeles he was an active lay leader in Wilshire Boulevard Christian Church, and continued to write articles for denominational journals, and to take part in the increasingly heated debate over missionary organizations, denominational structure, and liberal biblical criticism in Disciples institutions.

In 1950, Tyrrell died at the age of 83. A brief obituary appeared in *The Christian-Evangelist*.<sup>81</sup> The *Christian Standard* made no mention of his death. A funeral service was held for him at the Little Church of Flowers, Forest Lawn Cemetery, in Los Angeles.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Despite his interesting and impressive career, secondary sources on Tyrrell are rare. Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948) ignored Tyrrell completely. More recently Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker included a brief reference to him in *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1975), 287. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., has revealed much more about Tyrrell's contributions to the Disciples in *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900* (Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973). The richest source of information are Disciples periodicals published during Tyrrell's career and retirement, containing references to and contributions from Tyrrell. Chief among these are *The Christian-Evangelist* and the *Christian Standard*. In addition there is a file at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee, that contains a few assorted documents, including a pension information schedule as well as some personal correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> Tyrrell, "The Disciples Bogie," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 63 (Jan. 7, 1926), 10

<sup>3</sup> *Brimstone Bargains in the Marriage Market: or The Traffic in Sex: Stories and Studies of the Exaggeration and Perversion of Sex and the Degradation of Woman. Growing out of Her Economic Dependence: An Appeal for Justice and Freedom* (St. Louis: Puritan Publishing House, 1904).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 386.

<sup>6</sup> A discussion of Cave's unusual doctrinal positions is contained in an article in the *St. Louis Republic*, reprinted in *The Christian-Evangelist* (Dec. 26, 1889), 825. Cf. *Christian-Evangelist* (Jan 9, 1890), 23.

<sup>7</sup> In "News from the Churches," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 6 September

1896, 8, it was noted that Cave's sermon the following Sunday would be entitled, "The Religion of Free Thinkers." Many of his former parishioners, reading the Sunday religion section, would almost certainly have found that topic well suited to the highly unorthodox theology of Cave.

<sup>8</sup> The Commission on the Ministry Information Schedule, "Frank G. Tyrrell," 23 February 1926. Board of Ministerial Relief of the United Christian Missionary Society.

<sup>9</sup> Harrell, *Social Sources of Division*, 96-97.

<sup>10</sup> "Ordination to the Ministry," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 26 (2 August 1888), 473. During the 19th and early 20th centuries ordination to the ministry in the Disciples of Christ was a local issue, and qualification requirements were practically non-existent. In fact, all the candidate had to do was convince a local congregation and pastor of his (and occasionally, her) calling.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Tyrrell-Scott," *Christian Standard* v. 23 (29 September 1888), 628.

<sup>13</sup> The Commission on Ministry Information Schedule.

<sup>14</sup> In early May, 1890, he wrote to the *Christian Standard* to defend the choice of Cameron, Missouri, for the state Christian Missionary Convention. From the tone of the letter it is clear he was still serving as pastor. "Cameron, Missouri, the Place," *Christian Standard* 25 (10 May 1890), 298.

<sup>15</sup> The Commission on Ministry Information Schedule.

<sup>16</sup> "From the Field [Missouri]," *Christian Standard* v. 24 (28 December 1889), 870.

<sup>17</sup> Tyrrell, "Forward March," *Christian Standard* v. 25 (25 January 1890), 51.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., "A Specific Work for Endeavor Societies and Sunday Schools," *Christian-Evangelist* v. 28 (10 July 1891), 377; "Our Work in St. Louis," *Christian-Evangelist* v. 29 (13 March 1892), 124; and "The Home Field," *Christian-Evangelist* v. 29 (27 March 1892), 197.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous preface, *Brimstone Bargains*, iv.

<sup>20</sup> For a brief discussion of the Disciples of Christ and the Social Gospel, see Harrell, *Social Sources of Division*, 85-104.

<sup>21</sup> "Ordination," 473.

<sup>22</sup> "Our Budget," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 28 (30 April 1891), 281; cf. Harrell, *The Social Sources of Division*, 310-11.

<sup>23</sup> Tyrrell, "American Missions," *Christian Standard* v. 28 (5 November 1892), 926-928, and (12 November 1892), 947.

<sup>24</sup> Tyrrell, "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* 30 (3 February 1894), 134.

<sup>25</sup> Tyrrell, "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* 33 (23 October 1897), 1355.

<sup>26</sup> "St. Louis News," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (13 February 1896), 101.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, (7 May 1896), 304.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, (14 May 1896), 309.

- <sup>29</sup> A. W. Taylor, "Drake University," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (4 June 1896), 368.
- <sup>30</sup> Harrell, *Social Sources of Division*, 81; 291.
- <sup>31</sup> Tyrrell, "American Missions," 927.
- <sup>32</sup> Tyrrell, "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* 33 (27 November 1897), 1524.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> "Current Events," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (6 February 1896), 81.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> "St. Louis News," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (12 March 1896), 172.
- <sup>39</sup> Tyrrell, "American Missions," 928.
- <sup>40</sup> Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism: 1882-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 22.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963), 93-94.
- <sup>42</sup> B. A. Hinsdale, "Intemperance in an Economical Point of View," *Christian Standard* v. 15 (14 February 1880), 49.
- <sup>43</sup> The encounter was recorded in "American Missions," 927.
- <sup>44</sup> Tyrrell, "An Efficient Minister," *Christian Standard* v. 53 (18 May 1918), 1053.
- <sup>45</sup> "Lyman Abbott Criticized," *Christian Standard* v. 32 (22 February 1896), 253.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Cf., the section on city evangelization in "American Missions," 927.
- <sup>49</sup> Tyrrell, "New Testament Christianity and Social Progress," *Christian Standard* v. 34 (20 August 1898), 1087.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. Tyrrell's opinion on separation based on social class in worship; "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* v. 33 (27 November 1897), 1524.
- <sup>55</sup> Tyrrell, "New Testament Christianity," 1087.
- <sup>56</sup> Tyrrell, "American Missions," 926.
- <sup>57</sup> Parts of the sermon were quoted in "St. Louis News," *Christian Standard* v. 33 (6 February 1896), 92.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* v. 33 (17 July 1897), 932.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>61</sup> Tyrrell, *Brimstone Bargains*, 91ff.
- <sup>62</sup> Harrell calls Tyrrell "the most influential Disciples spokesman for the single tax...." Harrell, *The Social Sources of Division*, 146-47. Cf. Tyrrell, "The Land Question," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 29 (4 August 1892), 485;

and "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* v. 30 (21 July 1894), 710.

<sup>63</sup> Harrell, *Social Sources of Division*, 104.

<sup>64</sup> "Our Budget," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 28 (30 April 1891), 281.

<sup>65</sup> "St. Louis Letter," *Christian Standard* v. 28 (3 December 1892), 1008.

<sup>66</sup> Harrell, *Social Sources*, 65-66. Cf., "The Benevolent Association," *Christian Oracle* 16 (30 March 1899), 9.

<sup>67</sup> "Current Events," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (20 February 1896), 113.

<sup>68</sup> This "policy" seems duplicitous. While the journal denounced politically active clergy, it also ran front page editorials on the national political conventions, Populist developments, etc.

<sup>69</sup> "Current Events," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (1 October 1896), 625.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> "Our Budget," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 28 (30 April 1891), 281.

<sup>72</sup> Through *Christian Endeavor* Tyrrell spoke for temperance or prohibition in church settings. "St. Louis News," *The Christian-Evangelist* 33 (23 April 1896), 272. He also attended at least one State Prohibition Convention in Missouri in 1896, where he was on the program to give an address. W. W. Hopkins, "State Prohibition Convention," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 33 (23 April 1896), 261.

<sup>73</sup> Above, p. 16; cf. Harrell, *Social Sources of Division*, 146-47.

<sup>74</sup> "Our Budget," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 34 (10 September 1896), 580.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "The Next Congress," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 4 November 1896, 7.

<sup>77</sup> "All Eyes are on the Populists," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 11 September 1896, 10; "Populists to Fuse," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 September 1896, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Commission on Ministry Information Schedule.

<sup>79</sup> "Judge Frank G. Tyrrell, Disciple Minister, Dies," *The Christian-Evangelist* v. 87 (11 October 1950), 1005.

<sup>80</sup> His involvement during these years is briefly discussed in a history of Wilshire Christian Church: Frank G. Tyrrell, "The Early History," in *Wilshire Boulevard Christian Church. 1910-1924* (Los Angeles: n.p., n.d.), 4-5; 7.

<sup>81</sup> "Tyrrell, Disciple Minister, Dies," 1005.

# Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ: Their Origins and Transformation

by Kent Ellett\*

In his book *The Stone-Campbell Movement* Leroy Garrett favorably describes non-Sunday school churches as among the most progressive in the conservative Restoration tradition.<sup>1</sup> In recent years these congregations (of which there are about 200) have had pulpit exchanges with Baptist congregations in Muleshoe, Texas, joint services with Baptist and Methodist congregations in Unionville and Lena, Indiana, and the Speedway, Indiana church sponsored a forum for unity discussions with Independent Christian Churches. Ronny Wade, editor of the *Old Paths Advocate* laments that these churches “grow more liberal every year.”<sup>2</sup> This growing ecumenism is being recognized by many within the main-line tradition of Churches of Christ, and, ironically, those in the non-class fellowship now may be feared far more for their emerging openness than when they were considered “anti.”<sup>3</sup> David Langford has recently noted that when asked about a whole range of questions non-Sunday school ministers “consistently respond more moderately than their mainline peers.” Only three generations after the division between class and non-class Churches of Christ only one out of ten non-Sunday school ministers now make issues such as instrumental music and Sunday school a test of fellowship, and only one in three believe that a cappella singing is the only acceptable form of music in public worship.<sup>4</sup> Many would suggest that these churches are intentionally reclaiming the unifying vision of Stone and Campbell. What accounts for this growing ecumenism among churches who only a generation ago were known for their radical sectarianism?

## Origins

To answer this question it is necessary to consider the specific theological and social context in which opposition to the Sunday school arose.

### *Primitivism of the Christian Baptist*

In 1780 Robert Raikes went into the slums of early industrial England and gathered children who, having been released from employment on the Sabbath, would be making trouble in the streets.<sup>5</sup> Bible classes as they were originally conceived were charitable institutions independent of or adjuncts to churches which often taught the “church catechism.” As this practice was increasingly adopted in America, it became a target of the early primitivism of Alexander Campbell. Campbell believed he could usher in the millennium by uniting the Protestant denominations through a return to the “ancient order of things.” In the 1823 initial installment of *The Christian Baptist*, Campbell attacked Sunday school organizations as one of the “hobbies of modern times.”<sup>6</sup> Thereafter some Churches of Christ would oppose age-divided classes on the

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same basis that instrumental music was opposed—they were human innovations for which no warrant could be found in the “divine constitution.”

Of course Campbell later came to embrace the Sunday School as he did the Missionary Society after it became clear that the way to unity was not in restoring primitive Christianity as much as it was emphasizing the “common” Christianity of all Protestant parties.<sup>7</sup> Especially as Bible classes came to be implemented under the auspices of local congregations Campbell’s opposition to them turned into avid support. Yet, as Richard Hughes very ably argues, Churches of Christ are the heirs of the early Campbell of *The Christian Baptist*—not the later Campbell of the *Harbinger*.<sup>8</sup> While many in the Stone-Campbell tradition did not share Campbell’s millennial hopes nor his ecumenism, they found in the primitivism and sectarian tone of the early Campbell a theology and piety which protested the complex social structures and the growing inequality of the gilded age. By appealing to Biblical silence heirs of *The Christian Baptist* could resist growing institutional complexity and all symbols of social stratification.

### *Democracy*

Nathan Hatch, in his seminal work, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, argues that the Stone-Campbell Movement, like most Protestant religion on the frontier, sought to take ecclesiastical power from existing structures and place it in the hands of the common man. While there was a long tradition of evangelicals calling into question the spirituality of individual clergymen, “the Christians now took the liberty of slandering the entire profession as money-grubbing tyrants.”<sup>9</sup> No doubt Campbell saw the clergy and creeds as the chief obstacles to Christian union, and in *The Christian Baptist* his attacks on clergy are unrelentingly merciless. Elias Smith, a Jeffersonian Republican, sought to overthrow the Federalist and Congregational establishment in New England. He wrote in the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, “Many are republicans as to government, and are yet but half republicans, being in matters of religion still bound to a catechism, creed, covenant or superstitious priest.”<sup>10</sup> In dissolving the Springfield Presbytery Barton Stone and others were abolishing a power structure so “that the people may have free course to the Bible.” Candidates for ministry were now free to take their license to preach only “from God.” The church was to “resume her native right of internal government.” In short by abolishing creeds and all religious structure except for the local congregations the “oppressed” could go “free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty.”<sup>11</sup>

By 1840 Campbell and others within the Movement began to make peace with social structures and American society in general. But the forebears of the Churches of Christ did not. Benjamin Franklin stood low in the opinion of Campbell and others in the maturing Restoration Movement, but Robert Richardson admits he had “great popularity with a certain class of minds of which we have a great many in the Reformation.”<sup>12</sup> When Franklin started the *American Christian Review* he did so hoping it “might turn out to be another *Christian Baptist*.”<sup>13</sup> It was these radical democrats, continuing to be repulsed by clergy, wealth, power and complex social structures and continuing to share the primitivist hermeneutic of *The Christian Baptist*, who formed the Churches of Christ in the later nineteenth century.

### ***Rural, Lower-Class Consciousness***

These lower-class democrats still would not reconcile themselves to any kind of clerical power aside from local elders. One of the great “innovations” of the nineteenth century which was a source of tension between Disciples and conservatives is often overlooked—the advent of the “hireling pastors as tools of the well-to-do.”<sup>14</sup> Austin McGary’s insistence on rebaptism has been well documented, but he explicitly stated that he began *The Firm Foundation* in response to J.W. McGarvey’s desire to “give the pastor that plea and power that modern pastors now occupy in our city congregations.”<sup>15</sup> David Lipscomb had long objected to Bible colleges because they threatened to establish “a distinct order of clergy” who would lord it over the laity.<sup>16</sup> I.C. Stone classed Bible colleges as one of the “four leading departures” of the nineteenth century because such institutions produced “proud plug-hat pastors; our liberal and broad-gauged preachers and editors.”<sup>17</sup>

The pride of located ministers was often associated with pretentious urban living. The wickedness of American cities was a recurrent theme in the church papers of the late nineteenth century, and conservatives saw big towns as “centers of moral, religious, political and economic heresy.”<sup>18</sup> As the Disciples moved from sect to denomination seeking to be relevant to a more affluent, urban middle class, there was a good deal of talk about reaching the urban poor, but this only brought a backlash of conservative criticism which suggested that “the way to reach the masses was simply to get down on the level of the masses like Jesus did.”<sup>19</sup>

Rural lower-class consciousness fueled opposition to a located ministry. One conservative writes, “For the liberal pastor the modern rendering of the great commission appears to be go into the big cities and preach the gospel where people will pay a good salary and entertain the preacher in good style.”<sup>20</sup> Daniel Sommer understood the division to be largely the result of urban Disciples religion. “Churches as assembled in large cities gradually became proud, or, at least sufficiently worldly-minded to desire popularity, and in order to attain that unscriptural end they adopted...the hired pastor, choir, instrumental music, and man-made societies.”<sup>21</sup> Much has rightfully been made of sectional resentments being a source of division between Churches of Christ and Disciples, and there is no doubt that division occurred along sectional lines. But that is because, partly as a consequence of the war, class and agrarian prejudice came to be more and more located in the south and the remote Midwest.<sup>22</sup> One blunt agrarian wrote. “City churches gape for the flutes, horns and organs because the opera, theater and sangerfest have educated them to it.”<sup>23</sup>

### ***Liberal Theology***

Yet, it would not be accurate to assume that Churches of Christ arose simply because they were culturally out of step with prosperous, urban Disciples of the gilded age. Nineteenth century conservative Disciples were responding to fears about emerging Biblical criticism. Churches of Christ found in the primitivism of the early Campbell a means for resisting theological liberalism. In 1884 the editor of the *Old Paths* writes, “If expediency be

permitted to disturb the recorded practice of the primitive church, it is not difficult to foresee that doctrines might be subjected, by those who exalt human reason, to modifications and improvements to meet the circumstances of the times.”<sup>24</sup> C.H. Wetherbe much later but still considering the Disciples as brethren writes, “I am confident that if our radical brethren would so express their convictions on the question of higher criticism that their language would have the same meaning to our people as it has to them, the people’s eyes would be opened at once, and their influence would be gone.”<sup>25</sup> Church of Christ historian David Harrell admits, “most perceptive conservatives understood that moderate disciples were far from theological liberals, but they clearly saw that their actions created an ecclesiastical...milieu that could and did accommodate liberalism.”<sup>26</sup>

And so Churches of Christ emerged as largely lower-class rural folk, enamored with democracy, who found in the primitivism of the early Campbell a means to resist ecclesiastical and possible theological changes which they saw as citified, elitist and controlling.

### ***Primitivism and Democratic, Lower-Class, Rural Opposition to the Sunday School***

A generation after the division between Churches of Christ and the Disciples, Churches of Christ underwent another division over the use of age-divided classes for the same sociological and theological reasons. Generally speaking, the Sunday School was not a divisive issue in the population centers that adopted the practice before the turbulent times of the instrumental music controversy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in more rural and frontier areas where the Sunday School developed much later Sunday School was more apt to be viewed as part of a rising tide of innovation. When J. E. Dunn arrived in Peoria, Texas in 1898 he found the church not only divided over the instrument, but also over the Sunday school.<sup>27</sup> R. F. Duckworth saw the establishment of Bible classes as evidence of the “human tendency to drift with the tide” of innovation.<sup>28</sup> “[Sunday School] is an innovation,” N.L. Clark lamented. “I cannot see it in any other light.”<sup>29</sup> This rural, long-standing passion about the prohibitive nature of Biblical silence coupled with the militant spirit of *Firm Foundation*, where printed opposition to the Sunday School first developed, may explain why the strength of non-class churches has been in Texas—especially west Texas.

The first written debate on the Sunday School issue appeared on the pages of *Firm Foundation* in 1906. There N.L. Clark opposed classes on a number of grounds which can be traced back to the early Campbell, and informed opposition to Sunday School continues to trace its roots to the primitivism of *The Christian Baptist*.<sup>30</sup> First, Campbell objected to the Sunday school because such an organization could not be found in the primitive church of the New Testament.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the initial installment of *The Christian Baptist* attacks such unscriptural organizations as inherently hierarchical, unnecessarily complex, and fragmentary to the home.

Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such....The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the

president of some female education society, his eldest son the recording secretary of some domestic Bible society; his eldest daughter, the corresponding secretary of a mite society; his servant maid, the vice president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday School. They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their church capacity alone they moved.<sup>32</sup>

Second, Campbell objected to Sunday school religious tracts, the object of which was to “bring [children] under the domination of some creed or sect... as if the Bible dare not be trusted in the hands of a layman without a priest... at his elbow.”<sup>33</sup> Sunday School tracts were seen as making people dependent for they came to rely on literature disseminated by a centralized and powerful hierarchy. Third, Campbell objected to Sunday School in a strikingly democratic way when he told parents, “by the law of nature... as well as by his written word you are ordained to be the only preachers of the gospel, properly so called, to your own offspring.”<sup>34</sup> Nobody could assume the responsibility of a parent in teaching his children, and for some clergyman to do so was seen as a usurpation of natural as well as Biblical authority.

Eighty-two years later, Clark’s opposition to the Sunday School is remarkably similar. Sunday School literature was selected by “denominationalists” who divide the church with creeds and who tend to “make the child dependent” on tracts while “ignoring special needs” of local churches.<sup>35</sup> Over and again Clark hammers home Campbell’s primitivism, “Where, oh where is the Bible authority for Sunday School?”<sup>36</sup> Also, like Campbell, Clark thinks the Sunday School usurps parental rights and authority. Clark objects to the use of women teachers, but most revealing is his linking the Sunday School with the “hired pastor” and his belief that together they were undermining local congregational development and authority.

Now the way most churches that have a Sunday school do is this: The sisters and a few brethren meet at 10:00 to teach children for an hour in a Sunday School, and the church convenes at 11:00 to be ... entertained by a hired pastor for thirty or forty minutes... “the pastor” administers the supper, they sing a hymn and all go out. The result is that church soon learns to depend upon the preacher for its spiritual life and entertainment (especially), the elders become mere honorary supernumeraries so far as the public work of the church is concerned, the sisters are encouraged to make rapid strides toward the pulpit and eldership, the talent of brethren in the church is not developed, the evangelist stays home and pastorates the brethren... with the Sunday School and “pastor” to do our teaching in the church we can never develop an efficient eldership...<sup>37</sup>

Like Lipscomb, Clark feared a “distinct order of clergy” that would be authoritative and to which commoners and local elders would be essentially subservient. In this sense opposition to the class system reflects the fiercely democratic convictions which have often characterized the Restoration Movement and its fight against clerical and ecclesiastical power.

Clark also saw building large church facilities as a sell-out to the world culture. He said of Church of Christ architecture “Costly pews, fine windows, elegant furniture, lofty spires... Some of our brethren simply omit the pipe organ and follow suit on every other point.”<sup>38</sup> R.P. Watson concurred. He objected to building Bible classrooms at Denton, Texas as “extravagance in the extreme.” In building such the brethren “were prompted by no other spirit than the spirit of pride.”<sup>39</sup> R.F. Duckworth noted that “when Jesus came into this world he came as a poor man... A church that is really concerned about spiritual growth hasn’t the time to spend in the accumulation of great funds.”<sup>40</sup> While one might sense a bit of class envy in some of this, it is far more important to

see that for these men it was a central part of Christian piety to refuse to participate in the power structures of this world.

This difference in opinion about the Christian's relationship to culture was clearly seen in the difference between non-class and class church response to World War I. *The Gospel Advocate* had since its inception been pacifist and non-participatory in government, but during the war it caved in to government pressure and stopped publishing pacifist articles. But the *Apostolic Way*, the non-Sunday School paper, standing in the tradition of David Lipscomb, continued to publish pacifist articles against participation in the mainstream culture and its evil objectives. The war "galvanized a non-Sunday School protest against the mainstream church's pro-war stance."<sup>41</sup> While by no means did all Non-Sunday school church members share the *Apostolic Way's* strict separationist stance, the mainstream church's rapid abandonment of Lipscomb's non participation in politics doctrine reinforced the Non-Sunday school perception that the main-line church had become too accommodating, following the lead of capitalist culture. When culture dictated the church's course, descent into theological liberalism, a huge controversy in most other traditions during the period, was surely not far off.

And again, agrarian bias had a part in generating division over the Sunday School. The final argument against Sunday Schools Clark made in his initial printed debate in 1906 was a pragmatic one. Bible classes were ineffective means of rearing children in the faith, the models for which were based in urban industrial culture rather than in scripture. Clark writes, "How do I know that Sunday School literature has been a failure? By its fruits. It has been the principal source of Bible knowledge in our cities. Behold what a dearth of Bible knowledge exists among those who have been reared in the very lap of the Sunday School!"<sup>42</sup> There can be little wonder why division again occurred largely along rural/urban lines.

## History

In 1903 Gunter College was founded in Gunter, Texas and was connected with a stance against the Sunday School. It was well staffed. N. L. Clark was its first president until 1912 when Alfred Elmore assumed the presidency. Over the next twenty-five years this school produced many influential leaders who would champion what they perceived to be the Apostolic pattern of church instruction. In 1908 G. H. P. Showalter purchased *Firm Foundation* and began to challenge some of the anti-Sunday School sentiment that had been expressed by N.L. Clark and G.A Trott within its pages. In 1913, a graduate of Gunter, Clarence Teurman would join G.A Trott and W. J. Rice as an editor of a new publication, the *Apostolic Way*. It would quickly be known as the anti-Sunday School paper as the front page displayed two big squares on which were written "The Assembly" and "The Home" signifying the perceived biblical pattern for church instruction.<sup>43</sup> Through the printed medium of this publication and in many debates in succeeding years the disagreement over the use of Sunday Schools hardened into bitter division. Most date the eventual division over the Sunday School to the year 1925 when R. F. Duckworth published in the *Apostolic Way* a list of evangelists who opposed the Sunday School. This exclusive list was felt necessary because "congregations were being imposed

upon by Sunday-School preachers coming into their midst claiming to be sound, and while there, sowing seeds of discord.”<sup>44</sup>

But the anti-Sunday School churches soon divided over other issues. The *Apostolic Way* printed both articles which supported and opposed the use of individual cups in communion. Such tolerance of diversity was too much for H.C. Harper to take, and he soon started another paper, *The Truth* (later the *Old Paths Advocate*) around which opponents of “cups” would rally.<sup>45</sup> By the early thirties debates between Harper and J. N. Cowan began to harden attitudes, and yet another division would solidify over following decades.

For years Alfred Elmore in the *Gospel Echo* and W. J. Rice in the *Gospel Missionary* followed the lead of previous Restoration thinkers in asserting that Acts 2:42 proscribed a particular sequence or order of worship which prohibited any variation in the assembly. But by the 1930s and '40s such diversity of opinion was not to be tolerated. A complex series of events which involved personalities as much as doctrinal conviction led to yet another division between the editors of the *Old Paths Advocate* and the followers of J.D. Phillips who began editing yet another paper entitled, *The Truth*, in which he continued to advocate the Acts 2:42 order of worship position. This disturbance failed to finally harden in the way others did in part because of Phillips' eventual association with R. H. Boll who introduced Phillips to the grace-filled writings of K.C. Moser. Thereafter, he became open to the possibility of unity in some diversity.<sup>46</sup>

By mid-century, then, there were at least three distinct groups within churches of Christ who opposed the Sunday School. There was the order of worship group. There was the one-cup group which was essentially pacifist and remained opposed to the “located pastor system.” The other group followed the more irenic leaders like N.L. Clark, Alva Johnson, a well known and successful evangelist, and G.B. Shelburne, who began a more peace-loving paper, *Gospel Tidings* in 1936. This group either used individual cups or did not make such an issue a test of fellowship, and over time these churches either began to use or ceased to object to located ministry.

It is this later group which has undergone significant change since 1965 and whose ecumenism is being noticed by a great many.

### **Transformation**

There are a number of ways in which one might attempt to account for the growing ecumenical spirit among multiple-cup, non-class churches whose traditional identity and history have been overwhelmingly factious. Nancy Ammerman has pointed out that “fundamentalists who live in essentially traditional communities may share many beliefs with their urban fundamentalist cousins, but they do not share their militant separatism.”<sup>47</sup> Non-Sunday School churches are certainly primarily located in traditional communities, but often across the road from another Church of Christ which lives in the same community and which does not share its tolerance. While it may also be true the non-class fellowship is relatively more sheltered from contact with moral relativism and the theological liberalism which pervades urban main-line Protestantism, some of the most open non-class churches are located in cities in closest proximity to religious liberalism and worldliness. Thus, Ammerman's

work among Baptists does not provide a sufficient model for understanding the non-class church's change.

### ***From Sect to Denomination***

Part of the transformation might be understood as the move from sect to denomination which seems to characterize many religious bodies. This greater willingness to engage other religious groups and participate in at least some aspects of contemporary mainstream culture can be seen in many evangelical churches. And so the changes in non-Sunday School churches may be seen in the broad context of contemporary conservative Protestantism. Jeffrey Hunter has powerfully documented a growing tendency among evangelicals to value what he calls an "ethic of civility" or a socially conditioned desire to be tolerable to others.<sup>48</sup> This may be operative in non-Sunday School churches more than any of its leaders would care to admit. Nevertheless, many transforming influences upon these churches can only be understood within their particular context in the Stone-Campbell tradition.

### ***Waning of the Democratic Ethos***

One reason the passionate militancy against the Sunday School has subsided in some quarters is that the non-class brotherhood has lost much of its nineteenth century democratic ethos as its members have increasingly become middle-class participants in suburban institutions and stratified society. Opposition to the Sunday School has waned as fears of institutional and clerical domination have subsided. While occasionally an opponent of the "class system" may claim that Sunday Schools are mere tools of indoctrination, very few now suppose that in opposing Sunday School that they are standing up against authoritarianism, clerical power, and institutional structures which perpetuate creeds, stifle the conscience, and enforce uniformity. And in those places where Sunday School continues to be strenuously opposed in a sectarian way its use is still strongly identified with an intellectual arrogance and wealthy pride which seeks to participate in the power structures of mainstream culture.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Doctrinal influence of Clark and Shelburne***

Essential to any understanding of the transformation among non-class churches is an appreciation of the irenic influence of G. B. Shelburne Jr. and his mentor, N. L. Clark (1870-1956), who together have been the most influential personalities throughout this century. "Irvin Waters has called Clark the father of the non-class movement."<sup>50</sup> Clark, educated at a Baptist college and the University of Mississippi, moved to Texas in 1892 to teach school. He was converted in October 1895 and began preaching in December of that same year.<sup>51</sup> His scholarship was immediately recognized, and he became a co-editor of *Firm Foundation* on the pages of which he conducted the first printed discussion of the Sunday School issue with R. L. Whiteside in 1906. From the outset of the debate, to the dismay of many on both sides of the issue, Clark made it clear that he did not make one's opinion about the Sunday School a test of fellowship. "I am opposed to division among the people of God on account of such questions as the ones before us."<sup>52</sup> Throughout the ensuing

years of controversy, though most often misunderstood and maligned as simply soft on the issues, Clark was steadfast in pleading for unity in a diversity of opinion and practice.

One wonders over what other “such questions” Clark would have refused to divide. In 1947 defending a lifetime of this practice of unity in diversity Clark said he had worshipped with Sunday School brothers and had “always treated...one-cup brethren, premillennialists and others in the same [brotherly] way.”<sup>53</sup> But how many others would he fellowship? A hint can be found in a column he wrote in *Firm Foundation* in 1907. Defending his stance against Sunday School and at the same time his desire to be in fellowship with those who used it, Clark also added, “I believe too much haste has been made in many instances in dividing churches over other innovations.”<sup>54</sup> This is perhaps a cautious way of objecting to the division over the missionary society. As Clark argued that the Sunday School did not fit the patterns of teaching revealed to be in the primitive church, he had to respond to critics who said that there were no such specific patterns for church instruction. But he responded, “these same brethren [who claim there is no pattern for instruction] claim they can read in the New Testament a method of doing mission work so clearly revealed that we ought to make it a test of fellowship in the church.”<sup>55</sup> Clark clearly would not have made the missionary society a pretext for division.

In fact, Clark essentially abandons the anti-institutional argument in opposing the Sunday School. Clark was forced to defend his use of classes at Gunter College where he was president and teacher. How could he object to divided classes on Sunday and use them Monday through Friday? Clark’s response was formative. “My teaching as a Christian is one thing and the work of the Church of Christ when assembled for worship is quite another.”<sup>56</sup> “I can do many things as an individual Christian which the church cannot do.”<sup>57</sup> Campbell, McGary and others in the history of the Movement had opposed Sunday Schools as conceived by Robert Raikes on the grounds that they were unscriptural organizations which usurped the local church’s autonomy. But they became strong advocates of the Sunday School when it began to function under the auspices of the local congregation. Clark, however, felt just the opposite. Individual Christians could perform good works and develop institutions at will. It was only the church that was bound by strict construction of the divine constitution. Silence was prohibitive only in matters of church polity and practice.

By the late 1940s many of the one-cup and no-located preacher tradition were very concerned about G.B. Shelburne’s introduction of a Bible Training Work in Kerrville, Texas. Along with the long-standing problem with the use of multiple cups in communion, there were cries against the Training Work reminiscent of David Lipscomb’s opposition to ministerial colleges. Paul and Leland Knight published the *Church Messenger* in Booneville, Arkansas. Being fearful of Kerrville’s capacity to produce “pastors” that would usurp congregational authority, they attacked the motives of Shelburne and others involved with the training work. But what most troubled them was Shelburne’s willingness to have fellowship with those who used innovations. In a landmark 1947 *Gospel Tidings* article Shelburne opposed classes but resolutely “refused to be a part of a sect, anti-Sunday School or

otherwise.”<sup>58</sup> Paul Knight would later respond, “...I do not believe sin and digression can be covered with love...all in all there seems to be a strong tendency to disregard for the law of God and be guided by their own notions and think-sos, and leave off all the fighting and love everything to death.”<sup>59</sup> In June 1947 Clark weighed in with Shelburne and continued to resist the sectarian way in which the Sunday School question was being handled. He asks:

I should like for those who wish to make the Sunday School such a rigid test of fellowship to tell us what we should do about the cup question, the wine question, the order of worship question, the premillennial question etc. etc. Shall we make every man's view on any of these subjects a test of fellowship in the churches? If not, why not? If so, who among us is qualified to write our creed specifying exactly what we must believe, how we are to worship, where we may preach and so on...do not try to make a law for the church of Christ where he has given liberty.<sup>60</sup>

Would Clark allow such freedom even on issues like instrumental music? G.B. Shelburne Jr. says frankly in recent correspondence, “I have always considered all who have truly obeyed the gospel...my brethren...I got these views largely from my father and N.L. Clark who viewed things as I have stated. I never remember hearing Brother Clark express himself on making the instrument a test of fellowship, but I feel certain he did not, although he strongly opposed it in Christian worship....”<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps Clark and Shelburne's opponents saw more clearly than their supporters the ecumenical implications of allowing such Christian liberty. While both Clark and Shelburne were hesitant about explicitly saying that opposition to the instrument was not a legitimate test of fellowship, their capacity for accepting much wider diversity was not lost on their opponents.<sup>62</sup> Clearly what is most important about these firm stands for unity is not what they said, but what they simply implied. The brethren who supported the Kerrville Training work were making a distinction between sharing in a practice and sharing with people. They were rejecting the notion that acceptance of a brother or sister is tantamount to accepting all of their opinions.

Even more fundamentally they were saying that salvation does not come through correct understanding or obedience. By the early twentieth century the legalistic thinking of many within Churches of Christ gave every issue of church polity and practice great soteriological significance. For instance in the famous 1926 debate between J.N. Cowan and Daniel Sommer in Sullivan, Indiana over the Sunday school issue, both men were affirming that the Church of Christ each represented was the only true Church of Christ.<sup>63</sup> Clark, Shelburne, and others at the Kerrville Training work were challenging this heresy. While Shelburne continually insisted that he was not pleading for “carelessness with the Lord's commands,” his actions implied that salvation did not come through a perfect restoration of the ancient order, but through faith in Jesus and his atoning work.<sup>64</sup> It would only be a matter of time until it occurred to many of those following Clark and Shelburne's lead that the same kind of liberty they were extending to the “class brethren” could just as easily be extended to a Calvinist, or a piano player!

### ***Reaction to Sectarian Extremes***

It is not unprecedented in the history of American Christianity that toleration emerges after sectarianism is taken to an extreme.<sup>65</sup> And, it is

perhaps no coincidence that the most ecumenical Church of Christ leaders in the twentieth century have come from the extreme right of the tradition. Carl Ketcherside was the leader of the Sommerite party opposing located ministry before he was to undergo a transformation that led him in a completely ecumenical direction. The same is true of Leroy Garrett who had been a loyal member of anti-institutional Churches of Christ in the late 1950s. J. Irvin Waters whose 1970 address at Lubbock Christian University calling for a renunciation of sectarianism was said to have been “absolutely electrifying” came from the one-cup tradition.<sup>66</sup> Larry Hart in a 1979 *Restoration Quarterly* article suggests that non-Sunday School churches have lived among the most bitter forms of sectarianism for so long that they have grown sick of fighting and now want no more of it.<sup>67</sup> Gene Shelburne, the son of G.B. and senior editor of the *Christian Appeal* whose books have sold well throughout conservative Restoration circles, in a recent correspondence suggests that these churches have seen first-hand the inevitable fruit of sectarianism taken to its logical extreme and no longer wish to “do church” that way. David Langford, a life-long member of non-Sunday School churches and the minister at the now thriving Quaker Avenue Church in Lubbock, admits that the failure of divisiveness “opened our eyes to the possibility that there might be something wrong with us.” The relatively small size of the fellowship made it easier to see the inevitable fruit of sectarianism. While Langford does not think non-Sunday School churches were any more sectarian than some other parts of the Restoration tradition, he says it “takes less poison to kill a smaller horse.”<sup>68</sup>

### ***Epistemology***

Along with the whole of American culture, non-class Churches of Christ have come to see that their convictions have been formed in a particular context, and there is an increasing willingness to see oneself as part of a tradition which has greatly influenced thinking on a whole range of issues. While few of the members of this fellowship could be considered “post-modern,” the post modern critique of pure reason has undermined many people's confidence in their ability to be “sure” about many complex issues. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that disagreements are much less likely to be attributed to impure motives or rebellion against God as they were in previous generations. Lyndon Latham, a veteran minister among non-class churches highly respected for his exegetical work, says frankly, “the bit of learning I have acquired...has not given me more confidence, but it has given me more humility and made me more tolerant toward others who struggle to know truth and who started with a different set of givens.”<sup>69</sup> As members of non-class churches live in more complex worlds, they are more willing to acknowledge the complexity of issues and see how their own context influences biblical interpretation.

### ***Restoration History***

An awareness of the Restoration history is another reason for the rapid transformation of the non-class fellowship. The growing identification with the Restoration tradition has made transitions more palatable because changes are not seen as rejecting one's heritage, but as reclaiming the best parts of it.

In a 1989 reconciliation letter written by Dr. Thomas Langford, the Quaker Avenue congregation in Lubbock sought to mend relationships between estranged groups by directly appealing to the ecumenical tradition within the Stone-Campbell movement.<sup>70</sup>

Influential leaders have found their ministries turned around by a study of Restoration history. It was in a visit to the Presbyterian Church in Ahorey Ireland where Thomas Campbell once served as pastor that Carl Ketcherside asked Jesus into his heart and began a thorough study of the Restoration tradition which revolutionized his thinking about unity. During the 1960s after he began publishing his new understanding of salvation and the basis for unity in *Mission Messenger*, Ketcherside and a kindred spirit, Leroy Garrett, were ostracized in the main-line Churches of Christ. However, their reception in non-class circles was much warmer. It is fair to say Ketcherside and Garrett's influence and emphasis in understanding the tradition in which Churches of Christ stand have been extraordinarily influential.<sup>71</sup> Gene Shelburne, editor of the *Christian Appeal*, in a move very uncharacteristic of any mainstream Church of Christ publication in the 1960s, published a glowing report of the July 1966 meeting between all three streams of the Restoration Movement at Bethany College. In that issue he acknowledges the ecumenical influence of his Restoration roots.<sup>72</sup> Irvin Waters' transformation from a self-described partisan of the one-cup churches may be in part attributed to his growing understanding of the Restoration tradition.<sup>73</sup> While rejected by most of the churches with whom he worked for years, Waters' teaching ministry in Restoration history has been quite influential among churches of Shelburne's stripe.

In 1939 Leo S. Miller, raised in the non-class, one-cup, no located preacher, pacifist tradition, came to Indiana having done some undergraduate work at Abilene Christian College. He eventually began teaching at Indiana Central University in Indianapolis where he served as Vice President until his retirement in 1980. But during his career he served over two dozen non-Sunday School congregations performing hundreds of baptisms, weddings and funerals for congregations that did not have located ministry. On one occasion in Lena, Indiana he converted over twenty persons. In the spring of 1960 he contracted the mumps and was unable to perform his duties at the University commencement. Bedfast for a few days, he read Richardson's *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. He later confessed, "I couldn't put it down...that book changed my understanding of everything. It totally changed my view of the church."<sup>74</sup> Thereafter he used his enormous influence, quietly softening many attitudes by his teaching which in later years quite often drew upon the resources of Restoration history and tradition.

## Conclusion

Non-class Churches of Christ were born out of the same primitive hermeneutic and the same rural, democratic revulsion to institutions, wealth and social stratification which fueled the division with the Disciples a generation earlier. As mainstream Churches of Christ, like the Disciples had before them, increasingly adopted a different relationship to urban and suburban culture and began to use located ministers and Sunday Schools so long opposed, despite the

efforts of a few more unity-minded leaders, non-Sunday School churches largely left the fellowship in protest. In the last thirty five years one third of the non-Sunday School churches, following the more tolerant lead of Clark and Shelburne, have themselves entered the typical transition from sect to denomination and have become mainstream participants in contemporary suburban culture. Thus, although the primitivistic hermeneutic is only beginning to be challenged, the democratic ethos which generated such passion against the instrument and Sunday School is largely gone. Increasingly younger generations have found it far more difficult to be so sure about finding a clear pattern for church polity on the pages of the New Testament, and more are defining themselves against the evils of partisan wrangling, dogmatism and broken relationships rather than against the dangers of accommodation and doctrinal unfaithfulness in matters of church polity. Clearly there has been an extreme identity crisis which has prompted a search into the Restoration tradition. There many non-Sunday School leaders have found examples of men and women who have been faithful to Jesus Christ while engaging the broader culture rather than retreating from it. Imitating the example of G.B. Shelburne and N.L. Clark, non-Sunday School churches are increasingly engaging the wider Christian community in the tradition of Campbell and Stone.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leroy Garrett, *The Stone Campbell Movement* (Joplin, MO: College Press 1994) 436.

<sup>2</sup> Ronny Wade, *The Sun Will Shine Again Someday* (Springfield, Mo. : Wade 1986) 131.

<sup>3</sup> David Langford, *The Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ: A contemporary Perspective*. Unpublished Thesis given at Abilene Christian University February 17, 1997 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 6, 30-32.

<sup>5</sup> Wade, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Preface, *Christian Baptist* 1(July 4, 1823)14.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Richardson, *Principles and Objects of the Religious Reformation Urged by A. Campbell and Others* (Bethany, Va : A. Campbell 1853) 28.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996) 90-91.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* ( New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1989) 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Campbell, *Last Will and Testament* in C.A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Joplin, MO : College Press 1985)

<sup>12</sup> Hughes, 90.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> A. M. Morris, "Why I am not a Hireling Pastor " *Octographic Review* XL (May 18, 1897)4.

<sup>15</sup> Wade, 31.

<sup>16</sup> David Lipscomb, "Bible Colleges" *Gospel Advocate* XI(Dec 23, 1869).

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- <sup>73</sup> Interview with Leo Miller, September 7, 1997.

## **CONGREGATIONAL HISTORIANS' SEMINAR CONVENES IN SEPTEMBER**

The Historical Society proudly announces the inaugural Joe A. and Nancy Vaughn Stalcup Congregational Historians' Seminar. The seminar will meet September 14-16, 2000 at the Society building in Nashville.

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Philip N. Dare, Lexington Theological Seminary  
Peter M. Morgan, DCHS

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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## — From the Editor's Desk

When the young Alexander Campbell, future editor of the *Millennial Harbinger*, arrived in the United States in 1809, he had been much influenced by religious and theological currents in his cultural homeland of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Among those currents was the Scottish evangelical restorationist movement led by the aristocratic Haldane brothers, Robert (1764-1842) and James Alexander (1768-1851). In "British Backgrounds of Millennialism in the Campbell Tradition," Camille K. Dean uses the Haldane movement as a focal point for examining the British backgrounds of Campbell's millennial thought. Dean notes that the success of eighteenth-century revivals kindled the hope that through the proclamation of the gospel, the whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of God. Then, following a millennium of the ascendancy of Christ's spirit in the church, Christ would return bodily to claim his people. Dean shows that the Haldanes, caught up in the evangelical optimism of the era, were postmillennialists, but that their restorationist separatism and their defense of scriptural inerrancy provided fuel for a more pessimistic premillennialism that developed among groups they had influenced.

Mark Toulouse examines Campbell's voluminous writings on the theme of the millennium in "Campbell and Postmillennialism: The Kingdoms of God." He notes the emergence of premillennialism in the Stone-Campbell movement and discusses Campbell's response to the popular premillennialism of William Miller, whose views were attractive, at least temporarily, to many Stone-Campbell Christians. While critical of Campbell's millennialism at several points, Toulouse concludes that what he terms Campbell's "eschatological principle" did lead to "important theological insights that enabled a measure of self-transcendence for early Disciples in their relation to culture." He suggests that for this reason Campbell's views on the millennium, though they may seem foreign to many contemporary Stone-Campbell Christians, are "especially important for today's Disciples."

The articles by Dean and Toulouse were first presented to the Kirkpatrick Seminar for Stone-Campbell Historians, April 7-8, 2000. The theme of the 2000 seminar was "Millennialism in the Campbell Tradition." A third paper presented to the seminar, "Millennial Themes in the Campbell Tradition from the Civil War to 1900," by Stephen Wolfgang, will appear in a later issue.

-D. Newell Williams

## — From the President's Desk

Three of us were eating bagel sandwiches in a corner booth in the shop down the block from the Historical Society. Mark Miller-McLemore, Dean of the Disciples House, Vanderbilt Divinity School and Glen Stewart, Regional Minister of Tennessee, and I were catching up on each other's ministries. I was delighted to learn the important place given to this journal in Mark's history and polity course. In addition, both Mark and Glen commented on the appeal of treating local history in our historical scholarship.

Their observation confirms what you have been saying in recent feedback. In the nineteen issues of *Discipliana* published under my name, none has received more appreciative response than Mark G. Toulouse's "Once Baptists, Now Disciples: A Case Study of Rountrees Meeting House, North Carolina." (Spring, 2000)

Tip O'Neill's political proverb, "All politics is local," is transportable to our field. "All history is local!" A few days after our bagel lunch, thirty-five local church historians gathered at the Society. They reflected and shared on the moments when the Gospel was vitally alive in their congregations. Isn't our history the continuing story of our family of faith in relationship with the Gospel? That story always involves specific persons at specific times in specific places whether the "specifics" are thousands at Cane Ridge in 1801 or three persons in a bagel shop in 2000, caring about and supporting each other's ministries. All history is local!

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I will be with them." Christ kept that promise in a corner booth in a bagel shop in Nashville. Now that, too, is a part of our history.

-Peter M. Morgan

# British Backgrounds of Millennialism in the Campbell Tradition

*Camille K. Dean\**

The Scottish evangelical restorationist movement led by the aristocratic Haldane brothers, Robert (1764-1842) and James Alexander (1768-1851), provides a useful focal point for examining the British backgrounds of millennialism in the Campbell tradition. The Haldane revival launched in 1796 sprang from Enlightenment-era postmillennialist missionary enthusiasm. The success of eighteenth-century revivals kindled the hope that through the proclamation of the gospel, the whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Then, following a millennium of the ascendancy of Christ's spirit among His people, He would return bodily to claim His own. Such expectations fired missionary zeal. The Haldanes themselves remained postmillennial, but their restorationist separatism and their defense of scriptural inerrancy provided fuel for nineteenth-century Romantic adventist premillennialism, of both the historicist and futurist dispensational varieties.

When his family was shipwrecked and detained in Glasgow en route to America in 1808, the young Scots-Irish emigrant Alexander Campbell interfaced with members of the Haldane connection. Earlier, in his native Irish village of Rich Hill, Campbell had heard the former sea captain James Haldane preach. Still a Seceding Presbyterian when he visited Glasgow, Campbell became more intimately acquainted while there with the Scottish Independent ideas the Haldanes had borrowed from John Glas (1695-1773) and Robert Sandeman (1718-1771). Later, in America, the restoration movement that thrived under Alexander Campbell's leadership included numerous persons from Scots-Irish Haldanean backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> When Campbell revisited Britain in 1847, he found a small congregation meeting at the Haldanes' Edinburgh Tabernacle that in 1808 had housed huge crowds. In that very year of Campbell's original visit, the Haldanes' adoption of believer's baptism—a decision that sprang from their zeal to restore a New Testament pattern of worship and church government—split their connection of independent congregations. The remnants constituted themselves Congregationalists or Baptists or found a home among more determinedly restorationist fellowships such as independent Haldanean churches, British Churches of Christ, or the Brethren.<sup>2</sup>

As conduits of both fervent evangelicalism and independent, restorationist thought, the Haldane brothers influenced a broad spectrum of believers. The pan-evangelical revival they sponsored in cooperation with English evangelicals ignited the Scottish evangelicalism that subsequently flourished under Presbyterian auspices. After the association of churches that

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\*Camille K. Dean is Professor at Trinity Christian Academy in Addison, Texas.

had resulted from their revival efforts split in 1808, James Haldane, an effective polemical writer, continued to minister at the Haldane Tabernacle in Edinburgh, sponsoring domestic missions among the Scottish Baptist fellowship.<sup>3</sup> Devoted to the Reformation theology of their native Presbyterianism, the Haldane brothers vigorously defended scriptural authority and advocated a reinvigorated, meliorist Calvinism. Both their evangelical and restorationist views were rooted in and, to a great extent, remained consonant with, the Enlightenment intellectual perspectives that eighteenth-century British evangelicals had adapted to their own use. But in the Romantic, post-Napoleonic era, the Haldanes' views inadvertently nourished premillennial and charismatic movements of which they themselves disapproved.<sup>4</sup>

The Haldanes' evangelical postmillennialism was rooted in seventeenth-century Puritanism's interpretation of prophecy that anticipated the eventual conversion of all people. Adapting the thousand-year binding of Satan described in Revelation chapter 20 and scripture references to the latter-day outpouring of the Holy Spirit, optimistic eighteenth-century postmillennialists envisioned a millennium of great spiritual blessing. During that time Christ would be powerfully present on earth—in his Spirit, not in bodily form—mightily enabling preaching of the gospel and the submission of the world to His spiritual rule prior to His second coming.<sup>5</sup>

In their postmillennial convictions, the Haldanes joined numerous eighteenth-century American and British evangelical leaders. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) had believed that the millennium would be achieved in the New World. The pioneer Scots evangelical clergyman Thomas Boston (1677-1732) bequeathed the millennial idea to the Seceder Presbyterians, the dissenting branch of Presbyterianism to which young Alexander Campbell's family subscribed. At mid-century, revivals at Cambuslang and elsewhere in Scotland nourished millennial hopes in the hearts of evangelical leaders in the Kirk of Scotland, individuals such as John Erskine of Edinburgh and James Robe of Kilsyth. Millennial vision motivated the great missionary to India, William Carey, whose life in turn inspired the Haldanes' ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Evangelical postmillennialism suited optimistic Enlightenment expectations of progress. The same intellectual milieu that fostered the Scottish Enlightenment influenced eighteenth-century zeal for missions as British evangelicals obtained a wider world view, a respect for other cultures and languages, and a less introspective Calvinism that stressed gospel grace. As multiple Bible and missionary societies, both domestic and foreign, flourished, evangelicals saw the postmillennialist dream unfolding as they triumphantly took the Reformation gospel to the world.<sup>7</sup>

In his commentary on the book of Romans, Robert Haldane seconded the prevailing evangelical postmillennial belief that the literal conversion of Israel would usher in a time of unprecedented spiritual blessing for Gentiles, a belief that caused missionary societies to set up auxiliaries especially aimed at evangelizing Jews. Haldane confidently linked Paul's reference in the eleventh chapter to "the fulness of the Gentiles" and his assertion that "all Israel shall be saved" to the "filling of the earth with the glory of God." Haldane maintained that the Scriptures did not specify when this would happen; but when all nations should "submit to his authority, the prophecies concerning

him will be fulfilled in their utmost extent, and his reign over all the earth will be established.”<sup>8</sup>

The Haldanes’ former tutor and mentor in domestic missions, David Bogue, produced a widely influential book *The Millennium* (1822) heralding the postmillennialist optimism that inspired missionaries of the period. An expatriate Scot, Bogue ministered at a Congregational church at Gosport, near Portsmouth. During the Napoleonic war years, British Dissent had flourished partly because of the successful domestic mission efforts carried out by lay itinerant networks such as those of Bogue and the Haldanes. Peace brought Dissenters such as Bogue even brighter hopes as wartime repression ceased and greater social and political freedoms opened up. Among British evangelicals both within and without the established churches, postmillennial optimism concerning the continued growth of Christianity continued strong in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Leading Scots exponents included Thomas Chalmers and John Brown of Edinburgh.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in the 1820s, however, many in the established churches were less optimistic as they looked at increasingly democratizing and secularizing trends in British society and government that threatened the constitutional position of religious establishments. The repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts in 1828, growing working-class radicalism, Catholic agitation in Ireland, and the Reform Bill of 1832 appeared to many as signs of the biblical “last days.” Deeply pessimistic about events around them, premillennialists despaired of human efforts even if those efforts were empowered by Christ’s Spirit. Anticipating a time of tribulation as the Roman Catholic “Man of Sin” became manifest, they believed only Christ’s personal return to set up a millennial earthly reign with his resurrected saints could deal with such dilemmas.<sup>10</sup>

Optimistic postmillennial evangelicals continued their great foreign and domestic mission crusade, but during the century’s first four decades, more than one hundred important works concerning premillennialism, the blessed “advent hope,” appeared and slowly gained popularity. Prominent High Church members of the Oxford, or Tractarian, Movement shared the apocalyptic temperament that characterized a new radical generation of evangelicals in the Anglican Church, each group fearing secular, Erastian control of the established church. Against the threats of the times, Oxford Movement Tractarians turned to tradition, focusing on apostolic descent and the sacraments; but the radical third generation of Anglican Evangelicals pursued a course of narrow Calvinism, anti-rationalism, anti-Catholicism, biblical literalism, and premillennialism.<sup>11</sup>

Both David Bogue and Robert Haldane flatly opposed premillennialism. Bogue considered it an eccentric doctrine contrary to “the whole tenor” of Scripture. He marveled that anyone could believe that “the saints, whose souls are now in heaven, should . . . descend to live on earth again” and that Jesus would leave the throne of glory to establish an earthly kingdom. In his popular commentary on Romans, Robert Haldane echoed Bogue’s opinion:

The coming of the deliverer to Zion is not to be understood of any personal appearance. Jesus Christ has personally appeared once on earth, and he will appear the second time when he comes without sin, unto salvation. The Scriptures . . . speak in different ways

of his coming, though not in person . . . And at the appointed time he will come to Zion in his power by his Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Haldane brothers disapproved of prophetic speculation, in two significant ways they inadvertently contributed to its rise. First, Robert Haldane's 1819 treatise defending full plenary inspiration reflected his traditional Scottish high view of Scripture as well as his restorationist attitude that Christian unity could only come through reliance on biblical authority. Haldane's contention that one must accept the whole of Scripture as binding suited the purposes of literal interpreters of biblical prophecy. Second, having previously invested his fortune in Scottish domestic missions, Robert Haldane became actively involved after 1816 in European mission work, where his determined opposition to religious liberalism brought him into close contact with radical premillennialist evangelicals such as the eccentric, wealthy banker Henry Drummond.<sup>14</sup>

Haldane and Drummond were among many British evangelicals who viewed Europe as spiritually destitute, having suffered the effects of centuries of Catholic domination, the skepticism of the Enlightenment, the recent godlessness of the French Revolution, and most recently, Napoleon's tyranny. While vacationing in Geneva in 1816, Haldane engaged a number of theology students in a serious study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. He strongly defended Reformed Calvinist orthodoxy against the pernicious rationalism he perceived among Geneva's university faculty. Shortly after Haldane left, Drummond visited Geneva and influenced a number of Swiss evangelicals to leave the "impure" established church. After leaving Switzerland, Robert Haldane visited Reformed Protestant centers in France, and in 1819, he and Drummond organized the Continental Society to carry out European missionary activity.<sup>15</sup>

Upon his return to Britain, Robert Haldane was dismayed to learn that Bibles distributed on the Continent by the British and Foreign Bible Society contained the Apocrypha. Aided by leading Scottish evangelicals and radical Anglican evangelicals, Robert Haldane engaged in a long-running battle with the more moderate evangelicals in the British and Foreign Bible Society. For many millenarians, the Apocrypha controversy clearly proved how dangerously unsound most British evangelicals were regarding the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>16</sup> Robert Haldane's principal ally in London in this battle was his brother James's son, Alexander, who through the good offices of Henry Drummond, had become editor of the *Record*, a radical evangelical newspaper that achieved its first prominence during the Apocrypha controversy.<sup>17</sup>

In 1826 Alexander Haldane was one of a number of new-generation radical evangelicals whom Henry Drummond invited to a six-day conference at his Albury estate in Surrey, where the advancement of premillennialism was one of the main agenda items. The principal figure at Albury was the Scottish clergyman Edward Irving, popular minister of the Regent's Square Presbyterian chapel in London. Handsome, meteoric in his rise to popularity, drawn to the mysterious and exotic rather than the logical and rational, Irving personified Romanticism.

Prior to the conference at Albury, at the annual meeting of the Continental Society in 1825, in an impassioned speech Edward Irving had

announced his acceptance of premillennialism. He vividly described the general apostasy he perceived, in which Roman Catholicism and liberalism were increasing. Only Christ's coming, he maintained, would halt this godless juggernaut. Many of those assembled, in their eager anticipation of the conversion of the Jews, heard him gladly; others were stunned and dismayed.<sup>18</sup>

Irving had been influenced toward premillennialism by James Hatley Frere, an Anglican layman. Frere was glad to have the popular Irving take up his predictions of the imminent return of Christ in an extraordinary spiritual, not physical, presence. Irving's millenarian views took a more radical turn, however, when he discovered and personally translated *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. This work, written by a Chilean Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza, under the pseudonym of Ben Ezra, a converted Jew, convinced Irving that Christ would return in bodily form to establish an earthly millennial reign.<sup>19</sup>

The premillennialism that developed at the conferences held annually until 1830 at Albury differed from the earlier popular, revolutionary-era prophetic premillennialism of Richard Brothers or Joanna Southcott; claiming special messages from God, they focused on mending social injustice. Albury millenarianism, on the other hand, was genteel, Romantic, historicist, and biblicist. Participants were leading ministers and aristocratic laymen who published their ideas in theological pamphlets and special periodicals.<sup>20</sup> Irvingite premillennialists were "more adventist than millenarian"; the vision of Christ the King coming in glory appealed to the Romantic imagination. Stirred by the tumultuous social and political changes set in motion since the French Revolution, they painstakingly strove to fit the details of Bible prophecies concerning the "last days" to church history.

Robert Haldane did not attend the Albury conference, but his nephew Alexander's presence reflected the allegiance of those assembled to the views of scriptural inerrancy and canonicity expounded so ably by the elder Haldane. Edward Irving complained bitterly against the religious world's "spiritualis[ing] away" of prophecy, claiming that in so doing they had "shut up four-fifths, yea, nine-tenths of the sacred volume." Irving and his premillennialists, in their newspaper, the *Morning Watch*, lumped all postmillennialists with liberal interpreters of the Bible.<sup>21</sup>

Having brought premillennialism to prominence, Irving pursued an increasingly eccentric course. He took his lectures on prophecy home to Scotland in 1828, but although a number of prominent Scottish evangelicals joined the Irvingite circle in England, premillennialism did less well, overall, in Scotland than in England and Ireland. In the summer of 1830, however, reports reached London of the practice of charismatic gifts—healing and tongues—in certain Scottish communities. Irving himself never exercised charismatic gifts, but he welcomed them as an answer to his prayers for an outpouring of miraculous gifts signaling Christ's imminent return. It was Irving's musings about the human nature of Jesus Christ that finally alienated the evangelical community. Pondering the mystery of the incarnation, Irving, with characteristic originality and lack of discretion, stated that Christ had assumed fallen human nature, but was enabled to triumph over it by the outpouring of the Spirit.<sup>22</sup>

As early as 1829, James Haldane published a treatise rebuking Irving's error regarding the person of Christ; he also took exception to Irvingite charismatic manifestations.<sup>23</sup> Strong believers in the finality and completeness of God's revelation, the Haldanes had opposed the rationalism of eighteenth-century "natural religion," but they no less discountenanced mysticism and charismata. Controversial Irvingism wrecked the Continental Society. Opposed as they were to Irvingism, the Haldanes suffered some guilt by association. Although James Haldane's son Alexander readily dissociated his radical evangelical *Record* from the charismatic excesses of Irvingism, moderate evangelical newspapers gave the *Record* a taste of its own dogmatism by arbitrarily lumping the advocates of full plenary inspiration and reinvigorated Calvinism with Drummond, Irving, premillennialists, and charismatics.<sup>24</sup>

By 1833 Presbyterian officials deposed Irving on heresy charges; eight hundred members of his congregation followed him into the Catholic Apostolic Church that Henry Drummond and others established, a church in which Irving, ironically, was relegated to a rather minor role. Disgraced, but devotedly pursuing his calling, Irving died a broken man at age 42 in 1834. The Catholic Apostolic Church, increasingly focused on restorationist goals similar to those of the Oxford Tractarians, remained small and did not play a significant role among either millenarians or evangelicals.<sup>25</sup>

The historicist brand of premillennialism that Irving popularized ultimately influenced an offshoot of the Haldane evangelical connection, British Churches of Christ, frequently called Campbellites because of their admiration for Alexander Campbell's restorationist primitivism. Economic difficulties of the 1840s made this primarily lower-class group, susceptible to the teachings of American premillennialist William Miller. Their literal interpretation of Scripture, their recent origin and organizational instability, as well as their American connections, made them particularly vulnerable to Millerite premillennialism. Unlike the Albury premillennialists, who never specified a date for Christ's return to set up a personal earthly reign, Miller did so under pressure, choosing October 22, 1844. Alexander Campbell, as well as the British Campbellite leader, James Wallis, opposed belief in Miller's prediction, but many followed the teaching. British Millerite congregations declined after 1847, but in 1848 John Thomas attracted many adventists with Millerite views to his Christadelphian sect.<sup>26</sup>

A second, futurist and dispensational, type of premillennialism arose in the early nineteenth century with connections both to Irvingite historicist premillennialism and to the Haldanes. In the latter 1820s, in Dublin, London, and Plymouth, a group simply called Brethren, convinced of the worldliness of church establishments, met for evangelical fellowship. They closely resembled Haldanean churches in their separatist bent and their belief in scriptural inerrancy. The Haldane connection's example of autonomous congregations, lay participation, and aggressive evangelism inspired them.<sup>27</sup>

Literally interpreting Bible prophecy, one Brethren leader J. N. Darby, an Irish ex-clergyman originally trained as a lawyer, formulated a futurist dispensational premillennialism. In 1831, Darby attended a conference in Ireland that resembled those held at Albury. Lady Theodosia Powerscourt, an attractive young widow with connections to Henry Drummond and Edward

Irving, hosted the conference. Unlike the Albury conferences, those at the Powerscourt estate eschewed tongue-speaking and special miraculous gifts of the Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

Futurism was not original with Darby. Manuel Lacunza's *Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, which Edward Irving translated, was typical of Roman Catholic efforts to deflect Protestant charges that the pope was the Antichrist by proving that all events related to the Antichrist were in the future. Furthermore, Samuel R. Maitland's 1826 book, attempting to undermine millenarianism, had unintentionally introduced a millenarian alternative by forcefully advocating a futurist interpretation of biblical prophecy. Holding that prophecies depicted, not the course of human history, but great events in the future, futurist premillennialists were not bound to a prophetic timetable related to actual historical events.<sup>29</sup>

Through Darby's influence the Brethren's premillennialism soon became dispensational, that is, it divided biblical and subsequent history into distinct periods of divine dealings with humankind. Many nineteenth-century religious thinkers, including Alexander Campbell, took a dispensational approach to interpreting Scripture; but Darby's particular brand of dispensationalism emphasized his separatist and premillennial views. He believed God had two mutually exclusive plans: one for his earthly commonwealth, Israel, and another for his heavenly kingdom, the church. In order for God to fulfill his prophecies concerning Israel, He would remove, or rapture, the church, His mystic body, from the earth.<sup>30</sup>

The secret pretribulational rapture, Darby's most distinctive and controversial idea, taught a two-part Second Coming. First, Christ would come in bodily form to rescue His saints from a world headed for tribulation; then He would return with the saints to rule over the earth following the time of great distress. Also called "the doctrine of the any-moment coming," Darby's secret rapture was always imminent, and the unfolding of all unfulfilled biblical prophecy waited upon it. Darby's separatist dissatisfaction with worldly church establishments and his desire for a pure church led him to a millennial vision which would literally remove the church from the world.<sup>31</sup>

Darbyite dispensational premillennialism was highly complex; scriptural objections to one aspect of Darby's premillennial teaching—the secret rapture—brought division among the Brethren in the 1840s. Meanwhile issues concerning standards of fellowship resulted in two distinct groups of Brethren: one withdrawn, authoritarian, and exclusive; the other, called the Open Brethren, vigorously involved in positive missionary activity.<sup>32</sup>

By mid-nineteenth century, optimistic British evangelical postmillennialism had peaked; and premillennialism, especially the sentimental Romantic adventist hope, was widespread. The Irvingite movement had popularized premillennialism among many who rejected miraculous gifts and tongue-speaking. A preponderance of Church of England clergy held some sort of premillennial view. One of the most respected evangelicals of the nineteenth century, Edward Bickersteth, became interested in millenarian ideas in 1832 and thereafter actively propagated the idea, notably converting his influential friend, the earl of Shaftesbury.<sup>33</sup>

Many pessimistic premillennialists, both historicist and futurist, did

not believe that the gospel could save a world growing more and more evil and ripe for judgment. J. N. Darby echoed Edward Irving when he stated that “the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment . . . is delusive.” The Alburyites were pessimistic not only about liberalism and Roman Catholicism, but about evangelical missionary and Bible societies as well. Irving preached against human organizations planning and organizing mission activities, arguing that missionaries should rely on God alone.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars have argued that the shift toward premillennialism dampened missionary ardor and effectiveness. Premillennialists continued to support missions, but not because they confidently expected to conquer the world for Christ. They did so to hasten His return since they were convinced that the gospel must first be at least preached throughout the world as a witness before the end came. Confident of victory, postmillennialists had invested in establishing institutions, such as schools and orphanages, that would yield long-term benefits on the mission field. Premillennialists, on the other hand, tended toward a short-term focus on individual converts; they lost the energizing hope that fired postmillennialist missions. But notable premillennialists such as Edward Bickersteth and the Earl of Shaftesbury belie such criticism with their vigorous evangelically motivated actions.<sup>35</sup>

Although their restorationist separatism and defense of scriptural inerrancy appealed to Romantic Irvingite and Darbyite premillennialists, the Scottish Haldane brothers remained rooted in Enlightenment-era postmillennialism. Expatriate in London, Alexander Haldane was part of English radical evangelicalism, but the elder Haldanes maintained the postmillennial focus of an earlier evangelical generation. Certainly they must have been discouraged by the disintegration of their Congregational evangelical connection and their minority status thereafter as Baptists in Scotland. Toward the close of his life, Robert Haldane concluded that the efforts he and his brother put forth to “restore apostolic Churches and primitive Christianity,” whether due to personal unworthiness or whatever cause, had failed. Reflecting a concern for the church universal that was typical of the period, he pondered: “The truth seems to be, that the Church is in the wilderness, and until the Lord choose in his own good time to bring her out of it, I believe the attempt will be in vain.” Each brother labored on, however, to the end of his life, maintaining a curious balance of restorationism and evangelicalism and cultivating ties with conservative evangelicals in continued efforts to spread the gospel and expand Christ’s spiritual kingdom on earth.<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Lynn A. McMillon, *Restoration Roots* (Dallas, Tex.: Gospel Teachers Publications, 1983), 81-85.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Co., 1897; reprint, Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Co., 1956), 551; Camille K. Dean, “Restorationists or Evangelicals? The Careers of Robert and James Alexander Haldane in Political and Cultural Perspective” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 1999), 184-99.

<sup>3</sup>Dean, 188-90; David W. Bebbington, *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988), 1-47, distinguishes "Scotch Baptists," who appeared in the 1760s and were heavily influenced by the independency and restorationism of John Glas and Robert Sandeman, from the larger "Scottish Baptist" tradition of which the Haldanes and so-called "English" Baptist Churches in Scotland later became a part.

<sup>4</sup>Dean, 201-5, 210-12, 215-22; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 75-77, 87-90. Bebbington, as well as Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 28-30, and Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828-1860* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 15, link Robert Haldane to the intellectual milieu of Romantic premillennialism.

<sup>5</sup>Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 142-53. Murray cites premillennial references in the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Westminster Assembly's Larger Catechism.

<sup>6</sup>N. R. Needham, s. v. "Millennialism," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993). Needham notes that not all evangelicals embraced millennialism, notably Philip Doddridge and the Baptist John Sutcliff. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 62, cites Erskine's reaction in *The Signs of the Times Consider'd* (1742) to the revival at Cambuslang.

<sup>7</sup>Dean, 61-65, 82-87; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 42-62, 82-83.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans; with Remarks on the Commentaries of Dr. Macknight, Professor Moses Stuart, and Professor Tholuck*, 5th Edinburgh edition (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1849), 542, 546, 553-54.

<sup>9</sup>Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 14, 23-25; Lovegrove, "English Evangelical Dissent and the European Conflict 1789-1815," in *The Church and War*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1983), 263-64, 268-69.

<sup>10</sup>Ian S. Rennie, "Evangelicalism and English Public Life, 1823-1850" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1963), 53-56; David N. Hempton, "Evangelism and Eschatology," *Journal of European History* 31 (1980), 183-84.

<sup>11</sup>Hempton, 182-83, cites L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, iii. 266; W. H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland University Press, 1978), 142-49. Hempton lists G. S. Faber's *Dissertations on the Prophecies* (1806); William Cuninghame's *Dissertations on the Seals and Trumpets* (1813); and J. H. Frere's *Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras and St John* (1815) as seminal prophetic works.

<sup>12</sup>Murray, 187.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Haldane, *Exposition*, 555.

<sup>14</sup>Bebbington, *Baptists*, 43, states that Robert Haldane's *The Evidences and Authority of Divine Revelation* (1816, enl. 1834) was "the first work to deduce from a high doctrine of inspiration the infallibility of the scriptures and it is the source of the modern Evangelical belief in verbal inspiration."

<sup>15</sup>Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of his Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (2d ed., enl. London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1852), 415-35, 466-76, 484-86; Kenneth J. Stewart, "Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the 'Reveil' at Geneva 1816-1849" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1991), 2, 137-63; Deryck W. Lovegrove, "The Voice of Reproach and Outrage: The Impact of Robert Haldane on French-Speaking Protestantism," in D. W. D. Shaw, ed. *In Divers Manners* (Edinburgh, 1990), 73-83. Stewart questions Robert Haldane's allegation of Genevan apostasy and disputes Lovegrove's portrayal of Haldane's pivotal role in Continental evangelical revival.

<sup>16</sup>Hempton, 187, cites the Irvingite *Morning Watch*, ii, 143.

<sup>17</sup>Ian S. Rennie, s.v. "Haldane, Alexander" in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, vol. 1, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Josef L. Altholz, "Alexander Haldane, The Record, and Religious Journalism," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 20, no. 1 (spring 1987): 24-25.

<sup>18</sup>Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 82-83, notes that in 1809, Lewis Way led in establishing the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. In the society's journal, *The Jewish Expositor*, between 1820-1822, Way published his views linking the conversion of the Jews to the imminent personal return of Jesus. Convinced by Way, in 1823 Henry Drummond became Vice-President of the Jews' Society.

<sup>19</sup>Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 16-19; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 81-83. Irving's address before the Continental Society was published in 1826 as *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*. Lacunza's treatise, completed about 1791, appeared in Spanish by 1812 and in Irving's English translation in 1827.

<sup>20</sup>Hempton, 181-82; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1963; Vintage Books, 1966), 117-19, 382-89.

<sup>21</sup>Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 83-85; Hempton, 187, cites *Morning Watch*, ii, 143.

<sup>22</sup>Sandeen, 25-27; N. R. Needham, s.v. "Irving, Edward," *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron. Noting that Irving's was "the first Scottish millenarian voice" besides that of William Cuninghame, Sandeen observes the absence in the 1830s and early 1840s of any Scottish prophetic journal although the Edinburgh Association for Promoting the Study and Illustration of Prophetic Scripture began in 1841.

<sup>23</sup>See J. A. Haldane, *Refutation of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving, respecting the Person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1829). Deryck W. Lovegrove, "Unity and Separation:

Contrasting Elements in the Thought and Practice of Robert and James Alexander Haldane, “ in *Studies in Church History*, Subsidia 7, ed. Keith Robbins (Oxford, 1990), 175-76, notes James Haldane’s disapproval in *The Signs of the Times Considered; with the Duty of Preparation for the Approaching Crisis; being the Substance of Five Discourses* (Edinburgh, 1832) of Irvingite tongue-speaking.

<sup>24</sup>Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 83-84; Ian S. Rennie, “Evangelicalism and English Public Life,” 71, 85. Bebbington notes that Alexander Haldane left the millennial question open on the pages of the *Record*, joining his close friend, Lord Shaftesbury, in cherishing the adventist hope.

<sup>25</sup>Columba Graham Flegg, “*Gathered Under Apostles*”: *A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 55-58.

<sup>26</sup>Timothy P. Weber, “Premillennialism and the Branches of Evangelicalism,” in *Varieties of American Evangelicalism*, ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 7-8; Sandeen, 22; Louis Billington, “The Churches of Christ in Britain: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Sectarianism,” *Journal of Religious History* 8 (1974), 24-25. Billington observes that the Millerite *Gospel Banner* challenged the authority of Wallis’s *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, but by 1853 many Campbellite congregations had begun to recover from adventist schisms. See also Billington, “The Millerite Adventists in Great Britain, 1840-50,” *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 1, Oct. 1967, 191-212.

<sup>27</sup>Harold H. Rowdon, “The Brethren,” in *The History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (rev. ed. Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1990), 526-27.

<sup>28</sup>Sandeen, 34-35.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 36-37; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 85-86. Bebbington states that Alburyites studied Maitland’s theory and that the Catholic Apostolic Church modified their historicism, adopting a moderate futurist view that many events predicted in Revelation were yet to occur.

<sup>30</sup>Sandeen, 68-69; Weber, 8-9.

<sup>31</sup>Weber, 8-9; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 85; Sandeen, 65-66; Rowdon, 526-27. Weber notes that scholars still debate the source of Darby’s doctrine of pretribulational rapture.

<sup>32</sup>Hempton, 186, observes that Darbyite dispensational premillennialism, popularized by the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), eventually eclipsed both postmillennialism and historicist premillennialism, becoming widely influential among evangelicals in the twentieth century.

<sup>33</sup>Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 85; Hempton, 192-93; Murray, 196-97.

<sup>34</sup>Sandeen, 39-40; Murray, 186; Hempton, 187-88.

<sup>35</sup>Weber, 16; Murray, 178-80.

<sup>36</sup>A. Haldane, *Lives*, 628-29. See Dean, 205-218, regarding letters to his son Alexander that show James Haldane’s continued commitment to restorationist ideas; Robert Haldane’s correspondence with Church of Scotland leader Thomas Chalmers; and information about the Haldanes’ criticism of Scottish dissenters’ opposition to paying the annuity tax that supported the established clergy.

# **Campbell and Postmillennialism: The Kingdoms of God**

*Mark G. Toulouse\**

Few Disciples today, if asked to outline the beliefs shaping early Disciples identity, would talk much about eschatology. Few Disciples historians and theologians have examined this theme in any detail. There has been, however, a recent interest in the eschatological beliefs of the earliest Disciples.<sup>1</sup> My reading in early Disciples sources has convinced me that the “eschatological principle” influenced primary Disciples identity as much as any one of the three principles that are better known among Disciples: restoration, freedom of biblical interpretation, and ecumenism.<sup>2</sup> This ultimate concern is illustrated by how Campbell named his journal, a title he chose “because of [the journal’s] devotion to the principles which all christendom admits must spread before the millennium commence and triumph in that happy period.”<sup>3</sup>

What is the “eschatological principle?” As the church has used the word “eschatological” it has traditionally meant the “doctrine of last things.” Campbell wrote at length about “last things,” including such themes as prophecy, the millennium, and the “everlasting kingdom of God.” But a better overarching definition for this eschatological principle as it operated for Campbell might more truly be “God with us,” for this is how Campbell understood the Christian hope he described. His vision of the last things was proleptic (the kingdom of God is both “already and not yet” - the church lives in the present “as if” the kingdom has come in all its fullness, even though the fullness of the kingdom is beyond time). It arose from an understanding of God’s activity in history, from creation forward. To speak of “last things” one also has to tell the story of “first things.” Campbell approached eschatology from this perspective.

Eschatology forms and affects the movement’s early theology. This eschatological principle emphasized the saving work of Christ, and, as a result, nourished the Disciples decidedly christocentric character. Its focus was on the past, present, and future of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. Disciples commitment to it shaped their understanding of what it meant to be Christian and to believe in a God who intervened in history on their behalf.

## **Contextual Considerations**

### ***Millennialism in its Varied Forms***

In nineteenth-century America, millennialism came in many flavors. Unlike today, most all Christians had a deep and abiding interest in millennialism. They often discussed their likes and dislikes, especially when someone showed up with a flavor they did not like. The major arguments stemmed from just how to interpret the book of Revelation, especially what to

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do with Revelation 20:4-6:

Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years. (NRSV)

The church described this “thousand year” reign as the millennium. The problem various interpreters had, however, was reaching agreement about its nature, location, the time it was to take place, and the relation of Christ’s return to it. Would Christ reign literally or spiritually? Would the millennium be in heaven or on earth? Would Christ return before or after the millennium? Did Christ’s resurrection inaugurate the millennium or is it yet to come? Is the first resurrection actually a physical resurrection or a spiritual one? These questions divided the nineteenth-century church. Disciples entered the fray with great enthusiasm.

The term “premillennialist” has usually been reserved for those who take the view that Christ will inaugurate the millennium with his literal second-coming. Though there are different versions of premillennialism, most adherents in nineteenth-century America believed the saints would be physically resurrected and reign with Christ during the millennium. Though there were different definitions of the millennium, all premillennialists held in common the belief that Christ’s literal return would precede the millennium.

In general, premillennialists have been very pessimistic about the future. They describe the unfolding of history as if it were downward spiral. In the view of the premillennialist, things went bad with the fall of Adam and Eve and have only gotten worse since. There will come a time when God will simply get fed up with all the evil and sin and say “that’s enough.” At that point, Christ will return and put an end to human foolishness. This view had many defenders in the nineteenth century. A good number of Disciples, including Barton Stone and Walter Scott were attracted to it.

By far the most popular view of the millennium among evangelical Christians in nineteenth-century America was the one known as “postmillennialism.” The name originates from the belief that Christ would return at the end of the millennium rather than at its beginning. A few early American puritans, notably John Cotton and Jonathan Edwards defended a postmillennialist view. Its most influential advocates arose in the eighteenth century outside of America. These included Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), of Salisbury Cathedral, and Dutch scholar Campegius Vitringa (1659-1722). Alexander Campbell mentioned both men favorably in his writings.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike premillennialism, postmillennialism usually exhibits a profound optimism about the spread of the gospel and the success of the evangelistic mission of Christianity. Defenders of the view have asserted that the success of the church would usher in the millennium without need of any supernatural event. In their understanding, the millennium is a historical period characterized by religious peace and spiritual fulfillment. Most nineteenth-century scholarly postmillennialists emphasized that the millennium resulted from the grace of

God rather than the action of human beings. But the view has always had a high regard for the potential success of human efforts and, in some circles, for the effects the gospel could have on the social sphere. In the American setting, popular postmillennialism often placed great emphasis on the ability of human efforts to bring in the millennium. In some corners, including among the Disciples, it became attached to America's efforts to civilize and democratize the rest of the world.

The context of the early nineteenth century in America was especially suited to millennial enthusiasm. For many of the citizens of the new nation, innocent and free, the kingdom of God seemed very near.<sup>5</sup> The Second Great Awakening reaped a mighty harvest of new religious movements, among them the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Millerites. The first two of these movements attracted some early Disciples. The Shakers made serious inroads among Barton Stone's Christian movement while the Mormons snatched the more radical among early Disciples leadership. These defections might have had a moderating affect on early Disciples millennialism.<sup>6</sup> The Millerites are another story. In the beginning, they were a movement existing within a number of different denominations. Their consolidation into the Seventh-Day Adventists came later. Most of the Disciples attracted by the Millerites remained with the Disciples. The Millerite movement provided a backdrop for many of the eschatological conversations among early Disciples, especially during the 1830s and 1840s.

### *The Millerite Movement and Disciples*

A farmer in Low Hampton, New York named William Miller was converted in 1816, at the height of revivalistic excitement. He joined the Baptist church and immediately began to take account of the book of Revelation. After a number of years, he began to publish his calculations concerning the return of Christ. Miller became confident that Christ would return in the early 1840s, eventually settling on sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When the latter date came and went, Miller, with the help of biblical exegesis among his followers, made an adjustment to a final date of October 22, 1844.

Miller's musings were published in book form in 1836. Campbell, who wrote often of Miller, could not help but chuckle about Miller's concern for "copy-right" covering his written material:

I know it is difficult for those who believe the theory to act in a manner consistent with it.

Even Mr. Miller himself... has secured the copy-right of his book for some ten years after the end of the world, as if such a right could secure it against the general conflagration!<sup>7</sup>

At its most successful point, Miller's movement claimed some "50,000 convinced believers and there may have been as many as a million others who were skeptically expectant."<sup>8</sup> Some Disciples were found in both camps, those "convinced" and those "skeptically expectant."

Premillennial enthusiasm among some Disciples ran high well before the popularity of the Millerite predictions. Most Christians shared the belief that the age of the world was nearing 6000 years. Premillennialists attached to this the belief that the second coming was most likely near. Regardless of how Christians viewed the relationship between the second coming and the

millennium, many agreed that the millennium itself represented the Sabbath (the seventh and final thousand year period of human history). Campbell did not dispute, except in some minor details, the mathematical calculations (dates, etc.) used by the premillennialists. But he did not believe their “certainty” about them was justified. Nor did he share their “literal” understanding of the events that were to transpire. Campbell preferred “figurative” or “spiritual” interpretations.<sup>9</sup>

Campbell hated the pessimism associated with premillennialism, especially respecting its “paralysing influence” upon Christian motivation for evangelizing the world.<sup>10</sup>

To be convinced of it we have only to observe the conduct of those who are now looking for the immediate personal return of the Lord before the extension of his kingdom, and compare it with that of those who expect it after the Millennium. The former have almost, and they ought to have altogether, abandoned all effort and prayer for the conversion of the Jew and the Greek . . . In 1843 the day of judgment commences, and conversion ceases; and why should they who believe this engage in sending the gospel to foreign lands, or in translating the scriptures into foreign languages, or in any great enterprize [sic] that looks beyond a period so nigh - just at the door. . . .<sup>11</sup>

This is a theme Campbell sounded throughout the Millerite movement’s influence among Disciples. He also criticized last-minute evangelism. “Penitence superinduced by affliction, and repentance originating on a death-bed, have long since been of doubtful reputation,” he wrote. “Panic fears and impulses are not the eloquence of Christ’s gospel.” Converts won in this way, he argued, would only relapse once the “disappointment” occurs.<sup>12</sup>

With respect to millennialism during these years, Walter Scott defended a position Campbell regularly repudiated in his own journal. The *Evangelist* had been decidedly premillennial since at least the mid-1830s. In a series of articles, Scott laid out his understanding of the literal second coming at the beginning of the millennium.<sup>13</sup> By 1840, Scott began to lay hold of Millerite ideas concerning the immediate return of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Over the next few years, he came to understand Miller’s perspective as “the hope of the gospel” which “neither you nor I nor any other christian can reject.”<sup>15</sup> Campbell expressed shock “that any one should, under the plea of preaching the one hope of the Christian, plead for the proclamation of ‘the second advent near,’ as that one hope.”<sup>16</sup> By the end of 1842, Scott chided the Disciples for their “ignorance of the prophetic word, of which this great and flourishing reformation has just caused [sic] to be ashamed.”<sup>17</sup>

Alexander Campbell began taking notice of Miller as early as 1840. He described him as “more imaginative than learned in prophecy.”<sup>18</sup> On several occasions, he published extracts from Miller’s writings. Though he had high regard for Miller as a “good and exemplary Christian,” he had “no sympathy for [the] theory.” He believed it to be “an incalculable mischief to the cause of a suffering and degraded Christianity.”<sup>19</sup> Believing the theory to lack scriptural warrant, Campbell concluded, “I have never met with so much confidence, supported by so little reason and evidence, on a subject of so much importance, of such mighty magnitude, as I have witnessed in Mr. Miller and his party on the whole subject of the coming of the Lord and the things that are to follow.”<sup>20</sup> The fact that a number of Disciples, “some of our more intelligent and influential brethren,”<sup>21</sup> were favorably disposed to the Millerite theory bothered

Campbell considerably. In February 1843, just one month before Miller's twelve-month period marking the end of the world, Campbell expressed his concern about what might happen to Disciples if they continued in their Millerite enthusiasm:

I advise all of our brethren to be always ready to die any day, and every day; but I caution them against suffering themselves to be greatly excited about the end of the world in 1843. I do this with a great respect to those who differ from me; but I do it because of the injury which might accrue to a cause dear to us by every tie of sympathy and humanity, whose influence and success cannot but be injured by suffering themselves to become enthusiasts in a cause plead [sic] by a class of individuals no way distinguished for learning, Christian intelligence, or good sense in the Christian or current acceptance of these words.<sup>22</sup>

By 1856, Campbell became much more explicit in his description of the Millerites, calling them "Bastard Millennarians."<sup>23</sup>

Between 1830 and 1860, Campbell wrote enough material in the *Millennial Harbinger* related to prophecy, providence, the future life, the second coming, and the millennium to fill two very large books. He believed strongly in the importance of these topics for Christian faith. As a result, he proved an able defender of postmillennialism. His version of it had a decidedly Disciples twist to it, especially as he defined his understanding of the "kingdom of heaven." If today's Disciples are to understand the importance of this eschatological principle for early Disciples identity, both in terms of its benefits and deficiencies, they have to start with an analysis of Campbell's postmillennialism.

## **Campbell's Postmillennialism**

### ***The Millennium***

Campbell approached the topic of the millennium boldly in terms of interpretation, but with some caution in terms of dogmatism. Above all, he acknowledged that the book of Revelation, with all its allusions and symbols, posed a great difficulty for any would be interpreter of its pages. "The finite never can comprehend the infinite," he wrote.<sup>24</sup> But he never doubted that the millennium would come, and most likely that it would come soon. He did his best to figure out the dates historically, trying to build his own chronology for when Christians might expect the millennium to begin. As he did so, he talked of the "probable evidence, and probable evidence not of the superlative degree." In his 1829 debate with Robert Owen, he fixed the date for the "cleansing of the sanctuary" for sometime around 1847 (just four years later than the date chosen by William Miller).<sup>25</sup> This phrase came from Daniel 8:14, a passage of scripture used by most interpreters as a key to unlocking the future date of the Christian millennium. The difference between Campbell and Miller in their dating methods was only minimal; but they had considerable difference between them in how they understood the phrase "cleansing of the sanctuary."

Miller connected it with the second coming of Christ, at which time the earth was to be purified by fire or some other way. He therefore understood "the sanctuary" to represent the earth. Campbell believed it to be symbolic for the church.<sup>26</sup> In his debate with Owen, and throughout his writings about the subject in the 1840s *Harbinger*, he expressed his belief that the purification of the church would begin soon, if it had not already begun with the restoration of the ancient gospel. The first issue of the *Harbinger* claimed the sects were

“all too narrow and too weak” for the founding of the “Millennial Church.” “There is now . . . the Ancient Gospel, which is long enough, broad enough, strong enough for the whole superstructure called the Millennial Church - and that it will alone be the instrument of converting the whole human race, and of uniting all christians upon one and the same foundation.”<sup>27</sup> Campbell clearly connected the successful restoration of the church to his hope that the millennium might begin soon. This connection between looking back and looking forward is consistent throughout his writings on the subject.<sup>28</sup>

Campbell’s “purification of the church from all the defilements of the grand apostacy,” besides being intimately connected with the ancient gospel, contained a strong note of anti-Catholicism.<sup>29</sup> He believed the “little horn” of Daniel 7:20 referred to the papacy and was bound for destruction. He interpreted passages from Revelation 13:12-18 to refer to the papacy and directly connected it “and all clerical dynasties, Protestant and Papistical” with the antichrist.<sup>30</sup> This anti-Catholic note accompanied most Protestant interpretation of the book of Revelation, regardless of the views of how the millennium would begin.<sup>31</sup>

The millennial purification of the church would destroy all human governments along with four great evils: “Mahometanism, Papalism, Paganism, and Atheism.” Campbell defined “papalism” to include “sectarianism of every type,” those movements concerned with the question “Who is infallibly right?”<sup>32</sup> One of Campbell’s problems with premillennialism stemmed from his dedication to the idea that these rivals had to be defeated within history (before Christ physically came again), rather than beyond it. Otherwise, they, rather than Christ, would win the battle of the kingdoms in history. Campbell also looked for the complete conversion of the Jews within history, based upon his reading of Paul. In short, the historical triumph of Christianity must precede the physical second coming of Christ.<sup>33</sup>

Campbell approached the scriptures surrounding the millennium with an odd mixture of literal and figurative interpretations (these are the terms used by the writers of the time). The first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20 was figurative rather than literal, and signified the revival of the martyrs’ spirit within the church. But the thousand years was literal, rather than a figurative period symbolic of the triumph of God’s justice. He believed it to be a literal period to conclude history and that it would be preceded by the literal triumph of the church (aided by the Holy Spirit) over its enemies.<sup>34</sup>

Campbell’s understanding of the millennium provided him nearly an unmitigated optimistic view of history. He expected God’s ultimate purposes for history to be fulfilled historically. The millennium would be a time of unparalleled human happiness accompanied by the reign of absolute divine justice. Accompanying these views, Campbell shared with other Protestants in America a “faith in progress” and an overarching confidence in American institutions as the instruments of civilization and culture for the rest of the world. Even on the eve of the Civil War, Campbell could wax eloquent about “the great fact that this world is but as it were awaking from sleep - emerging from superstitions and barbarisms of all sorts.”<sup>35</sup> Both the early Campbell and the more mature Campbell could speak confidently and uncritically once and awhile about the role of America in leading the “nations and tribes” to truth.

Occasionally, he folded his cultural parochialism in with his millennialism and produced a rather strong dose of ethnocentrism. He was not above mixing in a tad of racism as well.<sup>36</sup>

Richard Hughes has argued that there was a shift in Campbell toward a consistent national form of millennialism in his later years. I do not see it any more evident there than it is in his earlier years, and it is never the dominant characteristic of his millennialism, but rather resides as an occasional and limited, but nonetheless real, part of it throughout his life.<sup>37</sup> Campbell understood the millennium to be associated with the renewal of the church, not of existing governments. He consistently stated his belief that none of the world's nations "can become a kingdom of Jesus Christ until all kingdoms become his."<sup>38</sup> The millennium would transform all existing governments; therefore, he tended to place no ultimate value upon existing governing institutions, nor did he express much interest in undertaking their reform. Writing in his *Christian System*, Campbell expressed the sentiment that, since Pentecost, "the governments of this world have either been directly opposed to [the kingdom], or, at best, pretended friends; and therefore their influence has always been opposed to the true spirit and genius of the Christian institution."<sup>39</sup> Though Campbell naively believed in human progress, and occasionally stated his optimism that America would contribute meaningfully to that process, his theological view of the kingdom of God did not allow him easily to combine nationalism, racism, and the millennium as a consistent expression of his eschatological views.

Few Disciples today would affirm Campbell's belief in a literal millennium, and fewer still would share his anti-Catholic and other culture-bound views of the end times. Campbell's experience instructs us that faith is never immune to the influences of the culture that surrounds it. Christians of all times need critically to discover ways to develop tension between faith and culture. Campbell's eschatological principle did lead to important theological insights that enabled a measure of self-transcendence for early Disciples in their relation to culture. It is at these points that his eschatological views are especially important for today's Disciples.

### ***Prophecy and Eschatology as the History of God's Salvation***

Alexander Campbell approached his interpretation of the millennium with a broader angle of vision than many other interpreters did. The key to understanding prophecy for Campbell rested in placing all prophecy and eschatology first in the context of God's saving acts in history. He concerned himself with unwrapping this salvation history in a way that would reveal the true character of both the millennium and the eternity to follow it.

Instead of beginning and ending with the Apocalypse, we begin at the beginning of the book of creation, providence, and moral government [by which Campbell meant the events recorded within the Old Testament]. We proceed to that of redemption [the New Testament] and treat the subject *historically*...<sup>40</sup>

Campbell shared with the Reformed tradition this theological confidence that a sovereign God guided all of history toward some particular end, from the very beginning of creation to the dawning of the eschaton. This God stands above history (the transcendence of God), but is not unconcerned with it. God acts

within and through history (the immanence of God) to bring salvation to humanity and to mold human history in the direction of the kingdom of God.

Throughout his lifetime of writing on these themes, Campbell remained consistently historical in perspective. He valued history and the church's record of God's activity within it. This historical consciousness formed the very heart of his eschatological understanding, and it gave him, and the mainstream of Disciples life after him, a commitment to the dynamic, rather than static, construction of human existence.<sup>41</sup> Human history is going somewhere. It is not standing still. God has an ultimate purpose yet to be worked out. The kingdom of God has broken in; the world is being changed. God is working unceasingly to bring human history to the divine conclusion planned for it since before creation. As Campbell put it: "Before he had laid the corner stone of the material universe, or pronounced the first fiat, the end - the development and the consummation of it, were stereotyped in his Omniscient mind."<sup>42</sup> God has willed it and it will be done.

Campbell's understanding of the different dispensations of history arose from his eschatological perspective. He broke history into different dispensational segments (Patriarchal, Jewish, Christian) and these indicated just how God "dispensed" salvation during those times. These dispensations revealed the "sacred history" of God's salvation.<sup>43</sup> He began with Genesis and, in series after series of articles, carefully moved through Revelation, covering, according to him, "the route which sacred history takes; and this, so far, is the best hint we can give to those who have patience to search devoutly and intensely for the coming glories of Messiah's reign."<sup>44</sup> All these stories, in his view, pointed forward to the ultimate instrument of God's salvation, Christ. In order to understand more thoroughly how this eschatological principle helped to keep the early Disciples on a christological center, and to understand how this christocentrism ultimately pointed back to God, we need to review briefly Campbell's understanding of the kingdoms (note the plural) of God.

### ***The Kingdoms of God***

Perhaps there is no element of Alexander Campbell's theology that is more misunderstood than his beliefs related to the kingdom of God. On the one hand it is true to say that "Campbell viewed the kingdom of God as a constitutional monarchy in the here and now and, for all practical purposes, equated the kingdom and the church."<sup>45</sup> But one has to say more because Campbell said a great deal more. Which kingdom are we talking about here? For, on the other hand, and, more important as an element within Campbell's theology, there was another kingdom, a transcendent eschatological kingdom of God that would replace this temporal "constitutional monarchy." This latter kingdom, in Campbell's theology, was one without beginning and without end, where God reigned forever and ever. This reign of God stood before creation and God plans for it to extend beyond creation. But before that purpose could be accomplished, God had to make contingency plans. The sins of humanity made those plans necessary.

Campbell generally talked of three kingdoms. But when his eschatological theology is considered as a whole, he referred to a fourth kingdom as well. Three of these four kingdoms are present within and

subservient to the fourth kingdom, the transcendent kingdom of God, though citizens of one are not necessarily citizens of any other.

### **The Kingdom of Nature**

Campbell occasionally wrote about a kingdom of nature. By this term, he meant God's reign over creation into which all creatures are naturally born. God is the "benevolent Creator." In Eden, human beings sinned. This sin against the Creator left the human race without hope. But God had a remedy. God warned the serpent that the last word belonged to God. This promise, claimed Campbell, opened "a large but yet undefined area of hope." It guaranteed a final triumph. Even during the times before God's covenant with Abraham, and before the giving of the law at Sinai, God expressed the divine purpose to redeem creation and to address what sin had done in the world.

The kingdom of nature was a divine kingdom, not simply a natural one. God reigned over the kingdom of nature through God's Word. Through human sin, the kingdom was usurped by Satan. God reclaimed it through Christ. Even before the birth of Christ, God handed over the kingdom of this earth to the Word because Christ was the key to its redemption.<sup>46</sup> For Campbell, the kingdom of nature existed, therefore, from creation. Into this kingdom, all human beings are born and, because of their sin, this kingdom will exist as a separate kingdom until the end of history. This kingdom of nature illustrates the sovereignty of God and of Christ over all creation, past - present - future, even where human beings within creation do not recognize their relationship to the benevolent Creator.

### **The Kingdom of God (also known as: the First Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Law)**

During the Patriarchal dispensation (Genesis 1 through Exodus 19) the kingdom of nature existed by itself. With the beginning of the Jewish dispensation (Exodus 20 through Acts 1), God offered the Jewish people a new kingdom, "the kingdom of God," because "God was in a peculiar sense their King." This kingdom is often referred to as the "first kingdom" because it was the first kingdom of salvation history, occasioned by the sin of humanity after creation. In his book, *Christian System*, one can find Campbell's references to both the Jewish "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of nature" as kingdoms of flesh, kingdoms into which one is naturally born. From the time of the Exodus and the giving of the law at Sinai, all Jews were born into "the kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of law." Everyone else was born into the "kingdom of nature," including those Jews born before this "first" kingdom of God was established over Israel. But because God chose the Jews, he became their king in a special way, establishing the kingdom of God over them.<sup>47</sup> God condescended "to appear in the character of King of the Jews, and to make them a kingdom of God, as preparatory to the appearance of his Son, who is predestined to be the king of the whole earth, and to have a kingdom which shall ultimately embrace all the nations of the world."<sup>48</sup>

## **The Kingdom of Heaven (also known as: the Second Kingdom, the Kingdom of Christ and God, the Kingdom of Favor - or Grace)**

The kingdom of God among the Jews, as Campbell interpreted it, continued some 1500 years, from the time of Sinai to the time of Pentecost (Exodus 20 - Acts 1). And then it ended. The Jewish dispensation ended as suddenly as it began, in a day. The Disciples emphasis on Pentecost has been one of the hallmarks of Disciples tradition and heritage. For Campbell, it was at Pentecost that Christ was made "Lord of all for the sake of that community of ransomed humanity called his church, or kingdom."<sup>49</sup> Not only did the church historically enter the world at Pentecost, the reign of the kingdom of heaven began at that time as well. "For our part," wrote Campbell, "we must believe that the Kingdom of heaven began, or the Reign of Heaven literally and truly commenced, in one day." At Pentecost, Christians were "saved from their sins," and "received a kingdom which cannot be shaken or removed."<sup>50</sup>

Pentecost, then, launched two great happenings: the birth of the church and the arrival of the kingdom of Heaven (Campbell's preferred name for this kingdom). This is why some historians have confused the two in Campbell's thought. The relationship between the two was essential. The emergence of the church depended upon the arrival of the kingdom of Heaven. Without it, the church would not have been born. Now that the kingdom has arrived, the members of the church have become its subjects. Every proper kingdom, according to Campbell, has subjects (members of the church), a constitution (God's will - the plan of salvation since before time began), a king (Christ), a territory (the whole earth), and laws (those found in the apostolic writings in the New Testament, though he emphasized the "supreme law" to be love to Christ and love for each other). The church, composed of the kingdom's subjects, was simply one of five aspects to the fullness of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>51</sup>

All of history looked forward to Pentecost and the establishment of this kingdom. The "spiritual children" of Israel had faith in this kingdom. And now they were fulfilled by its arrival. The "unbelieving Jews were rejected and repudiated as the visible and formal people of God" when this kingdom arrived. The kingdom was taken from them and given to those who would show its fruits (Matthew 21:43). Though they continue to exist as "a monumental people," they no longer represent the people of God as a nation.<sup>52</sup>

Pentecost marked when the kingdom of heaven commenced. This belief was so strong among early Disciples that they refused to speak the Lord's prayer, even if they were in the company of a group of worshipers from another tradition who were reciting it. Campbell claimed that the prayer, as indicated by the part of it that prays "thy kingdom come," was "literally answered some three years after it was presented." The apostles never taught it to anyone. They preached that the "kingdom or reign of Christ" had already come. "We may, indeed," wrote Campbell, "both pray and labor to enlarge his kingdom, but no intelligent Christian can now pray, thy kingdom or thy reign come."<sup>53</sup> Disciples today usually pray this prayer as a part of their worship life since, sometime after the turn of the century, as Campbell's influence waned, their ministers shifted their understanding of the "kingdom" in the prayer to refer

to the kingdom of God rather than the reign of Christ.

Campbell's understanding of these different kingdoms allowed him greater latitude than others had when considering just who might enter the "everlasting kingdom of God." This openness gained rather famous expression in the Lunenberg letter of 1837, when Campbell affirmed that infant baptized people might be saved. Lesser known is the fact that as early as June of 1829, Campbell used an essay defining the kingdoms to explain that, though infant baptized people do not enter the kingdom of heaven, the temporal kingdom of Christ, they could "enter into the . . . kingdom of glory."

I am prepared to say that my opinion is, and it is but an opinion, that infants, idiots, and some Jews and Pagans, may, without either faith or baptism, be brought into the third kingdom, merely in consequence of the sacrifice of Christ; and I doubt not but many Paidobaptists of all sects will be admitted into the kingdom of glory. - Indeed all they who obey Jesus Christ, through faith in his blood, according to their knowledge, I am of opinion will be introduced into that kingdom. But when we talk of the forgiveness of sins which comes to christians through immersion, we have no regard to any other than the second kingdom, or the kingdom of favor. I repeat it again - there are three kingdoms: the Kingdom of Law, the Kingdom of Favor, and the Kingdom of Glory; each has a different constitution, different subjects, privileges, and terms of admission.

The most interesting implication, and Campbell clearly spelled it out later in this 1929 essay, as well as in his *Christian System*, was that there are those in the kingdom of heaven ("Favor") who might not enter the kingdom of "glory." Full participation in the kingdom of heaven demanded an ethical and obedient life. Otherwise, one could not be assured of being born into the next kingdom, the kingdom that really counted. Human beings "cannot enter into the third and ultimate kingdom through faith, immersion, or regeneration." How then does one enter the eternal kingdom? One cannot get there by faith alone, "but by being counted worthy of the resurrection of the just." It requires also "the obedience of faith." Christ says one enters the kingdom "because I know your good works, your piety, and humanity. I was hungry and you fed me, etc."<sup>54</sup>

This perspective led to a great emphasis in Campbell, and among early Disciples, on obedience in Christ, on the ethics of being Christian. If one was not obedient, did not live ethically and cultivate peace, one would not see the eternal kingdom. This comes close to "works righteousness." "Hence," wrote Campbell

good works through faith, or springing from faith in Jesus, give a right to enter into the holy city - and this is a right springing from grace or favor . . . And while men are saved by grace, or brought into the second kingdom, (for all are in it are said to be saved in the New Testament style) by favor, they cannot enter the heavenly kingdom, but by patient continuance in well doing.<sup>55</sup>

The grace of God brings one into the kingdom of favor, but to be admitted into the kingdom of glory, one had to do more. But Campbell always emphasized the role of God's Holy Spirit in transmitting, diffusing, and sustaining an obedient and spiritual life after baptism. Christians are granted a new "state or condition," from which they should be able to act in obedient ways. In other words, God's grace enables obedience: "God never commanded a being to do any thing, but the power and motive were derived from something God had done for him."<sup>56</sup> Campbell's presumption was that a person with no inclination toward obedience could not truly have received God's grace and therefore could not be born into the kingdom of glory even though they might

have been baptized into the kingdom of favor.

Criticism from scholars alleging that Campbell equated the kingdom with the church, or that he did not possess a vision of a transcendent kingdom that could empower a countercultural or ethical vision is not exactly accurate. Campbell's ethical posture was clearly rooted in his eschatological vision of the most important kingdom, the everlasting kingdom of God.<sup>57</sup> A disobedient Christian who died without bearing the fruits of baptism simply did not stand much of a chance of being born, after death, into the kingdom of glory.

### **The Everlasting Kingdom of God (also known as: the Third Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Glory)**

Three kingdoms pertaining to the history of salvation are now in view: the kingdom of law, the kingdom of favor, and a "third kingdom," the kingdom of glory. This last kingdom is the transcendent one, the final one, the ultimate eternal kingdom of God. It is different in character from any of the previous kingdoms. This kingdom has no beginning and no end. It is not a temporal kingdom like the kingdom of nature or the other two kingdoms which commenced, after the occasion of human sin in the garden. This kingdom preceded creation and will continue after the story of history is done. From the King (God) reigning over this eternal kingdom, the other "reigns" received their authority and their purpose for existence.

The careful reader of Campbell recognizes, then, that Jesus himself, in Campbell's view, lived under the "old Kingdom of Law." He did not live in the kingdom of heaven, the Christian dispensation, as that time did not begin until Pentecost. The kingdom of heaven, therefore, is the reign of the triumphant and ascended Christ, anointed and empowered by God, not the reign of the earthly Jesus. At Pentecost, God anointed Christ the "Monarch of the universe." The "great God and Father of the universe . . . invested" Christ with "regal authority." Christ is the king, but his kingdom is temporary. It is a "remedial reign." It possesses the purpose "to put down sin." When that has been done, when Christ returns and establishes his authority over all history by his complete and utter triumph over sin and all the enemies of God, the kingdom of heaven will end and give way to the everlasting kingdom of God.

The temporary nature of Christ's kingdom is an important theological point for Campbell. The whole history of salvation, of God's activity in history, have pointed toward Christ and the conflict of history itself is resolved in Christ. But, in the end, when history concludes, Christ will return all authority to the One to whom it ultimately and always belonged (see Paul's statement of this in I. Cor. 15:24-28). The "sceptre" is handed back to God. Christ "gives up the kingdom," and "the government of the universe will assume its ancient order." The eternal kingdom of God remains and "God [will] be supreme monarch again."<sup>58</sup> Put simply, the christocentric focus of early Disciples always brought the Christian back to God. The narrative of the history of salvation in Jesus Christ ultimately belongs to, and always points us to, God.

### **Conclusion**

Alexander Campbell's eschatological views certainly appear somewhat

strange to modern members of the Stone-Campbell movement. His approach to the book of Revelation is dated when viewed from our perspective today. It is conditioned by nineteenth-century American culture in troublesome ways, especially in its anti-Catholic bias and its overconfidence in human progress. Today's Disciples, for example, are schooled in a different understanding of Revelation, one pegged to the author's context as a message of hope for Christians of his time who were persecuted (the "contemporary-historical" view, sometimes called the "preterist" or simply "historical" view), rather than as a book which lays out a blueprint for precisely how the long-range future is to unfold, of which we are living near the end (sometimes called the "church-historical" or "continuous-historical" view, the view held by Campbell).<sup>59</sup> Though his possessed some distinctive Disciples features, Campbell's interpretation represented the most popular reading of his day.

Though Campbell's theological reflections on prophecy, the millennium, and the various kingdoms are complex and potentially confusing, they can be summed up easily enough. In all his writings about eschatology, Campbell expressed a supreme confidence that God had a stake in human history. He firmly believed that God is with us. God has entered human time and changed it. The salvation of God has made history meaningful; these days we are living, they all have meaning, each and every one of them. The eternal God has transformed human time by acting within it. God as a living actor in history is one who can be and is encountered by human beings. These encounters are the stuff of eschatology. Because of God's grace, because of God's activities in history, "the Christian, that native of heaven, and pilgrim of time" possesses "the radiant hopes of a bright and boundless future:" an eternity with God.<sup>60</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Anthony L. Dunnivant has summarized some of this work in his "Evangelization and Eschatology: Lost Link in the Disciples Tradition," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* (Spring 1993), particularly pp. 47-51. Among the Disciples, Dunnivant has been one of the primary historians emphasizing the importance of the eschatological context for early Disciples. See Dunnivant, *Restructure* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 5; and Dunnivant, "Core Values and Disciples Culture: A View from the Inside," unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Religious Research Association, Nashville, TN, on 9 November 1996, p. 3. In this latter paper, Dunnivant presents what he describes as four core values for early Disciples life: freedom, apostolicity, unity, and evangelization. These values, he argues, are held within a context which "might be termed providential and eschatological." Stephen V. Sprinkle's 1988 *Discipliana* article also lifted up the importance of Campbell's eschatological beliefs as he discussed his doctrine of the church: see Sprinkle, "Alexander Campbell and the Doctrine of the Church," *Discipliana* (Summer 1988): 24-25. A recent essay by a Disciples minister has also examined the subject: see Tim Crowley, "A Chronological Delineation of Alexander Campbell's Eschatological Theory From 1823-1851," *Discipliana* (Winter 1994): 99-107. The importance of this theme for the Stone-Campbell movement has only recently received full (and somewhat controversial) treatment in the new history of the Churches of Christ written by American religious historian

Richard T. Hughes, himself a member of the Churches of Christ. See *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996); see also Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), especially pp. 108-112, 121-33, 171-187. David E. Harrell, another historian in the Churches of Christ, gave some attention to early millennialism in his book *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), see especially pages 39-61. See also the interesting essay by William D. Howden, "The Kingdom of God in Alexander Campbell's Hermeneutics," *Restoration Quarterly* 32 (1990): 87-104. An interesting non-Stone-Campbell perspective on Campbell's millennialism is found in the Appendix to Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 215-231.

<sup>2</sup> As Richard Hughes has put it, "Campbell's ultimate concern was for the kingdom of God, the millennium on earth. . . . Campbell's millennial dream was one of the constant factors upon which his other, penultimate commitments shifted and changed." Hughes, *Reviving The Ancient Faith*, p. 45. Actually, in this sentence, and in his book generally, Hughes is failing to distinguish between Campbell's understanding of the millennium and his understanding of the kingdom of God. For Campbell, as this article will make clear, these two realities were very different.

<sup>3</sup> "Reply to Mr. Waterman," *Millennial Harbinger* (April 1834): 156.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of postmillennialism in general, see *Ibid.*, pp. 77-81; for Campbell's comments about Whitby and Vitranga, see "Historic Prophecy, no. 1," (March 1832): 133; for comments about Whitby particularly see "Coming of the Lord, no. 25," (July 1843): 294; and "Coming of the Lord, no. 26," (October 1843): 441. Campbell did state that he had read of Whitby's views in Scott's *Evangelist*. Walter Scott quoted from Whitby in "Modern Opinions Respecting the Apocalyptic Millennium," *The Evangelist* (July 1835): 155-162. For Whitby's view, see "A Treatise of the True Millennium," in *Paraphrase and Notes on the New Testament*, 2 Vols. (London: Awnsham & John Churchill, 1703), 2:247-278. Campbell actually credited Englishman Joseph Towers with the most formative influence in shaping his views on the millennium. See "The Millennium, no. 3," (April 1856): 184. Towers book, title unknown, appeared first in London in 1796 and later in America in 1808. It is interesting that Campbell, in retrospect, in 1856, credited Towers with a heavy influence on his views of the millennium because in 1835, an anonymous letter to Walter Scott's *Evangelist* charged Campbell with plagiarizing "Towers on the Prophecies." See Eusebius, "The Letter Men and Allegorists," *Evangelist* (July 1835): 153-155.

<sup>5</sup> See Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, fifth edition, 1992), especially pp. 180-195.

<sup>6</sup> This is David E. Harrell's point; see Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, p. 36-38.

<sup>7</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 1," *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1841): 11.

<sup>8</sup> For this story of Miller, and the connection with these three events, I am dependent on the brief treatment given Miller in Hudson and Corrigan, *Religion in America*, pp. 192-194.

<sup>9</sup> See Campbell, "Coming of the Lord, no. 17," *Millennial Harbinger* (July 1842): 303-308.

<sup>10</sup> "The Millennium, no. 5," *Ibid.* (January 1835): 11.

<sup>11</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 1," *Ibid.* (January 1841): 11.

<sup>12</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 16," *Ibid.* (June 1842): 262.

<sup>13</sup> The series entitled "Second Coming of Christ: The Cloud," began in the pages of the *Evangelist* (August 1834): 174, and ran through 1836. Scott may have entertained postmillennial views earlier in his ministry: see particularly, Philip (the pseudonym used by Scott), "On the Millennium, no. 1," *The Christian Baptist* (July 6, 1826): 80-81. This series has a postmillennial feel to it, though he is not explicit on the relationship between the coming of Christ and the millennium.

<sup>14</sup> See the series of articles, entitled "Cleansing of the Sanctuary," that ran through 1840 in *Evangelist*, see particularly the first of these essays in the May 1840 issue, p. 9. This point is also made by David E. Harrell in "Walter Scott and the Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Spirit," in Toulouse, ed., *Walter Scott: A Nineteenth-Century Evangelical* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), pp. 27-31.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, "Reply to Bro. Church," *Evangelist* (September 1842): pp. 199-205.

<sup>16</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 23," *Millennial Harbinger* (May 1843): 219.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Harrell, "Walter Scott and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Spirit," p. 10. The reference is from Scott, "To The Brethren," *Evangelist* (October 1842): 236-237.

<sup>18</sup> For the quote, see Campbell, "Coming of the Lord, no. 2," *Millennial Harbinger* (February 1841): 54; for the first reference to Miller, see "The End of the Present Dispensation in 1840," *Ibid.* (June 1840): 269-270.

<sup>19</sup> For the first quote, see "Coming of the Lord, no. 13," *Ibid.* (March 1842): 97; for the second, see "Coming of the Lord, no. 20," *Ibid.* (February 1843): 55.

<sup>20</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 18," *Ibid.* (August 1842): 334.

<sup>21</sup> "Coming of the Lord, no. 20," *Ibid.* (January 1843): 49.

<sup>22</sup> "The Orthodox Preacher," *Ibid.* (February 1843): 93-94.

<sup>23</sup> "Millennium," *Ibid.* (December 1856): 698.

<sup>24</sup> "The Millennium, no. 3," *Millennial Harbinger* (April 1856): 184. Campbell expressed this sentiment often in his writings: see, for example, "The Conversion of the World," *Christian Baptist* (January 5, 1824): 42; "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 1," (February 7, 1825): 48; "The Millennium," *The Millennial Harbinger* (April 1831): 167; "Coming of the Lord, no. 1," *Ibid.* (January 1841): 6; and "Prophecy, no. 3," *Ibid.* (December 1860): 669.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell deals with the differences in dates between himself and Miller in "Coming of the Lord, no. 13," *Ibid.* (March 1842): 97-99.

<sup>26</sup> See "Coming of the Lord," numbers 13, 17, 18, 22, and 26, published in *Ibid.* (March 1842): 98; (July 1842): 305; (August 1842): 333; (April 1843): 187; and (October 1843): 445.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell, "Millennium, no. 1," *Ibid.* (February 1830): 58. See also

Campbell, "Millennial Character of the Harbinger," *Ibid.* (December 1840): 562.

<sup>28</sup> Hughes argues that Campbell gave up his connection between restoration and millennium and instead placed his hope for the millennium in American civil religion. See Hughes and Allen, *Illusions of Innocence*, pp. 170-187. The substance of that chapter originally appeared in Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (March 1976):87-103. I say more below about my disagreement with Hughes on this point. See footnote number 37.

<sup>29</sup> For the quote, see "Coming of the Lord, no. 22," *Ibid.* (April 1843): 187.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, "Historic Prophecy, no. 2," *Ibid.* (May 1832): 218-219.

<sup>31</sup> See Hughes on this point, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, pp. 32-37. Hughes points out Campbell's developing interest in defending the interests of Protestantism in general, which gave him a broader and more liberal vision than many within the early Disciples movement.

<sup>32</sup> Campbell, "Coming of the Church, no. 1," *Ibid.* (January 1841): 6. Numerous other references could be cited here. See Campbell's footnote on the bottom of page 6.

<sup>33</sup> Campbell associated the second coming of Christ with the absolute end of history. Campbell's reading of the New Testament convinced him that the second coming of Christ was associated with four great events: "the resurrection of all the dead saints, the transformation of all the living saints, the final judgment of all mankind, and the creation of new earth and heavens." Campbell, "Coming of the Church, no. 3," *Ibid.* (March 1841): 97; see also "Coming of the Lord, no. 25," *Ibid.* (July 1843): 295.

<sup>34</sup> See the "Coming of the Lord, no. IV," *Ibid.* (March 1841): 100-104; and "Coming of the Lord, No. IV," *Ibid.* (May 1841): 193-195. On the literal thousand years, see "Coming of the Lord, No. V," *Ibid.* (May 1841): 196. On the revival of the martyrs' spirit within the church, see "Coming of the Lord, No. VII," *Ibid.* (July 1841): 323: "The revival of the witnessis is not, therefore, of necessity the revival of the same persons, but of the same class of characters. So the first resurrection, or the revival of the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, is not the return to earth, nor the proper resurrection of those who had lived on earth before; but a return, or a recovery of such characters, a race of kindred souls, valiant for the same truth, and of the same danger and terror-defying spirit."

<sup>35</sup> "Why, it was but yesterday that the mariner's compass was discovered, that printing was shown to be practicable, that steam power was laughed at as an absurdity, and the electric telegraph ridiculed as the hobby of a vagarian's brain. A new world has been found and settled almost within the span of sire and son - and that world is yet but experimenting in its government. Still more than all, far off in the East, . . . there are races, nations and tribes, upon whom the light of truth, science, or even semi-barbarism, has never yet dawned." Campbell, "The Millennium," *Ibid.* (June 1858): 336. A passage similar to this one, in its confidence in progress, is found early in Campbell's writings, in 1834, in "The Millennium, no. 3," *Ibid.* (November 1834): 549. By 1862, however, Campbell wrote with great despair: "Of all the monstrosities on

which our sun has ever shone, that of professedly *Christian* nations glutting their wrath and vengeance on one another with all the instruments of murder and slaughter, caps the climax of human folly and gratuitous wickedness." See Campbell, "Moses, the Oldest of Prophets," *Ibid.* (April 1862): 169.

<sup>36</sup> "In our country's destiny is involved the destiny of Protestantism, and in its destiny the destiny of all the nations of the world. God has given, in awful charge, to Protestant England and Protestant America - the Anglo-Saxon race - the fortunes, not of Christendom only, but of all the world." Quoted in Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, p. 53. The quote is from the *Millennial Harbinger* (August 1852): 462. Harrell details the combination of national destiny, racism, and millennialism in this chapter; see especially pp. 44-53. For Campbell's references to Anglo-Saxon triumph, see Harrell, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> Hughes, *Illusions of Innocence*, chapter 8, pp. 170-187. It is interesting to note that Campbell's references in this regard are usually in the context of public addresses commemorating a public holiday like July 4, or orations delivered in a secular or political context. Through the countless pages of texts dealing with prophecy and millennium in thirty years of the *Millennial Harbinger*, I found no explicit references either to Anglo-Saxons or to America's role in bringing in the millennium. Though I was influenced by Hughes' arguments before reading the material in the *Millennial Harbinger* for myself, I have since concluded that Campbell did not offer any consistent or direct associations between the millennium and the "religion of the republic" in his later years. In general, I found consistent emphases connecting the hopes of restoration and the hopes of millennialism throughout Campbell's writings on the topic; his writings on the millennium and the second coming contain vastly more regular mention of the "ancient gospel" than mention of the "progress of civilization." Besides the reference I have already mentioned, see "Millennium," (December 1856): 699 for another later reference. In this essay, Campbell also affirms the Apostles Creed, and adds to it, as setting forth the "facts" of the ancient gospel that need to be believed (see pp. 701-702). I do believe Hughes has contributed greatly to our historical understanding of Campbell by demonstrating that Campbell came to a greater appreciation of his association with Protestantism as he became older.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, "Everlasting Gospel, no. 2," *Ibid.* (March 1833): 119. This theme appeared in his *Christian System* and throughout his writings on the millennium during these thirty years.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell, *Christian System*, p. 159.

<sup>40</sup> Campbell, "The Millennium, no. 3," *Ibid.* (April 1856): 187. The emphasis is his own.

<sup>41</sup> This remained true even though later generations lost any connection between this dynamism and eschatological views.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* See also Campbell, "Millennium, no. 4," (May 1856): 270: "There is one oracle of our Apostle Paul that commands much thought, and which furnishes a very safe sign-post . . . in our pathway along the lines of the prophetic chart. . . . It reads thus: 'The gifts and callings of God are without change of purpose' or 'repentance,' on his part [Romans 11:29]. He has a scheme, a purpose, a plan in creation, providence, moral government, and in redemption, from which he never departs. . . . Now such being the fact through the entire

domain of animated nature, ought we not to realize the Divine power and wisdom as acting wholly under the promptings of Divine goodness, and as directed and controlled by it? . . . In tracing all the meanderings of the stream of prophecy, from the first prophetic promise or covenant vouchsafed to fallen man, however it may appear to us to change its course, we shall find that it is moving forward in the most direct and consistent line, and in perfect good keeping with every Divine attribute, developing the moral and spiritual grandeur of the absolute monarch of universal being. . . . The history of this symbolic nation is but the history of a *special providence*, documented with the most interesting details and evidences.”

<sup>43</sup> As he put it in his *Christian System*: “That sacred history, or the remarkable instances of God’s providence to the Jews and Patriarchs, are the foundations of the sacred dialect of the new institution.” See *Christian System*, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> See the series on prophecy written under the pseudonym of the “Reformed Clergyman” that appeared in the *Millennial Harbinger* from January 1837-November 1838. The quotation is from “Prophecies, no. 6, *Ibid.* (August 1837): 377. The term “sacred history” was used often by Campbell. Campbell’s “Coming of the Lord” series, his longest running series, ran from January 1841-October 1843, and covered the same territory, as did his series on “The Millennium,” running sporadically from February 1856-June 1858, and his series entitled “Prophecy” running from March 1860-March 1862.

<sup>45</sup> Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, p. 93. Hughes compares Campbell and Stone on this point and argues that Stone places a hope in a transcendent kingdom of God, “envisioned the kingdom as God’s final, triumphant rule, which will be made complete only in the last age,” and Campbell did not. This is not exactly accurate. Campbell, as this section of the chapter makes clear, talked about several kingdoms, each having their purpose in the scheme of things, but the most important of the kingdoms was represented in the final and transcendent reign of God in the “everlasting kingdom.”

<sup>46</sup> For Campbell’s emphasis on creation, and on Christ as the “firstborn of creation,” see “Coming of the Lord, no. 2,” *Millennial Harbinger* (February 1841), particularly, pp. 49-51; and “The Millennium, no. 2,” *Ibid.* (March 1856): 132-135. For statements on this kingdom of nature, see *Christian System*, p. 160; see also Campbell, “Query,” *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1833): 12.

<sup>47</sup> Campbell, “The Three Kingdoms,” *The Christian Baptist* (June 1, 1829): 557.

<sup>48</sup> *Christian System*, p. 139.

<sup>49</sup> “Millennium, no. 5,” (May 1856): 275.

<sup>50</sup> *Christian System*, pp. 164, and 171. Walter Scott shared this view of the kingdom of heaven being temporal and separate from the transcendent kingdom of God: see *The Gospel Restored: A Discourse* (Cincinnati: Printed by O.H. Donogh, 1836): pp. 197-199.

<sup>51</sup> See William D. Howden, “The Kingdom of God in Alexander Campbell’s Hermeneutics,” pp. 90-91 on this point. See also W. Clark Gilpin, “The Integrity of the Church,” pp. 29-48. Campbell’s discussion on these five elements of the kingdom of God is found in *Christian System*, pp. 148-160.

<sup>52</sup> “Millennium, no. 5,” p. 275. See also, *Christian System*, p. 166.

<sup>53</sup> Campbell, “Prophecy, no. 8,” *Ibid.* (July 1861): 398-399. Isaac Errett shares this view of the Lord’s prayer as late as 1889: see, Errett, *Evenings With the Bible: New Testament Studies*, Volume III (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1893), p. 206.

<sup>54</sup> “The Three Kingdoms,” 557-558. The Lunenberg letter is found in *The Millennial Harbinger* (September 1837): 411f. See also *Christian System*, p. 233, which is a rewriting of this 1829 essay in the *Christian Baptist*. In this section of *Christian System*, Campbell talks about the “three kingdoms” and “three salvations.” Obedience is emphasized throughout *Christian System*. See, for another example, p. 241. In the book, Campbell rewrote the indented quote above to be a little less explicit about the “infants, idiots, deaf and dumb persons, innocent Pagans wherever they can be found, with all the pious Pedobaptists” who he said “we commend to the mercy of God.” See p. 233.

<sup>55</sup> See “The Three Kingdoms,” p. 558. Elsewhere on this page: “But if the justified draw back, or the washed return to the mire, or if faith die and bring forth no fruits - into the kingdom of glory he cannot enter.”

<sup>56</sup> See also *Christian System*, p. 176 where the quote immediately preceding this reference and the following quote are found: “But the remission of our sins, our adoption into the family of God, our being made heirs and inheritors of the kingdom of glory, are consequent upon faith and the obedience of faith. . . . the creature may throw away that life by refusing to sustain it by the means essential to its preservation and comfort.”

<sup>57</sup>This contrary to Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, p. 94.

<sup>58</sup> *Christian System*, p. 147. See also p. 154.

<sup>59</sup> See Boring, *Revelation*, pp. 47-51 for a brief definition of these various “types of interpretation.”

<sup>60</sup> See Campbell, “Coming of the Lord, no. 2,” *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1841): 5-6.

# DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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The Disciples of Christ Historical Society has been blessed through the years with gifts from estates. Some have come unsolicited; others have been planned in advance with leadership of the Society. These gifts have measurably strengthened the ministry of the Society. Through the Order of the Stone-Campbell Fellowship the Society can recognize these intended gifts and express appreciation to those planning the gifts.

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# DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## From the Editor's Desk

The period following the Civil War through World War I, though marked by racism and sexism, offered new opportunities for leadership to African-Americans and women. This issue focuses on three Stone-Campbell Christians, one African-American man and two Anglo-American women, who despite obstacles pioneered new roles of leadership in the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Todd Simmons, recipient of this year's Lockridge Ward Wilson Prize for the best student paper, examines the life of an African-American Disciples entrepreneur and minister in "Preston Taylor: Seeker of Dignity for Black Disciples." Hailed by Booker T. Washington as a man "whose business enterprises and wealth would be creditable to any man of any race," Taylor was first and foremost a minister who led African-Americans in staking out a place of dignity and service in the larger community of the Disciples of Christ. Simmons has drawn on diverse sources to tell the story of this remarkable leader.

A woman Disciples author, editor and hymn writer is the subject of Sandra Parker's "From 'True Woman' to 'New Woman': Ohio's Jessie Brown Pounds." Parker traces both paternal and maternal influences on Pounds and shows how this Ohio native employed short stories and novels rooted in her Disciples experience, as well as essays to advance her understanding of the church's mission and to advocate new roles for women. Parker concludes that Pounds, who may have been the first American to use the phrase, "New Womanhood" was "a pace setter who exorcised old gender definitions and lived a new kind of social role as a career intellectual."

Amy Cornfield examines leadership roles for women in Churches of Christ in "Selina Holman's New Woman and How the Discussion Has Continued Today." Holman, a Church of Christ wife and mother of eight who was active in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, advocated new roles for women in church and society through numerous articles published in David Lipscomb's Gospel Advocate. Cornfield shows how the discussion of women's leadership has continued among Churches of Christ by analysis of positions argued in four contemporary Churches of Christ magazines.

Review of these three articles shows that contemporary concerns of women and minorities for recognition of their gifts and potential contributions to the Stone-Campbell Movement are hardly unprecedented.

— D. Newell Williams

## —From the President's Desk

Assess and Anticipate:

Good words for our interior work as we fill Advent and year-end with prayer.

The Historical Society lifts its prayer for colleagues in history who shared our ministry in 2000. Of special note are three we honored: Dick Herrington, our Faithful Servant award recipient; Todd Simmons, our Lockridge Ward Wilson recipient; and Dorothy Sallee who received a President's Citation for her story history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin. Other glimpses of 2000 bring joy to our memories of 2000: 100 seminarians in worship at our building, seven Ketcherside scholars sharing their research with senior colleagues.

The movement of memory across the year 2000 continues on into anticipation of our rich ministry in 2001. We begin a decade of bicentennial anniversaries of the earliest years of our Movement: the great revival of Cane Ridge, the Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery, Thomas and Alexander Campbell's arrivals in North America, the Washington Association and the Declaration and Address.

The Society will be partner and resource for it all. It begins with our Reed Lecture on April 5, 2001, at Lexington Seminary. Leigh Eric Schmidt, Princeton scholar who gave us a new model for understanding the Revival, will inaugurate the festivities with a lecture. We will also be a part of the August celebration at Cane Ridge. Check the publicity from Cane Ridge to choose the events you wish to attend, August 4-12. The Society's Kirkpatrick Seminar at the Meeting House on Monday evening and Tuesday, August 6 and 7, will have papers on Barton Stone's millennialism.

The Society's General Assembly banquet is consistently an outstanding occasion for many of us to be together. We meet this year on July 14 in Kansas City to anticipate the Society's future in the new century.

We have given you not only a calendar but a prayer calendar. We wish for you the rich prayers of Advent as memory fills you with expectation of Godly work and joyful celebration.

—Peter M. Morgan

## **Preston Taylor: Seeker of Dignity for Black Disciples**

by Todd W. Simmons\*

### **New Adversity and New Determination**

When Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation proscribed slavery in the secessionist South in January 1863, the struggle for freedom among the African-American people was just beginning. Robert E. Lee would not surrender his Confederate forces until April 1865 at Appomattox, and the process of Reconstruction would take longer still. Even so, African-Americans did not experience a life of true equality and freedom after the war. In fact, the years following the formal conclusion of the Civil War were characterized instead by the recalcitrant Anglo-American attitudes which sought social, economic, and political superiority. As a result, African-Americans entered a period of new struggle and alienation.

Nevertheless, between the time of Reconstruction and World War I, African-Americans sought a greater role in determining the course of their own future. While national figures such as Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. DuBois ascended to popularity and urged their people to seize a prosperous future, denominational leaders also emerged as pioneers in the movement. Among Disciples, one man achieved uncommon success in the struggle to assure a place of equality and freedom for black persons living in America. In a life that spanned eighty-one years, minister Preston Taylor provided the means by which African-American Disciples could live with dignity in the dominant, and frequently hostile, Anglo culture.<sup>1</sup>

African-American historian John Hope Franklin calls the years between Reconstruction and World War I the period of "philanthropy and self-help" for African-Americans. According to Franklin, the effort to improve the economic and social status of African-Americans came basically from two sources: philanthropic agencies and denominational boards.<sup>2</sup> Even though education commanded the highest priority during this period of time, Preston Taylor worked tirelessly not only to establish educational opportunities for his people, but also to ensure the existence of an entire range of institutions and services in the black community. Among Taylor's many credits is his role in the formation of the National Christian Missionary Convention in 1917, a national organization of black Disciples whose purpose was to seek greater participation in the administration and leadership of the church.

### **Preston Taylor's Formative Years (1849—1865)**

Disciples historians Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox call our attention to an important fact: that "the National Christian Missionary Convention did not soar out of the plains of church history full blown."<sup>3</sup> Rather, the formation of the NCMC came only as the result of the deliberate and prolonged efforts of certain key people. Not least of these was Preston Taylor, whose life of advocacy and unceasing labor on behalf of African-Americans everywhere began amid the changing social and cultural landscape of the mid-

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nineteenth century.

On November 7, 1849—almost twelve years before the first shot of the Civil War<sup>4</sup>—Preston Taylor was born in Shreveport, Louisiana. Even though Taylor's parents, Zed and Betty Taylor, were slaves, they found a way to travel to Kentucky when Preston was one year old. Unknown to them at the time, this location would become the site for Taylor's early formation and one of his long-time homes.

Most accounts of his life tell how, while growing up in Kentucky, Taylor took an early interest in the Christian faith. When only four years old the young Taylor heard his first sermon in the First Baptist Church of Lexington.<sup>5</sup> Afterward he confided to his mother that one day he would become a preacher. Yet at this point, Betty Taylor deserves special credit for her role in shaping Preston's character. It seems that Taylor also suffered from a demanding sweet-tooth. One day, while trying to satisfy his appetite without permission, his mother caught him. "Keep still chile. No little boy what steals sugah can evah grow up an' be a preachah."<sup>6</sup> Taylor took the warning seriously, and from then on employed his remarkable intelligence, honesty, and integrity in the pursuit of the ministerial vocation. As a young teenager, Taylor made his confession of faith, was baptized, and preached his first sermon all on the same day. For the balance of his life, Taylor would dedicate his talents, resources, and energy not primarily to himself but to others.

By the time Taylor made his confession, Frederick Douglass was encouraging black Americans to fight for their full status as American citizens by joining the war effort. "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, 'U.S.,' let him get an eagle on his buttons and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States."<sup>7</sup> Taylor, it seems, responded to these, or other such sentiments. Booker T. Washington reports how one day Preston "saw a band of soldiers marching along the road and determined to join them."<sup>8</sup> So in 1864, at the age of fifteen, Taylor enlisted as a drummer in Company G of the 116th United States Colored Infantry.

According to Civil War historian, Bell Irvin Wiley, "the youngest wearers of the blue were the drummer boys and cavalry buglers."<sup>9</sup> As such, these younger enlistees would not (in most cases) engage in combat. Instead, drummers and buglers would perform other tasks. "The principle duties of the drummer boys," says Wiley, "were to sound the daily calls on drum, fife or bugle and to assist the band in providing music for ceremonies and drill. In addition they performed sundry chores about the camp."<sup>10</sup> Unless Taylor's experience departed drastically from the regular service of drummer boys, it is likely that he performed each of these responsibilities. His work might also have included "carrying water for the soldiers, honing the surgeon's instruments, assisting in removal and care of the wounded, helping bury the dead and drawing maps."<sup>11</sup>

As a member of the 116th Colored Infantry, Taylor was present at some of the Civil War's famous culminating events. According to John R. Towbridge, an archivist for the Kentucky Historical Society, the 116th defended Camp Nelson and Hickman's Bridge (July—September 1864), joined siege

operations against Petersburg and Richmond in the Appomattox Campaign (October 1864—April 1865), and helped pursue Lee's Confederate forces until their surrender on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865.<sup>12</sup> Even though Taylor was present at the Appomattox Courthouse when Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant, it is unlikely that he was permitted to play his drum as part of the ceremony. Grant had ordered his men to abstain from reveling or gloating. "The Confederates were now our prisoners," Grant recalled later, "and we did not want to exult over their downfall."<sup>13</sup> Instead a respectful silence overtook the field. Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain described the event: "On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word, nor whisper or vain-glorious, nor motion of man. . . but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!"<sup>14</sup> Taylor had participated in the demise of the Confederacy and witnessed the end of slavery in the United States. Following a brief tour of duty in Texas and Louisiana, the 116th returned to Louisville, Kentucky and mustered out on January 17, 1867.<sup>15</sup> Preston Taylor was seventeen years old.

### **Preston Taylor's Business Ventures (1865—1931)**

In 1907 Booker T. Washington included Preston Taylor "among the members of the Negro race that may serve to encourage other men and women of the race to go forward and win success in business directions."<sup>16</sup> It seems that Washington viewed Taylor's activities as an excellent example of how black Americans should establish a place for themselves in society and culture. Washington's philosophy emphasized practical industrial and vocational education. "The education of the people of my race," said Washington, "should be so directed that the greatest proportion of the mental strength of the masses will be brought to bear upon the everyday practical things of life, upon something that is needed to be done, and something which they will be permitted to do in the community in which they reside."<sup>17</sup> By supplying Taylor as an example, Washington hoped to demonstrate not only that African-Americans could succeed in business, but that they could perform as well as (or better than) their Anglo brothers and sisters. The people profiled in Washington's book were those "who [had] been unusually successful, whose business enterprises and wealth would be creditable to any man of any race."<sup>18</sup>

Once back in Kentucky and discharged from the Union army in January 1867, Taylor had shifted his attention to a new trade. Taylor learned the skills of a stonecutter, and became proficient in monument work and in engraving on marble. Taylor soon found himself working in the leading marble yards. Yet, racial tensions forced Taylor to abandon his job when white employees "refused to work with him because of his color."<sup>19</sup>

Taylor's ability to adapt to his life's changing circumstances made it possible for him to find employment elsewhere. Following his experiences in the Louisville marble yards, Taylor accepted an offer to work as a porter on the Louisville & Chattanooga Railroad. During the next four years Taylor performed his responsibilities ardently and gained a reputation "as one of the best railroad men in the service."<sup>20</sup> In appreciation for his professional and dedicated service, the officers of the railroad made an attempt to keep Taylor by promoting him to assistant baggage master. When Taylor declined to accept

the proposal, "the officers gave him a strong recommendation and a pass over all the roads for an extensive trip, which he took through the North."<sup>21</sup>

At the age of twenty-two, Taylor returned to Kentucky and settled in Mt. Sterling. While living there, he found out that the Big Sandy Railway refused to hire black Americans to complete the track between Mt. Sterling and Richmond, Virginia. The railroad preferred instead to draw its support from Irish labor.<sup>22</sup> In a bold attempt to prove the abilities of African-American workers, Taylor made a bid to complete sections three and four of the track (the most difficult of the entire line). When his bid was accepted, Taylor "erected a large commissary and quarters for his men, bought seventy-five head of mules and horses, carts, wagons, cans and all the necessary implements and tools."<sup>23</sup> Under Taylor's direction, one hundred and fifty African-American men completed both sections of the track in only fourteen months—ahead of schedule. This feat earned Taylor and the black workers new respect. C. P. Huntington, the president of the railway, said that "he had built thousands of miles of road, but he never saw a contractor who finished his contract in advance."<sup>24</sup> When news about the workers' extraordinary accomplishments got out, Taylor was flooded by job offers. Taylor had achieved an important victory: the Big Sandy success "removed the prejudice of Negro labor and from that time it was sought instead of being rejected."<sup>25</sup>

Taylor refused the job opportunities that materialized after he completed the Big Sandy project. Instead, he relocated to Nashville, Tennessee in 1885. Taylor's new surroundings did not prevent him from excelling in business and improving the social condition of African-Americans. Between 1885 and 1888, Taylor worked with M. S. Combs, a white Christian preacher and undertaker.<sup>26</sup> In this brief span of time, Taylor learned a completely new trade and eventually opened his own business as a funeral director in the spring of 1888. From that time forward, the Taylor Funeral Company both employed and served members of the black community in Nashville. In fact, most of the caskets used in his business were made in his own factory, providing yet another source of employment for African-Americans.<sup>27</sup>

Taylor never tired of finding new ways to improve the conditions of the community. As an extension of Taylor's mortuary business, Greenwood Cemetery provided a beautiful burial site for African Americans in Nashville. Taylor also owned and operated Greenwood Park, an amusement park for the black residents of Nashville. Among its attractions, Greenwood Park provided "a club house, with restaurant and refreshment stand; a theatre, skating rink, roller coaster, shooting gallery, box ball, knife, cane and baby rack, merry-go-round, a zoo, and a baseball park" that served as the home for the "Greenwood Giants."<sup>28</sup> At night the park was made attractive by "the glare and glimmer of hundreds of electric lights."<sup>29</sup>

According to Tennessee historian, Bobby L. Lovett, Taylor also played a significant role in establishing a bank for African-Americans in Nashville. "African Americans in Nashville had no bank since the collapse of the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company (1865—1874)," says Lovett, "and European-American banks treated black customers with indifference and disdain."<sup>30</sup> Ending the twenty-nine year period during which the black

residents of Nashville had no financial institutions, Taylor joined with eight other principal founders to create the One Cent Savings Bank and Trust Company. Its first office officially opened on January 16, 1904.<sup>31</sup>

Taylor's role in constructing a retirement home and orphanage also deserves mention. Apparently, Taylor purchased the land and built the facilities for the "Masonic Old Folks' Home" and "Orphanage on Lebanon Pike" across from his own estate.<sup>32</sup>

### **Preston Taylor as a Pioneer of "Negro Work" (1865—1917)**

At the same time Booker T. Washington was encouraging black Americans to seek practical industrial and vocational education, W. E. B. DuBois began questioning such a strategy. "DuBois opposed what he viewed as the narrow educational program of Washington," says African-American historian John Hope Franklin, "which was too predominantly economic in its objectives."<sup>33</sup> DuBois favored instead an educational curriculum whose aims included a balance between the practical and the intellectual. Only in this way, thought DuBois, could the black American ever fully find a place of equality and freedom in the United States. Even though Washington had chosen Preston Taylor in 1907 as an example of the successful practical businessman, he also recognized that the ministerial vocation was Taylor's "highest calling."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Taylor appears to have lived his life in a way that struck the proper balance between the practical and the intellectual—and each of these, in turn, seem to have been informed by the Christian faith.

By 1887, African-American biographer William J. Simmons was calling Preston Taylor "the leading minister of the Church of the Disciples."<sup>35</sup> By this time, Taylor had already spent eighteen years in his ministerial vocation. At the age of twenty, while working as a porter for the Louisville & Chattanooga Railroad, Taylor "became an elder in a black Christian Church founded by Elder Samuel Buckner."<sup>36</sup> Taylor himself considered this event his formal entry into the ministry of the Christian Church.<sup>37</sup> In his inaugural address to the NCMC in 1917, Taylor reaffirmed his Disciple identity: "I am ready to reaffirm my faith in the simple religion of Christ and in the Disciples of Christ as the most faithful exponents of Him. . . . I believe the Disciples of Christ have the message of salvation for my people, as for all people, for all time, world without end. Amen."<sup>38</sup> This simple but dynamic faith guided Taylor's entire life and ministry.

During the period following the Civil War, Anglo Disciples (like their Baptist and Methodist counterparts) began to regard missionary outreach to black Americans as an important endeavor. Unfortunately, these early efforts were often marked with a paternalistic character that tended to reinforce inequality and division. "African-Americans became objects of mission. It was seen as the mission of the church to take care of these poor people who were out struggling by themselves. . . . The main thrust was to do for the Blacks, more so than to do with them."<sup>39</sup> As a result, black Disciples were given little control over the course of their own future.

Even so, black Disciples worked to improve their social and cultural status within the church in the period of time between the Civil War and World War I. During these years "there were calls for African-American Disciples of

Christ to form their own national convention. Blacks desired greater cooperation, self-development and equality in the life of the Disciples of Christ movement."<sup>40</sup> The efforts of these black Disciples came to be known collectively as "Negro work."<sup>41</sup>

When Taylor settled in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky at the age of twenty-two, he began his role in the Negro work. His first act was to accept the pastorate of the Negro congregation of the Christian Church in Mt. Sterling. At this time black Disciples lacked organization, communication, leadership, education, and unity. Mt. Sterling would serve as Taylor's point of departure in each of these areas. During the next fifteen years (until embarking for Nashville, Tennessee), Taylor would travel extensively, establish schools, found churches, and preach.

The zeal that had always characterized Taylor's business pursuits redoubled as he struggled to establish a spiritual place for his African-American brothers and sisters. While leading the Christian Church in Mt. Sterling, Taylor also served the African-American congregations in Millersburg, Kentucky and Paris, Kentucky. All three churches flourished under his guidance.<sup>42</sup> Taylor's preaching talent earned him recognition and prestige at home and in the churches he visited. His sermons functioned both to strengthen the faith of black Disciples, and to empower them in the effort to improve their own circumstances. "Jesus is able to fulfill all his promises," preached Taylor in January 1881. "You have only to do what is assigned to your hand to do, and you will be assured Jesus will do more than he has promised."<sup>43</sup> Taylor eventually garnered nation-wide recognition for his preaching when he was elected "National Evangelist" by the General Convention in 1883 for work among Black Disciples.<sup>44</sup>

Early mission work among black Disciples tended to focus on education. "Setting up institutions for primary and secondary education, and sending out and supporting a few pastors and state evangelists was the basic strategy of Anglo-American Disciples of Christ for evangelism among Black people."<sup>45</sup> In addition to Taylor's other activities, he also worked vigorously to found schools for the African-American community. In this way, he demonstrated how missionary efforts could not only satisfy, but also exceed the original goals. Taylor purchased a segment of college property at New Castle, Kentucky and established the Christian Bible College of New Castle. Later the school was moved to Louisville, Kentucky where its name changed to the Louisville Bible School. The school became one of the few institutions dedicated to training ministers who could, in turn, support the efforts of the black community.<sup>46</sup> Taylor also helped to form the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes which opened in 1912. The school changed its name in 1968 to Tennessee State University. Perhaps the school's most famous graduate at this time is popular television personality, Oprah Winfrey.<sup>47</sup>

Despite his busy schedule, Taylor also managed to find enough time to compile and edit a weekly column entitled "Our Colored Brethren" in *The Christian Standard*. From 1879 to 1884, Taylor provided a way for black Disciples to organize and coordinate their efforts. On the occasion of the column's first-year anniversary, Taylor wrote about its growing role in

providing African-American Disciples a way to communicate effectively: "We cordially invite all to help extend the work of this column among our people everywhere. We would like to have all news of the churches, Sunday schools and Conventions reported weekly."<sup>48</sup> Four years later, the column could no longer keep up with the amount of activity occurring in the African-American churches. Black Disciples began to vocalize the need for a journal dedicated solely to Negro work. "The time has come when a paper should be run by us in the interest of our own organization in the United States," wrote three men in June 1884.<sup>49</sup> Papers of this kind (such as the *Gospel Plea* and the *Christian Plea*) eventually provided formats devoted entirely to the work of black Disciples in the United States. The last edition of "Our Colored Brethren" appeared in October 1884, and Taylor relocated to Nashville, Tennessee in 1885.

Once in Nashville, Taylor sought another pulpit. So in 1886, he took charge of the Gay Street Christian Church. Two years later, Taylor had opened the Taylor Funeral Company and opened the factory where caskets were made for the business. Two years after that, he founded Lea Avenue Christian Church (also in Nashville), where he would serve until his death in 1931.

#### **Formation of the NCMC and the Last Years of Preston Taylor (1917—1931)**

It is not surprising that, during a time when the world was splintered by war, Preston Taylor assumed the key role in a process of unity. On September 5, 1917 (five months after the United States entered World War I), the National Christian Missionary Convention convened for the first time. Taylor served as its first president. In the years leading to the formation of the NCMC, missionary work among black Disciples had been officially housed with two national organizations in the church. The official charge of doing work among black Disciples had been passed first to the Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM), and later to the Board of Negro Education and Evangelization.<sup>50</sup> Missionary work among black Disciples became ineffective when placed in the care of these two agencies. When this was done, "the other general agencies of the church as well as thousands of congregations felt free from any further responsibility for the colored work."<sup>51</sup> As a result, "the colored brotherhood was hoodwinked and cut off from direct appeal to the great, warm, but negligent heart of the church."<sup>52</sup>

The words of Taylor's inaugural address convey both indignation and tenderness toward the church. On one hand, Taylor saw African-American Disciples as having an important role in Barton W. Stone's religious movement as early as the meeting at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. On the other hand, however, Taylor recognized how "the attitude of our white brotherhood on the race question accounts largely for our smallness."<sup>53</sup> The formation of the NCMC, then, was a momentous and hopeful occasion. It signaled the advent of self-determination, organization, and unity for black Disciples.

For Taylor, though, the formation of the NCMC was also an opportunity for white and black Disciples to realize the supreme vision of Christian unity:

The Disciples of Christ, strange as it may seem, need the colored people, if for no other reasons, as the acid test of Christian orthodoxy and willingness to follow the Christ all the way in his program of human redemption. For if the white brother can include in his religious theory and practice the colored people as real brothers, he will have avoided the heresy of all heresies.<sup>54</sup>

Taylor knew well how the “disposition to philosophize about the Negro problem rather than to work at it” could lead to atrophy in the larger church.<sup>55</sup> The prospect of establishing Christian unity across lines of racial division was compelling. Taylor pursued this vision as he served as president of the NCMC for the next fourteen years.<sup>56</sup>

By mid-1930, Taylor’s health was beginning to decline. Still, he kept working and addressing the needs of his community. Early in 1931, Taylor developed a case of pneumonia, and after making a brief recovery, passed away in his Greenwood Park home in Nashville, Tennessee on April 13, 1931.<sup>57</sup> He was eighty-one years old.

In his final address to the NCMC on August 26, 1930, Taylor emphasized the importance of the minister. “In all the ages the Minister has been God’s leader of men; he has been the key man.”<sup>58</sup> This seems to have been the organizing principle of Taylor’s life. Even so, Taylor never regarded himself as more important than the people he sought to serve. Rather, he attempted to establish a permanent place of dignity and respect for African-Americans through his life’s work. One story tells how Taylor was offered \$1,000 per acre to sell Greenwood Cemetery and Greenwood Park. If he had accepted the proposal, Taylor would have received over \$90,000. Instead, Taylor refused, saying, “No, money will not buy it. I want it to always belong to my people.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Taylor felt that guaranteeing the future of the church outweighed any kind of personal gain—and this applied even to his inheritors. In his will, Taylor made provisions for his surviving wife and daughter, but also left substantial gifts to the church. He felt so strongly about his decision that he included a protective clause in the document: “In the event that either my daughter or my wife should contest my will in the courts then the bequests. . . shall be forfeited and the same is to be given wholly and absolutely to the National Christian Missionary Convention.”<sup>60</sup>

Judging by the accounts of his life, Taylor was a kind and thoughtful man. “Mr. Taylor is a man who will impress you when you meet him as thoroughly in earnest,” said William J. Simmons. “He is never idle, always with new plans, warm-hearted, generous, sympathetic and a true brother to all men who deserve the cognizance of earnest, faithful workers for Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Perhaps Taylor’s sense of duty and kindness to others came from his own sense of being a humble—if also an ephemeral—creation of God. The following lines, written (or copied) in Preston Taylor’s own handwriting, are kept in the Disciples of Christ Historical Society:

*Oh why should the spirit of mortals be proud  
Like a swift fleeing meteor, fast flying cloud  
A flash of the Lightning, a Break of the wave  
Man passes from Earth to his Home in the grave.*<sup>62</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Special thanks go to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society for assistance in the preparation of this paper. In particular, May Reed was of invaluable help in locating materials related to the life and legacy of Taylor.

<sup>2</sup> John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 382 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox, *Journey Toward Wholeness: A History of Black Disciples of Christ in the Mission of the Christian Church. Volume 1 From Convention to Convocation: No Longer 'Objects of' Mission But 'Partners in' the Work (1700—1988)* (National Convocation of the Christian Church, 1990), 1.

<sup>4</sup> The first shot of the Civil War occurred on April 12, 1861 at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. See Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> Clement Richardson, ed. *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race* (Montgomery, Alabama: National Publishing Company, 1919), s.v. "Reverend Preston Taylor," 334.

<sup>6</sup> Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention: An Appreciation of a Negro Leader," *World Call* (June 1931): 23.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Douglass quoted in Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns, and Ken Burns, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 246.

<sup>8</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business* (New York: AMS Press, 1907), 100.

<sup>9</sup> Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 296.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> This information comes from John R. Towbridge, *Kentucky Historical Society*, Frankfort, Kentucky, [www.members.tripod.com/isaziz/ky\\_his.htm](http://www.members.tripod.com/isaziz/ky_his.htm) (November 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Ulysses S. Grant quoted in Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns, and Ken Burns, *The Civil War*, 381.

<sup>14</sup> Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> John R. Towbridge, *Kentucky Historical Society*, Frankfort, Kentucky, [www.members.tripod.com/isaziz/ky\\_his.htm](http://www.members.tripod.com/isaziz/ky_his.htm) (November 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Booker T. Washington quoted in John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 391-2.

<sup>18</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>20</sup> William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland, Ohio: Geo. M. Rewell & Co., 1887), 297.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>23</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business*, 101.

- <sup>24</sup>William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 298.
- <sup>25</sup> Clement Richardson, ed. *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 335.
- <sup>26</sup> James L. Blair, "Preston Taylor: A Doer of the Word," in *The Untold Story: A Short History of Black Disciples*, ed. W. A. Welsh (St. Louis, Missouri: Christian Board of Publication, 1976), 32.
- <sup>27</sup> "Telegrams, Resolutions and Messages of Condolence on the Passing of Elder Preston Taylor," *The Memorial Supplement for the Christian Plea* (April 1931): 1.
- <sup>28</sup> Clement Richardson, ed. *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race* (Montgomery, Alabama: National Publishing Company, 1919), s.v. "Reverend Preston Taylor," 335.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Carroll Van West, ed. *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture* (Nashville, Tennessee: Tennessee Historical Society/Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), s.v. "Citizens Bank," by Bobby L. Lovett, 163.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention," 24.
- <sup>33</sup> John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 393.
- <sup>34</sup> Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business*, 100.
- <sup>35</sup> William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 296.
- <sup>36</sup> James L. Blair, "Preston Taylor: A Doer of the Word," 31.
- <sup>37</sup> Information Schedule for the Commission on the Ministry completed by Preston Taylor on 3 November 1925, *Disciples of Christ Historical Society*, Nashville, Tennessee. The information schedule asks the minister to indicate the "total years and months of service to the Churches of Christ." Taylor answered, "Every day since July 30, 1869."
- <sup>38</sup> Preston Taylor's inaugural address to the National Christian Missionary Convention is quoted in its entirety in "The Status and Outlook of the Colored Brotherhood," *The Christian Plea* (March 1942): 1-5.
- <sup>39</sup> Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox, *Journey Toward Wholeness*, 13.
- <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>42</sup> Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention," 23.
- <sup>43</sup> "Death and Life," a sermon preached by Preston Taylor in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky on January 2, 1881 was reprinted in "Our Colored Brethren," *The Christian Standard* (February 1881).
- <sup>44</sup> Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1995), 295.
- <sup>45</sup> Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox, *Journey Toward Wholeness*, 14.
- <sup>46</sup> Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention," 23.
- <sup>47</sup> Carroll Van West, ed. *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture* (Nashville, Tennessee: Tennessee Historical Society/Rutledge Hill

Press, 1998), s.v. "Tennessee State University," by Bobby L. Lovett, 163.

<sup>48</sup>Preston Taylor, "Our Colored Brethren," *The Christian Standard* (31 January 1880): 37.

<sup>49</sup>A letter by Gilbert Miller, T. S. Nelson, and T. Augustus Reid printed in "Our Colored Brethren," *The Christian Standard* (21 June 1884): 197.

<sup>50</sup>Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox, *Journey Toward Wholeness*, 14.

<sup>51</sup>Preston Taylor, "The Status and Outlook of the Colored Brotherhood," 2.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>For a detailed discussion of the development of the NCMC during these years see chapters 4 ("Refining Objectives") and 5 ("Implementing the Vision") in Brenda M. Cardwell and William K. Fox, *Journey Toward Wholeness*, 31-47.

<sup>57</sup>Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention," 24.

<sup>58</sup>"The Last National Convention Address of Elder Preston Taylor," *Memorial Issue of The Christian Plea* (15 April 1931): 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Grant K. Lewis, "Preston Taylor Joins the Larger Convention," 24.

<sup>60</sup>The Will of Preston Taylor, *Disciples of Christ Historical Society*, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>61</sup>William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 300-1.

<sup>62</sup>Hand-written note in Preston Taylor's handwriting, *Disciples of Christ Historical Society*, Nashville, Tennessee.

**From "True Woman" to "New Woman"**  
**Ohio's Jessie Brown Pounds**  
by Sandra Parker\*

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, England, Europe, and America experienced a revolt against the prevailing view that women's nature was pure and feminine. Traditional pieties about the "True Woman" limited her to the domestic sphere. This was challenged by writers as diverse as Thomas Hardy and Louisa May Alcott who drew readers' attention to an alternate feminine ideal—the "New Woman" who would join men in the public sphere. They challenged verities about women's psychological and social possibilities and examined conventional claims of feminine limitations, questioning the lack of choices offered to women and smothering social conventions. As Elaine Showalter points out, new gender definitions carried potential political repercussions. "New Women" might project a transcendence of traditional male and female roles "through activism."<sup>1</sup>

Into this fray stepped an unlikely advocate from Ohio's Western Reserve. Jessie Hunter Brown was born into a farm family in 1861 and started life in the village of Hiram, Portage County. She was part of a new generation, women born after the 1850s, college educated in the 1880s, and working "professionals" before World War I. Today they are known as the "first generation" of "New Women." During their prime, these women upheld the Victorian definition of women as "moral ballast" but demanded extensions beyond the limited range of traditional female expectations. "True Women's" passive piety was rejected and experimental, new gender roles were claimed, as Martha Vicinus points out, in "terms beyond those of the nuclear family."<sup>2</sup>

"New Women," diverse and rooted in America's evolving frontier society, sometimes became renowned for their contributions as did two famous examples, fiction writer Sarah Orne Jewett and social activist, Jane Addams. Pounds lived nearly sixty years, forty of which were spent in the limelight as an optimistic social activist whose 600 hymns, dozens of short stories and essays, as well as seven novels all promoted justice issues.<sup>3</sup> She wrote about domestic life in the Western Reserve and chronicled the history of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio. Her writings supported the "New Woman" who challenged the "cult of True Womanhood's" pious and passive ideal.

It is necessary to understand such women intellectuals as the product of both personal and social forces. Such "New Women" drew upon loyalty to both patriarchal and maternal traditions and reinterpreted these discordant heritages.<sup>4</sup> Nowhere are the compromises caused by this ambivalent dichotomy between two different sets of cultural values more clear than in the life of Jessie Brown Pounds.

Pounds grew toward the philanthropic movements of New Womanhood from a passionately patriarchal tradition rooted in the Disciples of Christ. She was the fifth child of Holland Brown and Jane Abell. It is likely that Holland Brown was among the Baptist congregation converted in 1829 by Alexander

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Campbell in Judge Eyles' new barn at Wadsworth.<sup>5</sup> Sixteen years later he married Jane Abell, and in 1852 they moved to Hiram where the Disciples' new school, The Western Reserve Eclectic Institute, had opened two years earlier. Holland Brown worked as a farmer, became a lifelong Campbellite preacher and ran a boarding house for students at the Institute. An abolitionist who entertained Sojourner Truth in his Hiram home in the 1850s, Holland Brown later served as Disciples minister at Brooklyn and Franklin Circle churches on the west side of Cleveland. Jessie Brown Pounds' Hiram home has been called a "council room for church leaders,"<sup>6</sup> including Isaac Errett, James A. Garfield, and Burke Aaron Hinsdale.

Though Jessie Brown was born only five years before Alexander Campbell died, she listened to Campbellite preachers' debates and heard Isaac Errett, a minister in New Lisbon and Warren, friend of her father's, and founding trustee of the Institute, talk about the problems of spreading the faith and educating Campbellites. After the Civil War, Errett was asked by James A. Garfield to edit a new Disciples' publication, the *Christian Standard*; it was to replace Campbell's faltering *Millennial Harbinger*, which Errett had once helped edit. Errett edited the journal for eighteen years, until he died in 1888. His editorial work was assisted by persons like Garfield and Hinsdale. He also became a powerful mentor to a young protegee, Jessie Brown, whom he took under his wing in his editorial offices in Cincinnati after she left college in the mid-1880s. Errett taught her how to edit and write. John Wade describes his method:

not a line entered the *Standard* which did not pass three times under his eye... [the result was] great clearness, vigor, logical arrangement, profound insight, chaste and delicate humor, thorough and satisfactory treatment.<sup>7</sup>

Disciple historian Alanson Wilcox calls the *Christian Standard* the "most influential religious paper in all the world."<sup>8</sup> Later commentators added that Errett "filled the leadership vacuum left by the passing of the first generation restorers" and served as a "bishop" in the brotherhood.<sup>9</sup>

The second patriarchal influence on young Jessie Hunter Brown was James A. Garfield, who came to the Institute in 1853 as a student; by 1856 he was a teacher, and in 1870 he became its President. Garfield was an intellectual who worked for the Disciples as an editor and author. Part of Holland Brown's early intellectual gatherings in his Hiram household and reflecting their spirit, James A. Garfield grew into an ardent "secularist." He tried to be true to Alexander Campbell's injunctions about rational discourse and directed the fledgling Institute away from narrow goals of the religious sectarians and toward a rigorous intellectual curriculum that today would be called "liberal arts." For instance, Garfield insisted upon identical training for men and women who would be teachers and missionaries, at the time when nearby Oberlin College's offerings were strongly sex segregated.

America's President James A. Garfield was assassinated in 1881. At Hiram College, as the Institute was renamed in 1867, leadership now came from Burke Aaron Hinsdale, the third role model for Jessie Brown. He was a few years younger than Garfield, a steady friend to the Brown family whose hometown was Wadsworth. In fact, Burke Aaron Hinsdale's Uncle George built the Wadsworth Disciples of Christ church. Young Burke arrived in

Hiram in 1854, planning to combine study at the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute and farming when back home on vacation. When the elder Hinsdales told him to drop out of school and demanded his return to Wadsworth for rural labors, his Hiram landlady, Jessie's mother, Jane Abell Brown, at "Hiram's first hotel" (their home) intervened, protesting his recall. She convinced the Hinsdales that their son ought to remain in Hiram at the Institute. This incident cemented Burke Aaron Hinsdale's gratitude and attachment to the Brown family. Today Burke Aaron Hinsdale is probably best known for his influential work, *The Old Northwest* (1888), but contemporaries knew him as a Disciple of Christ intellectual who for many years edited the "Book Table," a column in Isaac Errett's *Christian Standard*.

Complementing the patriarchal influences on Jessie Brown Pounds was a matriarchal culture, transmitted through the instructions of her schoolteacher mother, Jane Abell. Daughter Jessie was taught that women should purvey Christian values that might save souls. In her writings, Jessie Brown Pounds says that her dominating literary foremother is the British author George Eliot [Mary Ann Evans], the "aesthetic teacher" she most frequently quotes. Another author Pounds admires is Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose significance she tacitly acknowledges when in June 1911 Jessie Brown Pounds adopts the pen name "Auris Leigh" in the *Christian Evangelist*, echoing the name of Browning's popular feminist hero, *Aurora Leigh* (1850).

Jessie Brown Pounds was also influenced by regional Ohio authors, particularly Alice Cary and Constance Fenimore Woolson. Their Ohio-based stories in books like Cary's *Clovernook Sketches* (1851) and Woolson's *Castle Nowhere: Lake Country Sketches* (1875) celebrate the old Northwest Territory. Also Harriet Beecher Stowe lived in this state for eighteen years, between 1832 and 1850 and observed the hardship of its Fugitive Slave Law. This experience provided the impetus for her 1851 *magnum opus*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which places seven key chapters in Ohio. Stowe attacked the True Woman's "pink and white tyranny," as an exploitation of feminine identity, and in 1871 named a novel by that title.

What Jessie Brown Pounds absorbed from the work of writers like Eliot, Browning, Cary, and Stowe was a noncondescending appreciation of "New Woman's" achievements; this represents what Ann Douglas calls "the susasion of moral and psychic nurture."<sup>10</sup> Half of all books published during the century were written by women,<sup>11</sup> sometimes causing male animosity. One critic mused: "every female born under the stars and stripes comes into the world prepared to write a novel."<sup>12</sup> However, America's traditionalists, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, who fretted over the "d—d mob of scribbling women,"<sup>13</sup> did not dampen the buoyant spirits of "New Women" authors like Pounds, who chose to enter the public sphere carrying a Bible.

Her literary foremothers taught Pounds that women could be both nurturers and leaders, escaping the entrapments of the "Cult of True womanhood." Pounds' fictional narratives continue the tradition of dramatizing how women may successfully confront challenges, despite privation. Her female protagonists overcome cultural and family-made obstacles to go on and become poets, missionaries, kindergarten teachers, secretaries, and doctors—

often building into Pounds' fiction the plot of a *Bildungsroman* or novel of growth. For instance, her early novel *A Woman's Doing* in 1886 includes a woman artist and another who is an actress but focuses on a hero named Myrtle Mowbrey who relinquishes plans to be a missionary in India so that she may nurse her invalided mother. Later Myrtle marries a preacher and settles into urban missionary work in Cleveland's West End. Here they teach residents "the art of wholesome living."

Today Jessie Brown Pounds' writing provides a historically valuable record of the commitments and disputes of the Disciples of Christ. Pounds believed that her depictions of clashes between aspiring women and a hostile man's world was justified by Alexander Campbell's endorsement of women's spiritual significance. Pounds' characters are individuals who reject Calvinism's theories of innate depravity and predestination; her plots often describe social problems which occur when the literal word of the Bible is silent. For example, when Jessie Brown was a child, arguments arose over organ music and church singing. Her liberal family encouraged church music and hymns, so Pounds wrote over 600 hymns, including such famous ones as "The Touch of His Hand," "Beautiful Isle," and "The Way of the Cross Leads Home." Fictional treatment of this theme appears in such delightful local color stories, such as "An Orthodox Heretic," whose protagonist, Father Winniston, is described as "honest, narrow, loving and intolerant, with the habit of giving the name of convictions to his prejudices, and of persevering in them to his own and others' hurt." Winneston fights against the addition of organ music in the Disciples church in Craydock's Corners but dies in Victorian style with an articulated vision of heaven which ironically includes his raptures about harps and singing angels.

Another Disciples' controversy concerned the organization of societies for evangelistic, benevolent, and missionary purposes. The Bible endorsed the message Harriet Beecher Stowe put in Uncle Tom's mouth, "we does for him when we does for his creatures." In this spirit Jessie Brown Pounds wrote many stories which underline the necessity for supporting domestic and foreign missions. For example, the local color story "Ingleside Missionary Collection" ironically depicts a "friendly church outsider," Colonel Bristow, whose unconverted example is flaunted by the elders as an argument for not supporting foreign missions. They say, why give missionaries money when "there are people right here at our doors, who are not yet converted." Heathens, domestic and foreign, both demonstrate for Pounds the deleterious effects of environment. She also frequently drew upon settings like Cleveland's urban slums to demonstrate the need for missionary "social workers." For instance, "Praying Kate" (1886) and "For A' That" (1886) dramatize the problems faced by the Salvation Army and Bethany Mission which strove to save alcoholics.

Temperance was another major theme. The Woman's Crusade against whiskey began in earnest in Ohio in 1873 when Dio Lewis led women in Hillsboro to shut down saloons. "In the context of Christian conservatism, these women gained a new ability to understand social issues from a standpoint that was centered in women's experience; they were critical of society as it was."<sup>14</sup> Jessie Brown Pounds' stories often dramatize how alcohol leads to poverty and the disruption of the family; "Keith Clymer's Victory" is a story

about a dying alcoholic who has become so virtuous that he declines alcohol-based medicine. Perhaps more psychologically insightful are Pounds' village sketches which show such comic figures as a lapsed minister named "old Bill Higley" who, when on a binge, pathetically fears his dog's accusing paw. Another empathetic illustration is found in her regional story "Deacon Briarly's Repentance" where the village "oracle" makes two passionate speeches against alcohol. His first animated lecture stops a meeting:

Ef somebody was to come among ye to-night, dealin' out bottled-up fire to your children, I guess you wouldn't set in your seats quite so comfortable . . . ef ye was to take all the snakes and the lizards an' the creepin' things of the airth . . . an' bile 'em down, and get the strongest concentrated meanness that could be made out of the hull on 'erth, ye wouldn't hev anything one hundred billionth part ez mean ez the man that brings the trail of this whisky sarpent's foot into the blessed Eden of home.

His final injunction is to locate the "grog dealers" and "cram brimstone down their throats with a red-hot poker!" As this quote illustrates, Pounds' regional dialogue, wit, and unconventional tolerance take such stories beyond tractarianism and elevate them into memorable regional literature.

Young peoples' welfare in general was a fundamental theme for Pounds. For instance, she was a staunch advocate of Francis E. Clark's Young Peoples' Christian Endeavor Society. This 1881 movement, begun by Congregationalists, was nondenominational. Between 1886 and the turn of the century, Pounds wrote several novels that included the topic of the Y.P.S.C.E., and her *Ironclad Pledge* (1890) wholly centers around the virtues of adolescent redemption by Christian Endeavor. It also appears in several stories, among them "How Dora Looked Out for Herself" and the serialized "The Student Volunteer."

For Pounds, the role of being a "public mother"<sup>15</sup> extended beyond the care of guiltless children to the support of their fallible elders. Her nurturance repeatedly appears as a theme about threatened religious leaders. Pounds' novel *Norman Macdonald* (1884) is likely to have been inspired by James A. Garfield; this narrative introduces a dying pastor who convinces a friend to carry Christian values into Washington's political arena. Two years later, *A Woman's Doing* (1886) presents a female protagonist who supports a weak pastor, and two other early novels, *Roderick Wayne* (1886) and *The Ironclad Pledge* (1890) similarly connect the interests of children and ministers.

In 1896 Jessie Hunter Brown married John E. Pounds, who had been an assistant to her father's pastorate in Cleveland. Afterward, the content of Jessie Brown Pounds' fiction shifts toward greater psychological realism and more overt analysis of social issues. Her final, mature novels were *The Young Man from Middlefield* (1901), *The Popular Idol* (1901), and *Rachael Sylvestre* (1904). These stories develop a medley of interrelated religious themes. For instance, *The Young Man from Middlefield* is psychologically realistic; there is an alcoholic youth who needs to be weaned away from urban saloons and a misguided "intellectual" pastor who lectures on church architecture. His church is described as a metaphorical "picture gallery, where rare souls may linger and dream of the good, the beautiful, and the true." The novel's Y.P.S.C.E. group, led by the interloping "Young Man" from the Western Reserve countryside, challenges the minister to return to rigorous Christianity. Here, too, Pounds highlights the plight of impoverished lumberyard workers

who crave genuine, pragmatic Christianity. Furthermore, this interesting novel lingers over the depiction of a would-be “New Woman” who yearns to become a medical student, despite unsupportive parents who dote on their drunken son and berate her for not being a debutante.

Throughout a forty-year writing career, Jessie Brown Pounds earned her own way and never limited herself to the affiliative role of being a minister’s daughter or wife. A single career woman until she was 35, Pounds in the 1890 census described her occupation as “Editor.” This was the adult identity she claimed, extending a career that began with poetry published at the age of twelve. After that, Jessie Brown never, in effect, stopped the occupation of writing.

Pounds edited the *Disciple of Christ* between 1884-1887, and in the ’90s, several young peoples’ magazines including *Our Young Folks*, *The King’s Builders*, and the *Ohio Christian Missionary*. In 1897 Jessie Brown Pounds also began editorial work for the Disciples’ publication, the *Christian Evangelist*, where she edited a column called “Woman’s Realm” between 1910 and 1911. She wrote for the *Christian Standard* through 1918.

Jessie Brown Pounds also worked for the *Christian Century*. In October 1908 Charles Clayton Morrison had bought the paper and established its editorial policy as “frank and open commitment to liberalism.” After that *The Christian Century* had grown into the most widely read interdenominational journal of opinion in America with weekly circulation exceeding 40,000. In the spring of 1920 *The Christian Century* disavowed its sectarian affiliation with the Disciples of Christ and became an “undenominational journal of religion.” On March 27, 1919, *The Christian Century* featured Jessie Brown Pounds’ essay, “Old Clothes,” on its front cover. A year later, on March 4, 1920, Pounds became a Contributing Editor, a position she maintained until her death on March 3, 1921. A “New Woman” like Jessie Brown Pounds who stood for widening women’s sphere and developing social reforms was a valuable asset to the editorial staff of the nation’s leading ecumenical Christian journal.

As a publishing author, Jessie Brown Pounds only submitted work to Disciples of Christ publications until her mature, undenominational essays written between 1919 to 1921. Between 1884 and 1901 her seven novels consistently show female characters who defy convention and protest women’s limited roles, joining the ongoing national debate about “woman’s sphere.” Their uneasy path is well illustrated by a debate in her 1886 novel, *A Woman’s Doing*, that dramatizes two men’s contrasting viewpoints: the liberal declares, “woman was created the equal of man. It is the function of Christianity to restore her to her original position.” The conservative counters, “Woman is essentially different from man,” but adds that prejudiced people should not “decide as to what is womanly or unwomanly.” Thus Pounds diagnoses the New Woman debate as being dependent upon conflicting definitions of human worth.

Even more clearly than in her fiction, Jessie Brown’s essays like “Christian Womanhood” in 1888 advocate women’s role as social reformers. Five years later, her perceptively titled 1893 essay, “New Womanhood,” anticipates a more celebrated March 1894 essay by Sarah Grand called “The

New Aspect of the Woman Question"; this *North American Review* essay has been incorrectly credited by such figures as Henry James<sup>16</sup> with formulating Pounds' phrase, "New Womanhood."

Pounds' early essays adroitly avoid contemporary "women's rights" rhetoric, like that found in the writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Nonetheless, she consistently expresses sympathy with feminism's goals—education, suffrage, and reform. For instance, Pounds excludes characters who might resemble radical women's rights "fanatics," such as Victoria Woodhull. At the end of her career, Pounds expresses shock with free-love, radicalism, and "bohemianism," which in her essay "The Books of Yesteryear" she describes as "nauseating sex-consciousness." Pounds' fiction is morally conservative; yet, it promotes a revisionist view of women's right to study, preach, work and vote.

It was her personal experiences, for example as a youngster growing up in Hiram and then living in urban Cleveland, that provided Jessie Brown Pounds with ideas for writing that emerge and appear as social activist themes. Her public career supported many nondenominational organizations, especially those which helped the disadvantaged, among them children, women, and the poor. She became an author, editor, and public speaker who served as a spokesperson and liberal regional leader in the Disciples of Christ. Pounds passionately depicted situations in which women's right to pursue a "vocation" is shown to be sacredly congruent with women's "home instinct." To avoid repudiating traditional female values, Jessie Brown Pounds simply redefined women's gender roles as continuing to be founded upon domestic nurturance that extended into the public sphere. As a case in point, Pounds was childless but spent her life fighting for children's welfare. A "public nurturer," she argued for the sanctity of the family and actively participated in such organizations as the Christian Woman's Board of Missions, for which she served in 1875 as its first State Secretary and organized diverse auxiliaries. She was manager of the Ohio Christian Missionary Society and also active in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, King's Daughters, and Red Cross. In this way, to use the terms of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Pounds became a first generation "housekeeper of America" who promoted social justice to advance the well-being of both womankind and mankind.<sup>17</sup>

Today it could be said that Pounds "in effect deconstructed woman,"<sup>18</sup> since dismantling John Ruskin's Victorian ideal, the "angel of the house," is a theme that unifies her work. From her juvenalia to the final *The Christian Century* essays, Jessie Brown Pounds promotes autonomous women who follow the "call" to public life. Her editing and activism is thus shrewdly styled to deflect accusations of "feminism," per se. And it is confirmed in the 1919 to 1921 essays published in *The Christian Century* where Jessie Brown Pounds fully identifies with the "New Woman's" role. In essays like "Woman in a New World" she dismisses "doll-babies" who are limited by beauty, piety, and passivity, despite being "softened by home influences." Only "New Women," she says, may find fulfillment in a social contribution that extends into the public domain.

Jessie Brown Pounds believed at the time she died from goiter and congestive heart failure on March 3, 1921 that "Social Christians" and the

“New Woman” were triumphing. Progress appeared to be happening; for instance, in the early 1890s Disciples discussed social settlements, and five years later in 1896 they built one in Cleveland, named Hiram House, after its founders from her home-town college. Historians describe this settlement house as a “model for Disciples social work” and the “climax of liberal humanitarianism among Disciples in the nineteenth century.”<sup>19</sup> Pounds lived long enough to see the University of Chicago-connected liberals among the Disciples of Christ move into mainstream Protestant thought. Her late essays endorse the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment that grants Prohibition, ratified on Jan. 16, 1919, and the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified on Aug. 18, 1920, which gave women the franchise.

While some first generation “New Women” became nationally well-known, like writer Sarah Orne Jewett and activist Jane Addams, famous for Chicago’s “Hull House,” other American “New Women,” like Jessie Brown Pounds, never received much wider public recognition than in Ohio’s northeast corner. Living in the Western Reserve, Pounds often resembles a heroine in her own fiction, a spirited “girl-artist” in her first novel who is blamed for being too independent and self-sufficient because she has a “free way o’ tellin’ her opinions.”

Reputations fluctuate. Once James Russell Lowell wrote Hiram’s Jessie Brown to praise her first novel, and Mount Healthy, Ohio’s Alice Cary was celebrated by John Greenleaf Whittier. Yet for most of the twentieth century, Pounds’ work has gone unrecognized and remained out of print. Arguably the first American intellectual to use the expression “New Woman,” Jessie Brown Pounds rose above her era’s limiting gender definitions by developing illustrations of the dangers inherent in restrictive women’s roles.

Charles Clayton Morrison, her last mentor and editor of *The Christian Century*, appreciated her caring womanliness and wrote an obituary praising her civic and social leadership in terms of “ecclesiastical statesmanship.”<sup>20</sup> This woman was unique in the Western Reserve, a pace setter who exorcised old gender definitions and lived a new kind of social role as a career intellectual. She also carved out new models in fiction. Jessie Brown Pounds’ remarkably expansive career as a rare American specimen today deserves recognition as a Disciples of Christ “New Woman.”

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## **LOOKING AHEAD**

### **2001 FORREST F. REED LECTURE**

Lexington Theological Seminary

Thursday, April 5, 2001

Leigh Eric Schmidt, Lecturer

*Author of Holy Fairs; Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period*

### **KIRKPATRICK HISTORIANS' SEMINAR**

August 6, 2001 7:00 p.m.

August 7, 2001 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### **Millennialism in the Tradition of Barton W. Stone**

Papers presented by: James B. North

David Edwin Harrell

D. Newell Williams

Presentations by Ketcherside scholars

(Ph.D. candidates and recent degree recipients)

### **KANSAS CITY**

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY BANQUET**

July 14, 2001

**Building the Future of the Historical Society**

**"Memories to Cyberspace"**

**Silena Holman's New Woman  
and How the Discussion Has Continued Today**  
by Amy Cornfield\*

Silena Holman's view of a woman's place in society was shaped in large part by her personal experiences. She was born in 1850 as the oldest of five children, four girls and a boy. Her life changed dramatically when at 14 years of age her father died fighting for the South in the Civil War. This left the family destitute with no source of income since her brother was but a baby, the youngest in the family, and her mother had no marketable skills. Silena taught local children and earned enough to buy back the home the family lost shortly after the death of her father. These experiences left an indelible mark on her life that surfaced an individualism and a drive not usually found in the "True Woman" of her time.

In her childhood, she became a Christian and for the rest of her life considered God to be at the center of all she did. At 24, Silena married Dr. T.P. Holman. Together they raised eight children, seven boys and one girl. She raised her children, including her daughter, to be God-fearing citizens with a sense of responsibility. Out of concern for all families, she became heavily invested in the State Woman's Christian Temperance Union early in its organization and was president about fifteen years out of the 35 years she was involved.

Holman recognized that the True Woman society taught her to be was nothing more than a stereotype and detrimental to the cause of Christ and society. True to her character, she did something about it. She wrote numerous articles on the changing role of women in America. She postulated what she believed the "New Woman" ought to be, not out of prideful anger with a cry for social justice, but because she believed God intended for women to be more than society's True Woman. She was obviously well versed in the Scripture and studied it thoroughly and intelligently. She believed that questions about women's role would be "settled" from Scripture in the end, but recognized the prejudices and emotion that surface in such a discussion.<sup>1</sup> She thought through her position carefully and wrote in a clear, humble manner. Even when she felt misunderstood, she was never apologetic, condescending, or demanding; she accomplished her task in a "quiet, womanly way."<sup>2</sup>

The restrictive idea of womanhood which Holman combated was the ideal Victorian woman. She was religious by nature which meant to the Victorian mind that she was intellectually inferior to man. Because of her religious superiority, a great amount of blame for wayward husbands and sons was placed on her shoulders. In fact, it was her duty to reform such men. Women were to be the guiding lights of morality and purity and to be otherwise meant that she was no woman at all. She had no other ambition to define her position than as a wife and a mother. She had no place in society if unmarried. She was submissive to her husband concerning every sphere of life. A true woman made her home a haven for her hard-working husband and was useful

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to him in many ways. She was nurse, cook, support and comforter. She was perpetually pleasant and agreeable with "sincerity, benevolence, and forbearance" as her "watchwords."<sup>3</sup> She lived her life for others around her without consciousness of her own desires and talents. The True Woman was defended not only in society, but also by the church as witnessed by an article in 1880 entitled "The True Woman" signed by "Public Opinion."

At the turn-of-the-century, the True Woman was slowly being transformed into the New Woman. Previous assumptions about the scriptural status of women were being challenged. Silena Holman did not necessarily disagree with everything for which the True Woman stood. She, in fact, did believe that man was the head of woman and the husband the head of the household where the wife needed to be submissive under God. She did believe that a woman's manner should be pleasant and that her first duty was always to her family. Her own personal experience, though, did not match up with the popular stereotype and, therefore, she searched diligently for answers. She did not assume that she was inferior to man by virtue of her gender. She assumed that woman was created intellectually comparable to man and that women should indeed have a more active function and duty in the church and society.

Silena Holman regarded the frequent caricature of the New Woman with the same disdain that she regarded the sentiment that women's minds were inferior to men's. In an article to the *Gospel Advocate* titled "The New Woman. No. 2," she said that the New Woman portrayed in the papers was nothing short of a travesty that continued to feed unwarranted fears that the entire female race was in danger of sliding into apostasy and abandoning their families. In the article "The New Woman," she cited how times were changing and the women of America with it. She then gave a historical account of how the role of women had been repressed in education and employment. She clearly did not see the origin of the low position of women as based on Genesis, where many of her critics did, but saw it within the context of human history.

Silena saw the New Woman much like she saw herself. The New Woman would not place herself in the degrading position of having to "marry for a living," but marry "because she has found her king, and love has made her a captive."<sup>4</sup> If she never married, her life was still a success and nothing to lament. Upon waiting patiently for marriage, she would support herself and not be a burden on relatives or society. Silena did not accept the social arguments that women were taking jobs away from men or that women would refuse to marry and bear children in the name of their independence. Yes, there were women like this, but in the end, the New Woman would be refined and retain only the positive qualities.

The New Woman would be a true "helpmeet" to her husband. She would aid him best by drawing upon her strengths, instead of subduing them. She would be able to engage in meaningful conversation and decision-making. She would look after her own health as well as the health of her family. She would no longer be frail and physically unable to meet the challenges ahead of her. This would involve exercising and keeping up with health news.

The New Woman would be intelligent and informed in many areas of life. She would be aware of politics and history and cast an educated ballot. She would study every aspect of family health, including prenatal care.

In the end, the New Woman would be an asset to society at large and not bring about moral decay. Silena did not accept the argument that the sins of the world rested on women's shoulders, but both genders had an equal share of the blame. Women were not holier or purer than men, but humans with a sinful nature. Overall, she was optimistic about the human condition, though, and believed that in every issue, including this one, God's truth would prevail in the end and society would accept woman for who she was.

The basic difference between Silena's position of the New Woman and the men she conversed with through the *Gospel Advocate* was one of interpretation. Silena, as well as her critics, believed that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God and held the final authority in all matters. She approached the Scriptures in the manner of a New Woman, clear and logical. Judging from her arguments, she accepted the early Disciples' hermeneutics and looked for explicit commands and inference to give her guidance. She looked at the Bible inductively and tried to extract meaning from the whole counsel of Scripture on a given topic, and not just a few, select verses. She tried to let the clear passages dictate the meaning of the obscure and take each verse within its own context. F.W. Smith and the other men she conversed with through the *Gospel Advocate* agreed with her. What Holman and her critics parted company on, though, was what teaching was clear and what teaching was obscure. Another major issue between Holman and her opponents was the distinction between "public" and "private." Silena believed that if it was right for a women to share the gospel message with one unsaved man, it was right with 100 men. Her critics believed that it was imperative for women to teach the good news, but only permissible in a private setting. Private essentially meant that the teaching was done in the woman's home under the authority of her husband. Public meant speaking in front of any other crowd in any setting other than a home. It is important to note that while Silena did believe God sanctioned women to speak "publicly" to non-believing men as well as believing men, she did not believe it expedient in all situations. She did not believe all women (nor all men) should teach because not all were qualified to do so. Everyone had a part to play in the church and should be allowed to play it.

Silena saw the clearest passages on women's role in Scripture to be those of examples of God working through different women of the Bible. Acts 1 and 2, particularly the Day of Pentecost, was one of her principal arguments for women speaking in public. Acts 1:14 states that "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer (in the upper room of v.13), along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." When Pentecost came, the Holy Spirit rested on all who were present and all spoke in tongues, of which the women in 1:14 were included. In order to clarify the situation Peter stood up and said in vs.16-18, "but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.'" Silena believed the women were obviously praying and later speaking in the presence

of men and that this was a fulfillment of prophesy. F.W. Smith believed that Silena “jumped to conclusions” and quoted J.W. McGarvey as saying that the all in chapter 2 were not the 120 found in chapter 1, but were solely the apostles. McGarvey instead connected 1:26 where one found the apostles selecting another apostle with 2:1. He assumed the others were not present for the selection. Smith went on to reason that the promise of the Holy Spirit was only given to the apostles by Jesus and no one else for that particular day. David Lipscomb largely dismissed Silena’s reasoning because it was based on “the idol of her love,”<sup>5</sup> which was woman’s right to preach in public.

Another clear example to Silena Holman of women preachers/teachers in the first century church was the example of Philip’s four daughters prophesying in Acts 21. That this was done in public was most likely because I Corinthians 11 told the reader that women were to wear veils while praying and prophesying. Since women wore veils only in “public” or in the presence of men, it stands to reason that Philip’s four daughters not only could have, but most likely did, prophesy in public. Silena then went on to define prophecy. I Corinthians 14:3,4 told the reader that prophecy was used to edify the church so Philip’s daughters edified the church. It does not say they prophesied in their homes or solely with women present. David Lipscomb agreed that the four daughters did indeed prophesy, but that they did “not get up before promiscuous assemblies.”<sup>6</sup> To explain the I Corinthians 11 passage, he stated that the women did pray in the assembly, but quietly, to themselves.

Another example was Priscilla teaching Apollos in Acts. Again, Silena’s critics’ definition of public came into play here. F.W. Smith replied that Priscilla taught Apollos in her home. A.A. Bunner recognized that Priscilla taught, but not publicly. David Lipscomb also recognized that Priscilla taught Apollos, but in conjunction with Paul and never in front of an audience.

Silena not only used examples of women in the Bible to prove her point, but she also used different Biblical principles and teachings. One of the teachings she used was Galatians 3:28. She explained this passage by quoting Dr. Adam Clark, “Under the blessed spirit of Christianity, they (women) have equal rights, equal privileges, and equal blessings; and, let me add, they are equally useful.”<sup>7</sup> She then went on to illustrate that the reason why women are discriminated against in our culture was because “some of the prejudices of heathenism cling to us.”<sup>8</sup> Both Bunner and Lipscomb agreed that this passage expresses a vertical relationship and not a horizontal one. While men and women are seen equally before God concerning salvation, they do not have the same function or purpose in the kingdom of God.

Silena saw women preaching and teaching as a fulfillment of prophesy in the Old Testament. Psalm 68:11 and Isaiah 40:3ff foretold of a time when women would be spreading the good news. Brother Smith saw no connection between the prophesy in Psalms and the New Testament since, in his view, there were no examples of women speaking the gospel publicly. Lipscomb argued that Isaiah was referring to the church, the “daughter of Zion.”

Besides calling on Scripture, Silena also called on scholars and history to make her point. She used Brother Creel’s pamphlet to emphasize that the church’s early leaders including Campbell agreed that the women in Acts 2

were given the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. She used Mosheim's History of Christianity to prove historically that men and women prayed and preached in the early church.

As far as women in the workplace and politics she reasoned that there was no explicit command in the Scriptures for women to stay out of politics or the workplace; God was silent on the matter. If silence of the Scriptures meant prohibition, then women could neither sing nor participate in the Lord's Supper since there were no examples of women doing such things. Since Paul gave permission to women to remain unmarried, it stood to reason that she should be able to support herself.

As far as voting, the New Woman had the intelligence and knowledge of human needs to vote.

The crux of Lipscomb's, Bunner's, and Smith's argument against females participating in the public church service and politics was found in three Biblical passages, Genesis 3, I Corinthians 14, and I Timothy 2. The Genesis 3 passage most clearly illustrates the assumptions and prejudices of these men. It set the stage for all other arguments. In response to Silena over headship, A.A. Bunner summed up the sentiment when he said,

I believe that our heavenly Father never intended that the woman should be a leader. The very first attempt that she ever made at leading, resulted in disaster to the government of God, for she led our race into rebellion and ruin and immediately after her sad failure God for the first time said unto her 'your desire shall be unto your husband and he shall rule over you.'<sup>9</sup>

He then used Sarah as a godly example of a wife who obeyed her husband and called him ruler. F.W. Smith reiterated that Genesis 3:16 was the controlling verse for women's role in society or the church. David Lipscomb inferred an emotional nature in women from the Genesis passage. He interpreted this passage as indicating that it was this emotional nature that led Eve, and subsequently humankind, into sin so that God could no longer trust womankind based on her inferior intelligence and ability to make reasonable decisions. More than once he waved off Silena's reasoning because she was working from this "strong emotional nature and intense love."<sup>10</sup> Silena saw no connection between Genesis 3:16 and an emotional nature in women. She believed the Bible taught otherwise and refused to let one single verse control the rest of the document.

I Corinthians 14:34, "Let your women keep silent in the churches," and I Timothy 2:12, "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet," were obscure passages to Silena in light of the clear examples of women holding leadership positions in the church. To her critics, though, they were crystal clear and spoke for themselves in a church or political setting. Interestingly enough, these "clear" passages only spoke of women in the public setting and did not apply in her own home with her saved husband, children, or other men. Lipscomb went so far as to say that God had not entrusted His word with women so they would have nothing to lead. Lipscomb also stated once that if men refused to take the lead in a church, the women would have to complete the duties of running the church. Silena took the commands in their context and applied them to disruptive women in those particular churches. She had no problem with disruptive women being silent, but under normal, healthy circumstances women were permitted to pray and

teach with men present. In fact, Paul inferred that women were indeed praying and prophesying when he told them in I Timothy 2 to pray and prophesy with their heads covered.

The battle over the extent of woman's authority in the church and government was long from settled at the turn-of-the-century and, in fact, continues to rage today. The discussion has continued in the *Gospel Advocate* as well as other Restoration magazines, such as the *Firm Foundation*, *Wineskins*, and *Image*.<sup>11</sup>

Even though generally speaking, the *Firm Foundation* is considered the most conservative of the four, the *Gospel Advocate* the most moderate, and *Wineskins* and *Image* the most progressive, they had similarities in their positions and arguments over women's role in the church and society as expressed during the years 1990-1995. One similarity in position is that culture and the feminist movement precipitated women's changing role in the church. Another similarity is that single women and their unique circumstances and openness to service were never addressed.<sup>12</sup> All four magazines promoted "separate but equal" stances on men's and women's roles. The arguments used in the four modern magazines centered less on doctrinal passages, particularly Genesis 1-3, I Corinthians 14, and I Timothy 2, much like Lipscomb, Bunner, and Smith used.

Nevertheless, the differences in approach among these magazines and their positions and arguments become apparent. While all state explicitly that they seek to interpret the Scriptures holistically and without bias, there are fundamental differences in how they approach the women's issue and Scripture and what conclusions they draw as a result.

In the *Firm Foundation* and *Gospel Advocate*, culture was an enemy of the church. It influenced women to grab power in the work-world and be discontent with their subordinate role in the church and home. The *Firm Foundation* also spoke of the "liberal media" in several articles being a cause of discontent. *Wineskins* and *Image* identified cultural and political correctness as motives of women seeking larger roles in the church, but were more likely to also recognize an earnest seeking of women desiring to use their gifts and talents in the body. One female author in *Image* believed the church gave into culture generations ago with the adaptation of the hierarchical system. Edyth Lane stated,

If we are obliged to fill differing roles, it is a result of adapting to the world we live in, not because God demands it. Christ did not leave us a set of rules with which to construct an organization in which some have authority by virtue of their positions. The church went down that road into apostasy with its hierarchy, and we have the religious world of sects and creeds as a result.<sup>13</sup>

She illustrated her point by pointing out that Paul did not seek to change the relationship between master and slave and would not have upset a matriarchal society if he had encountered one. Our society is changing, so the church must change with it where there is no clear teaching on a matter so as to promote peace and unity in the church.

Again, as in Silena Holman's time, the difference between "public" and "private" came into play. All four magazines saw a strong distinction between public (the general assembling of the saints) and private (one's home or workplace). In the *Gospel Advocate* and *Firm Foundation*, a woman's

sphere of teaching was to take place within her home or in "private." Priscilla, Phoebe, Lois, and Eunice were cited as common examples of women who taught in their homes or in conjunction with men. The older women were to teach the younger women, and above all else, mothers to teach their children. Women could teach children's classes at church and even "write scholarly articles for brotherhood papers, especially those designed for mothers and children."<sup>14</sup> In *Wineskins* and *Image*, women, under the authority of the men of the congregation, were able to teach to a much wider audience. They could teach in their homes or in the assembly to mixed audiences. They could teach the unsaved as well as the saved.

The image of the ideal woman in the *Gospel Advocate* and *Firm Foundation* sounded much like the True Woman of the early 1900s *Gospel Advocate*. The *Firm Foundation* especially spent a lot of space on the qualities of the ideal, Christian woman. The ideal woman exhibited all of the virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" that the True Woman exhibited.<sup>15</sup> Her examples were Sarah and the Proverbs 31 woman. There were fundamental differences, though. The modern ideal woman could work outside of the home if circumstances demanded and she was not inferior to men in any way, she only had a different role to fulfill. Her crowning glory was her children since "God gave women a place of honor, comfortable and secure, in which they have the power to make a difference in the world through the privilege of raising and training the next generation."<sup>16</sup> According to H.A. Dobbs, a woman had to be "scatterbrained" to work outside of the home.<sup>17</sup> *Wineskins* and *Image* do not speak much about women and the workplace; women's role in the church appears to be more of a crucial issue. All four magazines went to great pains to stress that even though a woman's role differs from that of a man's, she was just as important to the kingdom of God as a man.

There are major differences in how each magazine treats Genesis 1-3, I Corinthians 14, and I Timothy 2. To the *Firm Foundation* and the *Gospel Advocate*, just like the *Gospel Advocate* of old, Genesis was the controlling factor for all subsequent texts, especially I Timothy 2. Women were not to have leadership positions because it was Eve who usurped Adam's authority and ate the forbidden fruit. The *Firm Foundation* recognized that Genesis 3:16 was a curse as a result of the fall, and that this curse still holds authority for today. The *Gospel Advocate* said that sin set men and women in competition in the workplace and the church. Genesis 1-3 set a clear pattern of male headship and female subordination. Adam was created before Eve and Eve was created for Adam. "Man was woman's antecedent, her *raison d'être* or her justification for existence."<sup>18</sup> Not every author expressed this sentiment. Some, instead, expressed that woman and man complement each other and exist for each other. No other article expressed the *Gospel Advocate's* position on Genesis 1-3 in relation to women better than "The New Eve?" by Nancy Ferguson.<sup>19</sup> She stressed that women have an equal share in salvation and importance in the church, but likened the modern woman who was questioning her role in the church to Eve. The questioning woman, like Eve, was being deceived by the world and led to believe that she could have authority not granted to her by God.

The predominate idea of Genesis 1-3 in *Wineskins* and *Image* is

presented much differently. Before the fall, there was no evidence of a hierarchy, but after, pride came into play and both sexes started to struggle for power. Jesus came to initiate a restoration of God's original intention in relationships. Eve being created from the rib of Adam meant that woman and man were created with the same nature. Being a "helpmeet" meant women and men were to fulfill each other's needs and one could not live without the other. This interpretation of Genesis 1-3 in the two magazines did not mean that men and women did not have different roles. On the contrary, men still have the positions of heads of the households and churches.

I Timothy 2 and I Corinthians 14 expressly state that women are in subordinate roles to men in the church and home. To the *Gospel Advocate* and *Firm Foundation* this means that women are not permitted to lead in the public assembly, whether it is song leading, passing communion, preaching, or teaching in mixed audiences. The authors support this position by insisting that there are absolutely no examples of women public leaders in the New or Old Testaments. Paul's commands to be silent and not teach a man are clear doctrines extending over culture and time, especially since Paul refers to Genesis and the preeminence of man in I Timothy.

In *Wineskins* and *Image*, a much different picture of these passages was seen. These authors set the context within the immediate situation. These passages were interpreted to speak to disruptive women in the church assembly. This meant that while men were the heads of women in authority, women had a much wider role in the church than the more conservative interpretation allowed. Opinions on women's role in the assembly was split. Some taught that women could teach mixed audiences, pass communion, lead songs, or have another visible role in the assembly as the church needs while under the authority of the elders. Others, though, believed that women could not have a visible role in the assembly or leadership, but could teach classes, read Scripture, write articles, or make announcements.

The discussion on women's roles in church and society that Silena Holman believed would be "settled" is far from finished as evidenced in the modern magazines produced by the Churches of Christ. The basic arguments are still being debated and the basic concerns over authority and position are still being addressed. The assumptions regarding woman's worth and intelligence have been one positive change in all the discussion. Women are no longer presumed feeble in mind and body, but are capable co-workers with men.

#### NOTES

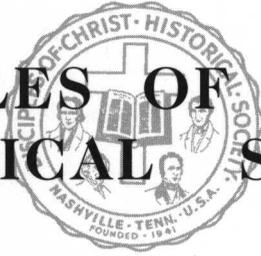
<sup>1</sup>"The Bible settles all questions of right and wrong by the eternal principles of truth and justice promulgated in its pages, but people do not always readily accept the teachings of the Bible on subjects where the teaching is contrary to their natural inclinations...and usually the questions that stir the nations in this way are settled right in the end and in accordance with the teachings of God's Book." Silena, Holman, "The New Woman. No. 2," *Gospel Advocate* 28 (July 16, 1896): 452.

<sup>2</sup>Silena Holman, "The Woman Question. No. 2," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (March 6, 1913): 218.

<sup>3</sup>Public Opinion, "The True Woman," *Gospel Advocate* 22 (July 15,



# DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Order of the Stone-Campbell Fellowship

The Disciples of Christ Historical Society has been blessed through the years with gifts from estates. Some have come unsolicited; others have been planned in advance with leadership of the Society. These gifts have measurably strengthened the ministry of the Society. Through the Order of the Stone-Campbell Fellowship the Society can recognize these intended gifts and express appreciation to those planning the gifts.

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Members of the Fellowship are persons who have a hope and a dream for the future of the Society as it continues to serve individuals and the church. They have named the Historical Society in their Will, established a charitable gift Annuity or Trust, made a gift of life insurance, or given their home or personal property while retaining lifetime use of the property. Some of these provisions were made early in the days of the Society's 50 year history while others were made in recent months. Each is a testimony to a life of stewardship and an expression of faith in the purpose and mission of the Historical Society.

## The fellowship is named for two of the earliest Church leaders

Barton Warren Stone was the first of the major leaders to appear on the scene in 19th century America. Soon thereafter Alexander Campbell's voice was heard. From the followers of these men a church was born which continues to spread the gospel. The history of that movement housed in the Thomas W. Phillips Memorial is a legacy of their early faith and witness. Their gifts live on in the life of the church and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.