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DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**STALCUP SEMINAR FOR CHURCH HISTORIANS
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Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, TN
(Watch DCHS web site for details)**



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— From the Editor's Desk

What role should Christian ministers play in relation to social issues and human rights? This question emerges forcefully from both studies in this issue of *Discipliana*.

Paul Allen Williams examines the relation of Disciples missionaries to the colonial practices of the Congo Free State during the "Red Rubber" era. The term "red rubber" refers not only to the human blood on the wild rubber collected as a tax by the colonial administration (harvesting wild rubber was a difficult and dangerous task), but also to the colonial practice of cutting off the hands of Congolese civilians who failed to pay the rubber tax.

Bruce A. Breeding looks at the ministry of Disciples pastor Colbert Cartwright in Little Rock, Arkansas during and after the events surrounding the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. Cartwright preached on the issues, counseled with participants, and published articles on the events in Little Rock in the *Christian-Evangelist*, the *Christian Century*, and *Christianity and Crisis*.

Ministers have often been criticized for becoming involved in social and human rights issues. They have also been criticized for failing to do so. The studies by Williams and Breeding describe the actions of particular Disciples ministers in highly controversial circumstances. These stories can now be read with historical perspective; they invite reflection on contemporary events.

D. Newell Williams

— From the President's Desk

Source. In historical study our first question is: What, or Who, is the Source? Where is our information coming from? In the purest sense, we should not use the term 'source' unless we are speaking of a primary reference. Our sources are those first person accounts of what happened. Others will come along between the occurrence and us to comment on the event. These are secondary references. While these fellow historians can, at times, be helpful in our pursuit of the facts, they are, nevertheless, secondary. They are not sources. We confuse the two at our peril. Because, ultimately, our interpretation of history must be founded firmly on the sources.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. We want to make sure that we are connected to the source of life, and not just a transmitter of it. It is important to learn from others. In particular, there are saints who have gone before us who can give insights into a fruitful relationship with God. Whether it is a giant like Augustine, or a saint I have known personally, she or he can give specific direction, from experience, which will hasten my growth in faith. But the saint is secondary. He is not the source. I must be careful to put God at the center of my attention. The Spirit is the source of life, hope, peace, love, health and abundance.

At first glance it seems obvious. Of course God is the source. Of course the Spirit is primary. But unless I remind myself of that fact each day, it is easy to drift. Before I realize it I am reading the ideas of others and equating them with scripture. I am listening to one who I love and respect, but I confuse her voice with that of God.

In historical research it is necessary to spend time with the sources. By reading through large numbers of documents I begin to absorb the thoughts of the source. Little by little, over time, I gain a sense of the person – who he is, what he believes, how he thinks, what influences his ideas, and the philosophies underlying his words. It is only through this expenditure of time that I come to know my source. Then, and only then, can I begin to interpret.

With God, my source, I must spend the requisite time. Day after day, hour after hour, I come to know God through scripture and community. Our spirits connect. Ideas reach out to me and transfer the thoughts of heaven to the world in which I live. Scripture and prayer and communion give direct, one-on-one contact with the divine. As I go directly to the source, I receive God's power in my life. You cannot give it to me. I must receive it personally from God, through Christ.

It's interesting. One would not automatically connect historical study with a relationship with God. Yet, they are both dependent on source. I'm not willing to settle for the secondary. I want the primary source. I want to hear from someone who lived through the historical event. And I want to hear from the One who gives life. I want the Source.

Glenn Thomas Carson

DISCIPLES AND “RED RUBBER”: THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CONGO MISSION (DCCM), THE CONGO FREE STATE, AND THE CONGO REFORM CAMPAIGN, 1897-1908¹

Paul Allen Williams*

A Public Relations Snaflu and a Question of Historical Evidence

At the end of the twentieth century, Disciples of Christ in North America commemorated the centennial anniversary of their mission work in central Congo, a country whose history is fraught with controversy.² Church leaders, former missionaries, and other interested people, participated in a centennial gathering in Indianapolis on 17 April 1999 complete with speakers and workshops.³ The March 1999 issue of *The Disciple*, the principal monthly magazine of the Disciples of Christ at the time, marked the centennial in the cover articles. Ironically, the issue featured a silhouette of a Zulu warrior and the title “100 Years in Africa: Did we help or hurt?”⁴ It is ironic for this reason: although the centennial anniversary to which the cover article alluded concerned the Disciples of Christ acquisition on 17 April 1899 of a Baptist mission station called Bolenge, at the intersection of the Equator and the Congo River, that event was not mentioned anywhere in the magazine. Further, the Zulu live thousands of miles from Bolenge and speak a completely different language. Thus, to portray the centennial of Disciples in the Congo with an image of a Zulu warrior is curious. Despite these puzzling features, what is even more significant is the actual content of the articles in that issue.

Daniel Hoffman wrote the cover article and its companion piece, “No Place for Sentimentality,” stimulating a heated response among many individuals familiar with the history of Disciples of Christ in Congo.⁵ Hoffman’s two references to the century-long history of Disciples of Christ missionaries in Congo were cryptic. Surprisingly, he neglected to employ some of the classic tropes of missionary literature: the risks taken, the personal sacrifices made, and the extraordinary amount of work done by the missionaries. In addition, while calling for a more careful examination of the history of Disciples in central Africa, Hoffman provided no information about that history. The controversy arose from the starkly negative implications of his articles. In his two references to early Disciples of Christ missionaries in Congo, one may infer that Royal and Eva Dye were going about “killing cultures” and that Ellsworth Faris was complicit in the cruel excesses of the “red rubber” period, whether or not those inferences were intended by the author. Many people took his comments to be an attack on the early missionaries with no supporting data. Neither he nor the magazine editors contacted the only scholar researching that history at the time.

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This semi-official denominational presentation of events and its aftermath appeared to pose two questions: Were the early Disciples of Christ missionaries in the Congo culture-destroying collaborators of a ruthless colonial regime? On the other hand, were they sincere, well-meaning people whose primary concern was the well-being, both temporal and eternal, of the African peoples among whom they worked, as they believed themselves to be? Like the question on the cover of the March 1999 *Disciple* (“Did we help or hurt?”), each of these questions contain presuppositions which prejudice the discussion. These questions have troubled some Disciples and members of other Protestant denominations, as well. Standard anti-missionary rhetoric has also included these questions as innuendo or allegation.

Despite the perceived slight against the missionaries’ reputations, Hoffman raised a valid set of questions concerning the relationship between the DCCM missionaries and the colonial practices of the Congo Free State. He cited Adam Hochschild who provided evidence that at least one early Disciples missionary, Ellsworth Faris, knew of the large number of killings at the hand of officers and soldiers of the *Force Publique*, the armed force used by King Leopold’s administration to collect the rubber tax and to exert control over resistant communities. Some have compared the result of the actions of the government of the Congo Free State with the genocidal policies and practices of Hitler and Stalin.⁶ Thus, Hoffman asked,

If Disciples did oppose Leopold in some public manner, how can the narrative of this opposition be retrieved and reclaimed by Disciples both in North America and the Democratic Republic of the Congo? If, by contrast, there was no opposition we may well wonder about the reasons for the silence.⁷

Hoffman went on to speculate about the connection between the presumed “silence” among early Disciples missionaries about Leopold’s genocide, and, as he put it, “the reluctance of Congolese Disciples leaders in subsequent periods to engage issues of justice with the state, especially during the recent dictatorial regime of Mobutu Sese Seko.” In this series of questions, Hoffman hinted at the possibility of a very disturbing historical role played by Disciples of Christ missionaries and subsequent Congolese church leaders. Although he made no direct allegations, in a few lines, he implicated the early missionaries and the later Congolese church leaders in a conspiracy of silence extending from one brutal dictatorship (Leopold II’s) to another (Mobutu’s). The latter innuendos provoked outrage from missionary supporters. Nevertheless, taking Hoffman’s basic question at face value (“how can the narrative of this opposition be retrieved by Disciples both in North America and the Democratic Republic of the Congo?”), let us return to the historical issue at hand.

Did DCCM missionaries participate in the movement to reform the abusive practices of the Congo Free State? If Hoffman had read David Lagergren, he might have been able to claim some scholarly foundation for his apparently negative judgment regarding the early DCCM missionaries.⁸ Commenting on the transfer of the Bolenge station from Baptists to Disciples of Christ in 1899, Lagergren said, “In its relations to the State, Bolenge changed from a centre of opposition to what could best be described as an ally.” Further, noting the connections between the DCCM

and the state officials in their educational and medical work during the first few years at Bolenge, Lagergren observed,

The friendly relation which was thus established between Bolenge and Coquilhatville was remarkable in that it was to be maintained even when the new crisis between State and Mission broke out. No longer could the critics of the Congo State expect much support from Bolenge.⁹

Lagergren was correct to note “the friendly relation...between Bolenge and Coquilhatville,” but he was incorrect to say that, “No longer could the critics of the Congo State expect much support from Bolenge.” Although Lagergren was careful in his work, there is evidence in the published record and in private letters that Disciples of Christ missionaries participated individually and corporately in the movement to oppose the abusive practices of the Congo Free State. My thesis is that both the curiously motivated mission administrator and the careful historian were incorrect in their judgments about the Disciples of Christ missionaries in the Congo Free State and their role in the Congo Reform Campaign. After an introduction to the historical context, the bulk of this study is an effort to document the basis for this thesis – in Hoffman’s terms, to retrieve and reclaim the narrative of the Disciples public opposition to Leopold’s regime.

A review of the history of the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM) in relation to the early colonial state is long overdue, and I hope that it will contribute to the history of Congo and to the role of Christian missions in colonial central Africa, a story that continues to affect the course of history in the post-colonial period.¹⁰ Several basic questions will help to nuance future discussions about the DCCM missionary community and its role in the history of Congo. First, what specifically happened in Congo that one might describe as human rights atrocities or state-sponsored terrorism? Second, in what sense was the social location of the missionary “ambiguous,” and what position did the DCCM missionaries assume regarding the atrocities committed by colonial officials, their agents, and their allies? Third, how did the DCCM missionaries articulate their judgments of and opposition to the atrocities committed by the colonial state?

This paper addresses these questions in the following two sections: (1) an introduction to conditions in the Congo Free State (1885-1908) that evoked the Congo Reform Campaign; (2) a review of the relationship between the DCCM and the Congo Free State in three phases, with special reference to evidence of Disciples’ participation in the reform campaign. It is my hope that a review of these questions in light of both documentary and literary source materials will contribute to a more critical and more accurate assessment of the history of the DCCM.

The Congo Free State (1884-1908) and the Congo Reform Campaign

The European colonial processes in the upper Congo River basin began to take shape prior to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. After Henry Morton Stanley descended the Congo River in 1876-1877, agents of Leopold II, King of the Belgians, approached him, and subsequently, Leopold engaged Stanley to return to Congo and to ascend the big river, making “treaty” arrangements and establishing stations along the way under the flag of the Africa International Association (AIA). Alphonse Vangele and Lt. Camille Coquilhat established a government (AIA) station

at Equatorville, known locally as Wangata, in 1883.¹¹ Commercial enterprises, *Anglo-Belgian Indian Rubber Company* (ABIR) and the *Société Anonyme Belge* (SAB), based on the rubber and ivory trades were well established, and the *Force Publique* used its military power to insure the success of the colonial enterprise.¹²

Soon after the original Equatorville station was established, the Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM) founded a mission station near the AIA station, which they quickly turned over to the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU). Roman Catholic missionaries also entered the area, and by 1895, Trappist monks had begun mission work a few miles up the Ruki River from Coquilhatville at Bamania (now a station of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart). The final mission society established in the nineteenth century near the equator was the Foreign Christian Missionary Society (FCMS). The FCMS acquired the Bolenge station from the ABMU on 17 April 1899. Thus, when the FCMS missionaries arrived in the Congo in 1897, two decades of colonial intrusion had already taken place.

Approved by the European “powers” on 24 February 1885, the Berlin Conference agreement (commonly known as the “Act of Berlin”) included provisions for freedom of commerce, protection of “natives,” and freedom of religion. The extent to which the Congo Free State abided by this agreement was a point of controversy from a very early stage. In order to protect Belgium’s political reputation among the European nations, the Belgian Parliament eventually settled the controversy by acquiring the State in 1908, renaming it the Belgian Congo, and instituting reforms.

Concerning the freedom of commerce, the colonial regime divided much of the nation into various “domains” for selected monopolistic concessions. Major concessionary companies and the Belgian crown directly controlled so-called “vacant land,” thus squeezing the indigenous population both geographically and economically. The two major concessionary companies in the equator area were SAB and ABIR. During the period of the Congo Free State, there were also large tracts of land, designated Crown Lands (*Domaines de la Couronne*) for the personal benefit of Leopold II. These concessions or domains served to funnel the anticipated economic windfall of control over the region into the accounts of various American and European corporate interests. The windfall lay in monopolistic control over products of the forest.

In his initial explorations in the late 1870s, Stanley made calculations regarding the economic feasibility of the slave and ivory trades in central Africa. He concluded that they provided short-term benefits, whereas other extractive activities were supposed to provide long-term benefits (for colonial powers). The early colonial administration of the “Congo Free State” heeded Stanley’s advice in part. Because the supply of ivory was declining and international community forbade the slave trade, the colonial government placed a high priority on extraction of other forest products, especially rubber. The result was a systematic abuse of indigenous peoples in Congo, through forced labor, provision taxes, and the rubber tax/trade. The character and extent of the abuses during the “red rubber” period appeared in missionary journals at the end of the nineteenth century, but its true political impact came to fruition after Roger Casement made his report to the British Parliament on 3 September 1903.¹³

From 1885-1908, the administration of the Congo Free State fell under the authority of Leopold II, King of the Belgians. Legally, Leopold was granted this authority from the European powers in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, and from

the diplomatic recognition of the Congo Free State extended first by the United States and then by the European powers and others. Technically, his agents, principally Stanley, had acquired a series of signed treaties from local African leaders ceding rights to external affairs. Based on those treaties and considerable diplomatic maneuvering on Leopold's part, the western "powers" granted Leopold the right to administer the Congo Free State. Although the agreement of the Berlin Conference attempted to place limits on the exercise of state power in the Congo (e.g., free trade, freedom of religion, etc.), by the 1890s some missionaries were increasingly aware that the state was neither living up to its promises nor to the letter of international law.

Under Leopold's administration of this vast area, human rights atrocities were so extensive that the term "red rubber" became commonplace, referring to the human blood on the wild rubber collected as a tax by agents of the colonial administration. The idea of "red rubber" refers not only to the difficult and dangerous process of collecting wild rubber, but also to the practice of state soldiers (the "*force publique*") punishing Congolese civilians for their failure to pay the tax by cutting off their hands, sometimes after killing them and sometimes while they were alive. The soldiers collected the hands and took them to colonial officials, as evidence that they had done their job and were using their bullets efficiently.¹⁴

The symbolic language of "red rubber" highlighted only one aspect of the systematic abuse of the indigenous population; other abusive practices of the colonial administration included forced relocation of village populations, kidnapping women and children to compel cooperation from men, forced labor of various sorts, and summary executions. As part of the colonial system, most of the European employees of the Congo Free State and the employees of the concessionary companies operating there were hoping to become wealthy through the ruthless extractive economy of the colonial administration, and thus they remained largely silent about the human rights abuses.

A small but growing population of European and American missionaries entered the area with a different agenda. Inspired by the writings of David Livingstone and others, the Protestant missionaries intended to bring "Christianity and civilization" to Africa (through preaching and teaching, healing and building), but what they found was an uncivil society in which the horrors of "heathenism" were more than matched by the horrors of colonial administration. Some of these missionaries were so outraged that they spoke up against various state practices, including the human rights atrocities. Such missionaries played a key role in the first international human rights campaign by protesting the atrocities, first to colonial officials in Congo, then through their correspondence to the mission society, and finally in public speaking in Great Britain and the United States.

From the world of British business, Edmund D. Morel spearheaded and orchestrated an international campaign protesting the abuses in the rubber trade in the Congo Free State. In his writings and speeches, he popularized the term "red rubber," referring to the colonial practice of punishing Africans who resisted the rubber tax by cutting off their hands. As indicated above, the hands served as evidence that the soldiers, sent to collect the tax, had in fact attempted to collect it. As rubber was difficult to collect in the wild and the supply dwindled, the soldiers delivered more and more hands to traders and state officials. As a result, baskets of human hands became a type of currency among soldiers, traders, and state

administrators.¹⁵ Although it was not the only type of human rights abuse or violation of the Berlin agreement, this form of punishment was the most controversial. Thus, despite the terms of the 1885 agreement, Leopold II and his agents did not permit the free exercise of religion or trade, nor did they protect the rights of the indigenous peoples. The ideology of colonialism was for many years an effective distortion of the human experience in Congo. Through the 1890s, English- and Swedish-speaking Protestant missionaries wrote home to the United States, England, and Sweden about the problems they observed. Some Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries were particularly outspoken in protesting abusive treatment of the indigenous population by the agents of the colonial state and agents of the major trading companies, ABIR and SAB. Leopold responded with his own public relations campaign and managed to forestall reforms for years.

By 1904, a broad coalition of missionaries, human rights activists, and politicians, concerned about a mixture of issues (free trade, freedom of religion, and protection of the natives), raised their voices in the British Parliament, the American Congress, and the international press. Gradually, the evident contradictions between the widely accepted ideology of a beneficent colonialism and the actual practices of a brutal extractive colonial economy in the Congo Free State forced the Belgian Parliament to take action. In 1908, the Belgian parliament compelled Leopold to cede control, establishing the Belgian Congo under parliamentary control. Promised reforms came to Congo, although more slowly than the activists would have liked. The worst abuses of the state against the indigenous people ceased, and the Belgian colonial state began to function in a more orderly fashion; however, it remained a colonial regime intended to produce profit for Belgium and various commercial interests. It also continued to suppress opposition to its authority within its boundaries.¹⁶

Studies of European and American missionaries in colonial Africa have demonstrated both the ambiguities and the potency of the interstitial character of the missionary status.¹⁷ Inevitably, missionaries were part of the colonial ordering processes, yet they often entered the scene with motives and agendas independent of the political and military authorities. The missionary approach to the colonial situation put them in an ambiguous position: they were part of the colonial social system, yet they held no official position, and their motives were not monetary. Furthermore, they frequently came from countries different from the colonial metropole and spoke a different language than the colonial administrators. Despite these ambiguities in their position, many European and American missionaries to Africa played a role in effecting a change of administration and administrative policies.

Historians, journalists, and others have documented the voices of protest raised by Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries to Congo.¹⁸ Like those other missionary groups, the American Disciples of Christ were not unanimous in how to respond to the state-sponsored terror against the indigenous population. A review of this case will explore the ambiguities of the missionary position, including both protest against and acquiescence to the state in the context of missionary dependence on state authorities. We will hear the voices of those American missionaries in various degrees of outrage, voices cast against the background of the complicity and suffering among the indigenous African peoples themselves and the relative silence of their voices in the historical record.

Three Phases in the Relationship between the DCCM Mission and the Congo Free State

One may divide the story of the relationship between the DCCM and the Congo Free State into three phases. First, during the itinerant years of the mission (1897-1899), the Disciples missionaries made some tentative, private notes about their observations of the abusive situation. They had arrived in the midst of controversy over official abuses that had already reached the British Parliament. In public, the DCCM missionaries were in the delicate position of petitioning the state to approve a new mission, while the state officials stalled and concocted excuses for failing to approve their request. Second, despite their preference for Mushie (on the Kwamouth), the DCCM acquired the existing station at Bolenge from the ABMU, and they attempted to cooperate with the state officials at Coquilhatville. They appear to have assumed the good will of state officials between 1899 and 1903. The role of Ellsworth Faris and his relationship to the major voices of the Congo reform campaign appears in this section. Third, from 1904 to 1907, Disciples participated actively in the Congo reform campaign. The activities and writings of DCCM missionaries E. A. Layton and R. R. Eldred occupy our attention in this section, with particular emphasis placed upon the *Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Kongo Free State* and material published in Disciples of Christ periodicals. In 1908, the DCCM warmly greeted the change of administration and encouraged the promised reforms.

Phase One: The Itinerant Years, 1897-1899

First, when the first Disciples missionaries reached Congo, they tried to establish a new station at Mushie on the Kwamouth River. After they applied to the government for permission to build a station, the Commissioner of the district of Lake Leopold II, Alphonse Jacques, postponed and finally rejected the FCMS request. The government informed the Disciples missionaries that the law prohibited establishing a new mission station within seventy-five miles of an existing one. Contrary to the public explanations offered to the Disciples missionaries, correspondence from Alphonse Jacques to the Governor-General indicated that the real reason concerned the economic implications of a new Protestant mission station at Mushie. On 3 May 1898, he wrote, "I can only repeat one thing: it is that the post at Mushie is beginning to produce and that *from the day when the missionaries establish themselves there, we could no longer constrain the natives to work.*"¹⁹ The Belgian authorities were afraid that the new Protestant missionaries would interfere with the practice of forced labor.

During this early period, the DCCM missionaries observed and noted problems in the colonial state. In fact, they began to comment on the acquisitive nature of the state almost as soon as they arrived. In private correspondence to his brother dated 8 July 1897, Harry Biddle wrote that, "The whole policy of this State is one of *grab*. Not only do they plunder the natives but they rob the foreigners."²⁰ In a letter dated 28 November 1897, he made the following comment about the depopulation of Irebu: "The state drove the native population away, thro [*sic*] their meanness."²¹ The latter observation did not remain private. Extracts from letters that appeared in the *Missionary Intelligencer* supplement these quotes from Biddle's original letters to his brother. While aboard the *S.S. Pioneer* on 1 December 1897, Biddle wrote the following observations:

It took us all day to cross the river to Lukolela, which is little up-stream. Owing to the population having been driven away by the State, the Baptist missionary Society has withdrawn the white missionaries from Lukolela, and left it in charge of the native evangelists. Yesterday we arrived at new Irebu, a large town on the French side. It is settled by people who ran away from Irebu and other places upon the State side. There must be several thousand in this town, which is four and a half hours' steaming down from Irebu.²²

This evidence of the displacement of large populations due to state policies ("having been driven away by the state") was only a part of the DCCM missionaries' experience, but as Lagergren noted, during this trip on the upper Congo, "they became acquainted with the consequences which the domain policy had had."²³ The Disciples missionaries were in the awkward position of observing problems in the colonial state while they were petitioning that same administration for clearance to establish a new mission station – one of the many ambiguities in the missionaries' position.

The conclusion of the itinerant years came when the American Baptists changed their mind about the disposition of their upriver stations. The ABMU had previously refused to sell Bolenge to the American Disciples; however, by the fall of 1898, the ABMU reversed its position and arranged to transfer the station to the Disciples. Effectively, the two mission societies bypassed the official stalling tactics. The Disciples finally got a mission station, but the state could not interfere because the Disciples of Christ missionaries did not start a new station; they acquired an existing one.

Phase Two: Discreet Complaints and Efforts to Cooperate, 1899-1903

After Biddle's death in 1898 and the acquisition of Bolenge in 1899, allusions to the situation in Congo began to appear in Faris' missionary reports sent back to North America. Thus, like the Baptists at Bolenge before him, Faris reported on the tensions between state (or company) officials and the indigenous people in letters back to America. For example, in a letter published in December 1899 and which provided an overview of "the field," Faris included an allusion to the history of abuses. "A mile or so back from the river the swamps begin. Among these many people live, *having fled from the state soldiers* at different times."²⁴ In another letter published in 1900 in the official journal of the FCMS, Faris offered more details concerning the state officials and their treatment of the indigenous people:

Formerly the people were compelled to hunt rubber, and many were murdered by the soldiers. Every village pays a heavy tax now, payable weekly and payable in food. The people regard it as oppression. [A]nd [they] hate the State but can not offer any resistance.²⁵

Faris clearly recognized the tensions between the colonial state and the Nkundo people, based on violence used to enforce the rubber collections and the provision tax. These forms of taxation were not simply burdensome, but, as Faris testified, they generated hostility against the state on the part of the local populations.²⁶

Despite these published observations, Faris did not offer his own opinions about the state practices.

In addition to these references to the human rights abuses, on at least one occasion Faris went to a government official to complain about the abusive treatment of the Congolese people. The complexity of Faris' role in the situation requires more thorough and careful treatment than space allows; however, there is substantial evidence that Faris learned of human rights abuses along the Momboyo River in a conversation on 23 August 1899. These abuses were precisely the practices regarding rubber collection. Specifically, Faris learned that when soldiers went to collect the balls of wild rubber from villages, officers issued cartridges to the soldiers for their rifles. For each cartridge used, the soldiers were required to produce a human hand in order to demonstrate that they were using the cartridges in the line of duty rather than simply hunting for game. Thus, the number of guns correlated positively with the amount of rubber collected in a district, and the number of cartridges discharged provided a basis for calculating the number of people killed in that district. When he learned about this grim calculus in a conversation with Simon Roi (a government officer) and two telegraph workers, Faris informed the government station at Coquilhatville. He agreed not to make the information public; however, after the arrival of British consul Roger Casement in Bolenge, some dramatic events began to develop.

The British government sent Casement to Congo to investigate the various charges of abuses regarding free trade, freedom of religion, and protection of "natives." Casement traveled in the area with Faris on 17 and 18 August 1903, making his inquiries; and he left for Coquilhatville at 9:45 a.m. on 19 August. Sometime during his stay at Bolenge, he copied a portion of Faris' diary concerning the incident in 1899, presumably with Faris' permission. Not long after Casement left Bolenge, he returned to Great Britain where he filed his report, in which he passionately confirmed and amplified the allegations already made. Casement's 1903 report triggered a new round of protests in Western Europe and in North America. As Hochschild and the others have noted, Roger Casement used Faris' diary entry in his official report. However, that was not the end of Faris' contribution to the reform campaign. E. D. Morel also used Faris' diary entry in his intentionally provocative writings on "red rubber."²⁷ In addition, Mark Twain, in his satirical work entitled, *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A defense of his Congo rule*, quoted precisely the same passage.²⁸ In effect, Ellsworth Faris' diary entry of the August 1899 conversation served as one of the sources for the three most prominent writers in the Congo reform movement – Roger Casement, E. D. Morel, and Mark Twain. Thus, by copying a portion of Faris' diary concerning the conversation in 1899, Casement brought Faris into the network of sources that documented the abuses.

Phase Three: A Public Record of Protest, 1904-1907

By 1904, a broad coalition of missionaries, human rights activists, and politicians concerned about a mixture of issues of "free trade," "freedom of religion," and "protection of the natives" raised their voices in the British Parliament, the American Congress, and the international press. For the next few years, the publicized contradictions between ideology of a beneficent colonialism and the practices of a brutal extractive colonial economy in the Congo Free State created sufficient political pressure to force the Belgian Parliament to act in 1908.

In this period, Disciples missionaries were not as circumspect in their criticism of the state and its mercantile allies in the SAB and ABIR, and some of them assumed an activist stance in their public statements. Although Biddle and Faris had complained privately and discreetly and provided information to others, two other DCCM missionaries, Edwin A. Layton and Robert Ray Eldred, were public and vocal in their criticism of the abuses in the Congo Free State. They published articles and spoke out in the United States about the extractive system and its consequences in human suffering. In this activity, the mission society cooperated through the agency of Archibald McLean, the President of the FCMS and editor of the *Missionary Intelligencer*, the official journal of the FCMS. In addition, articles published in other Disciples journals spoke strongly against the abuses and in favor of reform.

On 23 March 1904, Layton and McLean met with representatives of the northern Baptists (ABMU) and the southern Presbyterians (APCM). They drafted a *Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo* for Senator Morgan, ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to present to the United States Senate, hoping also to compel the sympathetic attention of Secretary of State John Hay and President Roosevelt.²⁹

Essentially, what the framers of the memorial contended was that the Powers had the right to act as official guardians of the indigenous population, for the Congo had acquired an international status through Leopold's acceptance of the General Act of Berlin.³⁰

In his own testimony, Layton corroborated the testimony of the other missionaries, Baptist and Presbyterian. He emphasized the abuses in the "provision tax" and the forced labor in the Bolenge area. He noted the fear among the population directed towards the state and its soldiers ("the savage soldiery"), and the distinction people made between representatives of the state and the missionaries. He did not hesitate to describe the conditions as a form of enslavement.

There is, in Layton's testimony, a strong tone of moral outrage; however, although his concerns were primarily humanitarian, they were not strictly so. For example, he noted that the abuses led to a depopulation of the riverine villages, highlighting the economic impact by calling the rivers "the paths of commerce." The *Memorial* had made the general point that the abuses undermined "free trade," recalling the fact that missionaries continued to believe in the mutually supportive relationship between Christianity and commerce, echoing the language of David Livingstone. Finally, Layton and the other missionaries were also concerned with the fact that the abuses undermined their evangelistic and educational work. These additional concerns do not diminish the moral outrage at the horrific conditions the DCCM missionaries heard about and the fear of the indigenous population that they witnessed, and to which Layton testified.

In addition to Layton's and McLean's contributions to the *Memorial*, Disciples of Christ publications promoted the Congo reform campaign. For example, in an article published in 1904 in the *Christian Standard*, Layton leveled a scathing critique against the state. After a review of the high motives and philanthropic ideals of the Congo Free State, which were articulated in the Berlin agreement, he stated that

The world is just learning that Leopold is a hypocrite; that the Congo

State is not “free” but slave; that the solemn obligations imposed and accepted at Berlin have been violated in every essential point.

Despite its good professions throughout its score of years of history, the State must be charged with grave administrative abuses. The first decade saw the development of a unique commercial system; the second decade has seen the atrocious acts resulting from a commercialism which is the curse of central Africa to-day. The country came to be “exploited” by trade monopolies, the State or the sovereign always holding the majority of shares, free trade being totally destroyed.³¹

To say that the “Congo State is not ‘free’ but slave” is both a play on the name of the state and an evocation of the mid-nineteenth century civil war in the United States between “free” and “slave” states. Accusing the agents of the state of extortion, robbery, mutilation and murder, he raised the specter of soldiers cutting off human hands as a punishment for failure to pay the rubber tax. “The writer has photographs of a number of such victims, and has seen recent cases with wounds unhealed.”³² The direct, personal testimony of Edwin Layton to the U.S. Congress and in a church-related magazine clearly places this DCCM missionary in the Congo reform movement; however, Layton was not alone among Disciples in his efforts to publicize the conditions in the Congo Free State during this period.

In September 1904, the *Christian-Evangelist*, another Disciples of Christ periodical, published an article from Robert E. Park of the American Congo Committee. Although Park was not a member of the Disciples of Christ, he summarized the charges leveled by Layton, FCMS President Archibald McLean, and other Protestant missionaries and mission executives against the colonial regime.³³ In the same month in which the *Christian-Evangelist* published Park’s article, an article by the Disciples of Christ minister and social activist, Alva W. Taylor, appeared in the *Missionary Intelligencer*. His article began as follows,

The Congo Free State is one of the most tyrannically ruled sessions in the world. Leopold of Belgium is a notorious roue, though he is a man of shrewdness and of some ability; but no other act of his equals in opprobrium his government of the Congo (so-called) Free State.³⁴

In a typical form of argument among the reform advocates, Taylor contrasted Henry Stanley’s earlier idyllic vision of colonial Congo with Roger Casement’s grim portrait of the country under Leopold’s rule. Taylor included statements by Bismarck and President Cleveland that supported the Belgian monarch’s “philanthropic spirit.” On the same page with these statements, the author or editor placed a photograph of an African man with both hands missing – visible evidence of the nature of the abuses.

During the Disciples of Christ Annual Convention in San Francisco, the FCMS Committee on Africa presented their report on Monday afternoon, 21 August 1905. Read by J. J. Legg, this text also recalled an ideal that early missionaries shared with Henry Stanley’s stated purpose and contrasted it with Roger Casement’s firsthand description. Someone on the committee in 1905 had read Alva Taylor’s article from 1904, and the committee appropriated not only the line of argument but

also the very words of his second, third, and fourth paragraphs with only slight modifications.³⁵

Finally, a note in the *Missionary Intelligencer* in 1906 indicated that another DCCM missionary, Robert Ray Eldred, was speaking publicly about problems in the colony.

R. Ray Eldred, one of our missionaries in Africa, home on a furlough, says that the governmental conditions in the Congo are simply terrible. The Protestant missionaries have the implicit confidence of the natives, but everywhere there is suspicion and hatred of the government. Mr. Eldred says that any leading missionary might rally the natives about him, become their leader and king, and wage warfare against the Belgian government, if he would. But our missionaries are spiritual not temporal kings.³⁶

Reporting that conditions are “simply terrible” and that “there is suspicion and hatred of the government,” Eldred’s criticism of the government was both direct and public. We also find here an indication of the missionary reluctance to engage in overtly political action. The dualism implicit in the distinction between spiritual and temporal realms suggests the basis for that reluctance, and a source of ambivalence, even contradictions, in the missionary attitudes to the colonial ordering processes generally.

Conclusion

As documented above, and contrary to the implications of Hoffman’s articles and Lagergren’s study, there is clear evidence that Disciples of Christ missionaries privately and publicly reported and protested colonial abuses; and they participated in the final and most important phase of the Congo Reform Campaign from 1904 to 1907. Some DCCM missionaries, like Biddle, Faris, Layton, and Eldred, were willing in their private and/or public statements to acknowledge what they saw and to report the testimony of witnesses to atrocities throughout the early history of the DCCM (1897-1908). These missionaries did so with the knowledge and approval of the President of the FCMS, Archibald McLean, who himself participated in the reform movement. Thus, the record indicates that both executives and missionaries of the FCMS/DCCM participated in the Congo reform campaign. They were not present in Congo during the earlier controversies of the 1890s; however, when other Protestants were ready to speak out more vigorously in the aftermath of the 1903 Casement report, Disciples were part of the effort.

In light of this record, we return to the question of complicity and silence. Why did the DCCM missionaries not protest publicly and more actively prior to 1904? A reasonable answer to this question requires acknowledging a combination of four factors: how recently the Disciples arrived on the scene, the difficulties of establishing themselves and dealing with the logistics of life in Congo, small numbers of missionaries and frequent health problems, and finally, their sense of vocation that did not encourage political activism. First, compared to the Baptist and Presbyterian mission societies, the DCCM was relatively new to Congo, and the Protestant missionary activism among *all* the societies was in quiescent state when the Disciples arrived in 1897.

Second, when they settled at Bolenge in 1899, they were overwhelmed with the sheer amount of work involved in language acquisition and in renovating the station. They knew that their foothold in Congo was tenuous, and they were at the mercy of the colonial government. As noted by Benedetto, “Protestants who defied the Leopold regime not only jeopardized their personal safety but risked reprisals against their mission, including the threat of expulsion from the country.”³⁷ On the whole, even if they had suspicions and were beginning to see the evidence of abuses, prior to 1904, the DCCM missionary community took a pragmatic route of cautious cooperation, hoping that the government would both identify and correct the problems, just as Faris apparently hoped in the matter of the SAB employee in 1899.

Third, it is important to put their numbers in perspective. Among the eleven DCCM missionaries sent to Congo before 1904, six had significant health problems: one died in service (Biddle), four resigned for health reasons (the Farises and the Leas), and one remained bedridden for months at a time (Eva Dye). Thus, one may reasonably argue that several members of the small DCCM missionary community had pressing personal (primarily health) problems at the time of the renewed Congo reform agitation in 1904. Among the remaining five, Edwin Layton and Robert Eldred in fact took a quite vocal role in the Congo reform campaign, although their wives, Jessie Layton and Edith Eldred, apparently never spoke out on this or any other issue. Finally, Royal Dye referred to the abuses in his writings, but there is no evidence that he actively protested the Congo government.³⁸

Finally, I would argue that the interstitial character of the missionary location in the colonial ordering processes produced both their reticence to voice outrage at the policies of the state and the potency of their voices when they did speak out. The missionaries’ crisis of conscience in this ambiguous position with respect to colonial policies and politics thus generated a spectrum of responses. Both the government and the indigenous population recognized this ambiguity in the role of missionaries, and it made the former anxious about their presence (and their potential as troublemakers) and the latter hopeful of their protective power. Despite such anxiety and hope on the part of others, the missionaries themselves did not fully recognize the potential of their position in the political arena, and they preferred to do the work for which they had trained. Thus, after international pressure and the Belgian parliament forced Leopold II to relinquish control and the government changed from the Congo Free State to the Belgian Congo in 1908, the missionaries went back to their work, and in subsequent decades, they rarely and reluctantly inserted their voices in the administrative affairs of the colonial state.

NOTES

¹ A missionary organization in Congo, the DCCM was supported by, staffed by, and answerable to the Foreign Christian Missionary Society (FCMS) in Cincinnati, Ohio.

² For two perspectives on the history of the Congo, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998) and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kahila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2002). For a detailed review of the latter, see Paul Allen Williams, “Book Review: Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaire to the Demo-*

cratic Republic of the Congo and *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*," *International Third World Studies Journal and Review* 13 (2002) 33-36 (available on-line at www.unomaha.edu/itwsjr/thirdXIII/WilliamsZaire.pdf).

³ In a plenary presentation at that 1999 meeting, I first spoke about some of the material in this article. This paper is a substantial revision of portions of my dissertation, Paul Allen Williams, "The Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM), 1897-1932: A Missionary Community in Colonial Central Africa" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000), especially the Preface and Chapter Three, "DCCM and the Colonial State." A further revised version was presented at the American Academy of Religion in Toronto (November 2002), and benefited from remarks made by Dr. Sumner Twiss, the commentator of the session.

⁴ Although published by the Christian Board of Publication, the *Disciple* was not an "official" publication of the General Units of the Christian Church. It was, nevertheless, the only monthly, widely distributed periodical of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the latter decades of the twentieth century, and it is for that reason an important source for understanding the public voice of Disciples of Christ.

⁵ Daniel Hoffman, "100 Years in Africa: Did we help or hurt?" *The Disciple* (March 1999): 2-7; and Daniel Hoffman, "No Place for Sentimentality" *The Disciple* (March 1999): 6-7. The response to those articles was evident in letters to the editor of the *Disciple* (May 1999) 28-29; further evidence of displeasure was present at the centennial event in Indianapolis on 17 April 1999. At the time, Hoffman was the Executive Secretary for the Department of Africa, Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North America. Through the Common Global Ministries Board, he was also responsible for overseas ministries in Africa affiliated with the United Church of Christ.

⁶ Although not the first to describe the atrocities in the Congo, Hochschild provides a vivid and detailed account based on recent research, and he makes an impassioned case for reassessing that period in history. Adam Hochschild, "Mr. Kurtz, I presume," *The New Yorker* (14 April 1997): 40-47 and Hochschild (1998).

⁷ Hoffman, "No Place for Sentimentality," *Disciple* (March 1999) 6-7.

⁸ David Lagergren, *Mission and state in the Congo. A study of the relations between Protestant missions and the Congo Independent State authorities with special reference to the Equator District, 1885-1903*. Translated by Owen N. Lee. Studia missionalia Upsaliensia, XIII. (Lund: Gleerup, 1970).

⁹ Lagergren (1970) 256.

¹⁰ The basic sources for the early history of the DCCM are the Disciples periodicals of the day (*Missionary Intelligencer* - MI, *Missionary Tidings* - MT, *Christian-Evangelist* - CE, and *Christian Standard* - CS) and works by Eva N. Dye, E. R. Moon, and Herbert Smith. The most useful survey of early DCCM history is Herbert Smith, *Fifty Years in Congo: Disciples of Christ at the Equator* (Indianapolis: The United Christian Missionary Society, 1949). The principal review of the second half of the century parallels Smith's work. Dr. Gene E. Johnson, *Congo Centennial: The Second Fifty Years* (Galesburg, Illinois: First Christian Church, 1999).

¹¹ Henry Stanley's version of this history appears in *The Congo, and the Founding of its Free State: A Story of Work and Exploration* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1885). Records left by both Vangele and Coquilhat confirm the basic story.

¹² Sources for the early history of colonialism among the Nkundo and neighboring groups include the following: E. Boelaert “Équateurville,” *Aequatoria* 15 (1952): 1-12; E. Boelaert, “Les premières explorations du Ruki et de ses affluents,” *Aequatoria* 21 (1958): 121-133; Camille Coquilhat, *Sur Le Haut-Congo* (Paris: J. Lebègue et Cie., 1888); Samuel H. Nelson, *Colonialism in the Congo Basin* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1994).

¹³ William Roger Louis, “Roger Casement and the Congo,” *Journal of African History* 5, no. 1 (1964): 99-120; P. Singleton-Gates and M. Girodias, *The black diaries. An account of Roger Casement’s life and times with a collection of his diaries and public writings* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1959).

¹⁴ In addition to the issue of the *Disciple* cited in footnote 5 above, the works of E. D. Morel and various websites contain images of persons missing hands from this period. See, for example, http://www.boondocksnet.com/congo/congo_kodak03

¹⁵ In addition to the evidence presented in Casement’s report, the writings of E. D. Morel stimulated the final stage in the Congo reform campaign. For an account of evidence based on firsthand sources in the Bolobo area, see Roger Anstey, “The Congo Rubber Atrocities - A Case Study,” *African Historical Studies* IV:1 (1971) 59-76. Evidence for the area around the mouth of the Ruki River near Bolenge may be located in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* and *MI*.

¹⁶ Jean-Luc Vellut, “La violence armée dans l’Etat indépendant du Congo: Ténèbres et clartés dans l’histoire d’un Etat conquérant,” *Cultures et développement* XVI, nos. 3-4 (1984): 671-707.

¹⁷ See, for example, Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* Vols. I and II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 1997); Tim Couzens, *Murder at Morija*, (Johannesburg, Random House, 2003); Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ Stanley Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold’s Congo* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1970); Benedetto, Robert, ed. and Introduction, *Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa: A Documentary Account of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and the Human Rights Struggle in the Congo, 1890-1918*. Studies in Christian Mission, ed. Marc R. Spindler, vol. 16 (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996); and Hochschild’s previously cited works from 1997 and 1998.

¹⁹ Quoted by Lagergren (1970), 255, footnote 8. See also Jules Marchal, *E.D. Morel contre Leopold II: l’histoire du Congo, 1900-1910*. Zaire - Histoire & Société. Rev. ed. of *E.D. Morel tegen Leopold II en de Kongostaat, 1900-1910*, which appeared under the author’s pseudonym, A. M. Delathuy. (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996) vol 1, 132. Emphasis added.

²⁰ Biddle, Letter to “Br.” Londe, 8 July 1897, (Emphasis original). Biddle’s correspondence may be found in the archives of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville.

²¹ Biddle, Letter to “Br.”, Bonga, French Congo, 28 November 1897.

²² Harry Biddle, “Africa Department. Extracts from Dr. Biddle’s Letters,” *MI* (March 1898): 70. Cf. Lagergren (1970), 255, footnote 2.

²³ Lagergren (1970), 255.

²⁴Ellsworth Faris, “Bolengi, Africa,” *MI* (December 1899): 356. Emphasis added.

²⁵Ellsworth Faris, “Bolengi, Africa,” *MI* (October 1900): 237. Note written 1 June 1900.

²⁶See Nelson, *Colonialism* (1984) where Nelson noted the origins of the local food tax: “By 1892, Lemaire, district commissioner of the Equateur region, demanded that the Boloki commercial terminus near Equateurville be transformed into a public market; soon afterward he began to impose upon them food impositions to feed the employees at nearby SAB and administrative posts.”

²⁷Marchal (1996) 226-227, 328.

²⁸Mark Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (Boston: P. R. Warren Co., 1905), 18.

²⁹U. S. Congress. *Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo*. 58th Congress, 2nd Session. Senate Document 282. 19 April 1904. “Document VI. - Testimony of Edwin A. Layton, M.D.” 30-32.

³⁰Shaloff, (1970), 92. The list of seven missionary participants is in Shaloff (1970), 105, footnote 23. In addition to the missionaries, the Congo Reform Association actively sought the ouster of Leopold from Congo. According to Shaloff, “at the suggestion of Roger Casement, Morel set up the Congo Reform Association on March 24, 1904, to accomplish this design” (93).

³¹Edwin Layton, “The Conquest of Congo,” *CSXL*, no. 35 (27 August 1904): 1181-1182.

³²Edwin Layton, “The Conquest of Congo,” *CSXL*, no. 35 (27 August 1904): 1181-1182. Layton had been in the Congo from August 1901 until September 1903, and he never returned. He went to China where he served for many years.

³³Robert E. Park (of the American Congo Committee), “The Case against the Congo Government,” *CE* (1 September 1904): 1121.

³⁴Alva W. Taylor, “The Congo Infamy,” *MI* (September 1904): 285. The term “roue” is not a typo. Taylor meant a “roué,” that is “a man devoted to a life of sensual pleasure,” according to *Webster's*.

³⁵“Report of Committee on Africa,” Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Convention, San Francisco, California, 21 August 1905, *MI* (November 1905): 330-331. One of the members of the committee was P. J. Rice, whose presence on the docket of the Centennial Convention in 1909 raised the ire of Russell Errett.

³⁶*MI* (July 1906): 206.

³⁷Benedetto (1996), 9.

³⁸R. J. Dye, “The Call of the Congo,” *MI* (October 1906): 314.

“DISCRIMINATION IS AT HEART A SIN STEMMING FROM PRIDE”: COLBERT S. CARTWRIGHT AND ONE DISCIPLES’ MINISTER’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE 1957 LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS

Bruce A. Breeding*

In a “confidential letter from one of your church members to his pastor,” E. B. Whitaker, a member of Pulaski Heights Christian Church, wrote to the Reverend Colbert Cartwright, the congregation’s minister since 1954: “I belong to neither ‘group’ in our church... I have no idea of getting myself labeled as a ‘pro’ this or an ‘anti’ that,” Whitaker said. “I go to church primarily to worship. Your sermons as a whole are the best I have ever heard, [but] your *first* [emphasis his] duty is to all members of your congregation... your duty [is] to... those who are frustrated... this group needs your kindly counseling more than the nine negro [sic] students... you cannot criticize people and hold up to ridicule and scorn their prejudices and at the same time lead them into adopting a Christian attitude... frankly, in my opinion, you are the best preacher and the sorriest pastor I have ever seen.”¹

This correspondence from October, 22, 1957, illuminates the contradictions and difficulties of Cartwright’s ministry in Little Rock during and after the events surrounding the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in the fall of 1957. His tenure at Pulaski Heights was tumultuous, strife-torn, and in many ways, representative of the ordeal of hundreds of white, socially-progressive clergy in the American south of the nineteen-fifties and sixties. Cartwright was, in the tradition of John the Baptist, “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”² As one of the few liberal Protestant ministers in Little Rock, Cartwright was inexorably drawn to issues of racial harmony. When he arrived in the Rose City in 1954, little could he have imagined what was awaiting him.

He would later come to believe that the Holy Spirit had been at work in his life; others, less sanguine, perhaps, grudgingly admitted that serendipity had put this man with a passion for justice in the right place at the right time.

Colbert Cartwright was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and spent his childhood years in Tennessee and Missouri. His father, Lin Cartwright, was for several decades the editor of the *Christian Evangelist*, the denominational magazine of the Disciples of Christ, the tradition in which Colbert was raised and ordained. Cartwright earned the A.B. from Washington University in St. Louis, and the Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Sacred Theology from the Divinity School of Yale University. Prior to his arrival in Little Rock, he served his first pastorate as the minister of First Christian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia.³

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Cartwright had come to Little Rock in February 1954. On May 17 of that year, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”⁴ Compared with that of other southern states, reaction to the decision from public officials in Arkansas was surprisingly restrained. In response to reporters’ queries about the Court’s ruling, Governor Francis Cherry remarked that “Arkansas will obey the law, it always has.”⁵ Black Arkansans greeted the action with a bit more skepticism: “If the South hasn’t learned in 91 years to respect the rights of all its citizens, the decision doesn’t mean much.”⁶ The doctrine enshrined two generations previous in *Plessy v. Ferguson* would no longer apply to the nation’s public school pupils. And just three short years later, Cartwright would find himself at the center of a storm no one in Arkansas could have imagined—what began as a case over local school integration would slowly mutate into the most serious constitutional crisis since the American Civil War - a sitting governor was challenging the power of the national government.

What most Americans today know of Central High School they read in a U.S. history survey textbook or saw on Public Television, but it was never more than a brief segment, at best:

Over the last two decades, historians have all but ignored Little Rock, giving it nothing like the exhaustively contextualized treatments they have given the civil rights battles in Montgomery, Greensboro, Birmingham, Mississippi, and other places. An event of immense national and international significance has become a mere footnote.⁷

The reality of what would happen in Little Rock in 1957 “had its roots in the growing militancy of black activism in Arkansas after the Second World War.”⁸ None of those who would participate in Central High’s desegregation were isolated individuals; they were part of a long series of brave men and women of mettle who fought to overcome the barriers; representing as long, rich, and “conflicted a tradition of protest as those depicted in the trend-setting local studies of Greensboro, Tuskegee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.”⁹

The place where some of the greatest tension could be observed in both the black and white communities (especially as it related to black-white interaction), was in the state’s churches, where the struggle for black rights had important and far-reaching consequences for white people.¹⁰ British historian Mark Newman noted that the Civil Rights Movement’s “triumphs and limitations cannot be understood without taking into account the ideological and institutional constraints that kept major groups of white southerners from making a whole-hearted and effective defense of segregation.”¹¹

Newman finds that Southern Baptists in Arkansas in particular mirrored the divisions of the overall white population in their attitude to segregation, wrestling especially with the issue of how the demands of “mission” and segregation might come into conflict; in 1954, a white congregation near the Northeast Arkansas town of Paragould admitted ten black members because they did not have a church of their own. A local church official claimed the “congregation acted because ‘we would look funny talking about foreign missions if we could not do something like this in our own community.’”¹³ This was the exception rather than the rule, however. Most white Baptist congregations in Arkansas were not at all interested in any form of

integration. It appears from Cartwright's experience that Disciples in Arkansas were little different.

Cartwright, however, wasted no time in confronting the issue. Only five months after coming to Arkansas, he was making public statements about segregated educational facilities. In the wake of *Brown*, Cartwright mounted the pulpit and proclaimed "we in the church can only work for this transition in the spirit of penitent humility... though we confess that segregation is opposed to God's will, we cannot take credit for having brought a legal end to it in the public schools... when courage in the fight was called for, we were timidly seeking delay. When bold, definite, radical action in the name of Christ was called for, we whispered eulogies to brotherhood in innocuous terms... it is a shameful fact that the Supreme Court ruling to end public school segregation is a challenge to white Christians, rather than being the result of a challenge by white Christians. White Christians gathering...in segregated congregations can only hail the decision with penitent hearts."¹⁴ Excerpts from his Sunday sermon were carried in the *Arkansas Gazette* (the decidedly more liberal of Arkansas' two state-wide dailies) and elicited what Cartwright called "a few crackpot letters, but beyond that, little direct comment."¹⁵ A Baptist woman from North Little Rock chided Cartwright for "plung[ing] into deep water without a life saver." Telling him that his "statement that segregation is morally indefensible... [was] altogether untrue," she argued "that any white person must degenerate from the high standard to which God placed him if he comes down to the emotional and unstable disposition they [blacks] are born with... there isn't a negroe [sic] in the world that God bids me degenerate to their low principles."¹⁶ C. A. Bishop of Ashdown, Arkansas, offered up a rhetorical question exceedingly popular among southern racists: "if you have a daughter and should a negro [sic] man write her a note asking her to go out driving with him some evening or go to a show with him, will you let her go?"¹⁷

Members of Pulaski Heights, however, were more reserved in their judgment. "They commented that this sermon preached a year ago or even the Sunday before would have caused quite a fuss. They felt that the Supreme Court decision has in itself changed the atmosphere in such a way that people are more open to discussing the matter... [although] one member made the more caustic observation that it is obvious the Supreme Court carries more weight than the Christian gospel."¹⁸

As the import of the Court's decision began to be better understood by the leaders of the city's churches, ministers in Little Rock, both black and white, confronted the consequences in their June meetings. The Greater Little Rock Ministerial Alliance, which represented the city's white clergy, and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, composed of black ministers, began, at Cartwright's suggestion, efforts toward unification. Cartwright addressed the Negro ministers with what was, for him, the central question: "[will] Christians... act in a Christ-like manner or continue with hollow mockery to call out 'Lord, Lord,' and at the same time refuse to do what the Lord requires? If we refuse to accept the responsibilities of our brotherhood, then we shall continue to reap the whirlwind of hatred and contention which always follows disobedience to God."¹⁹

Cartwright believed that a solution could not be found apart from the interchange of ideas and views by all of the city's citizens, irrespective of race. Both white and black church leaders had the inescapable obligation to lead the Christians they served that they might accept "their Christ-given responsibilities in regard to solving our present problem." This was crucial because "very few members of one

race have any really accurate idea of what the members of the other race are thinking and writing.”²⁰ He called for the establishment of an interracial committee, appointed by the mayor, to study the “overall problems of race relations.” He also called for the organization of a Greater Little Rock Council of Churches and an Arkansas Council of Churches, both of which should be integrated.²¹

When the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* ran a story including a summary of Cartwright’s remarks, another round of critical letters began to appear in the church’s mailbox. C. H. Thomas of Fordyce, Arkansas, informed Cartwright that “it is no stigma on the negro [sic] just because he has not in 200 years reached the same average level as the white race, even tho’ [sic] he has had the hand of the white man to teach and discipline his savage instincts in the white man’s pattern... Mr. Cartwright, do you want the little ones of your congregation learning the ‘facts of life’ from such little negroes [sic] in school? Most, if not all, Negroes indulge in sexual intercourse, both sexes, by teen-age, as any reputable physician can tell you.”²²

When Cartwright replied with a polite but firm letter, Thomas wrote again, stating that he was an elder in his local Presbyterian congregation and asking, “How can it [segregation] be sinful when God Himself segregated His people from the Egyptians, and required them to drive out the other inhabitants of the Promised Land. And how is it that everyone is a child of God, when Christ said part are children of the devil?”²³ This time, Cartwright was more forceful in his retort, sharing with Thomas what was a central tenet of his faith: “I can find nothing in the life, teachings, [or] spirit of Christ that indicates any idea that his disciples should discriminate against one another because of racial differences. Jew and Gentile mixed freely in the early Christian church to the point today that we can no longer tell which Christians have Jewish ancestors and which do not... it is hard for me to think that our churches in America have so consistently degenerated. Either they [national denominational statements applauding *Brown*] are right, or Christianity in America is at its lowest ebb in our history.” Pointing to the fact that Thomas’ own Presbyterian leaders supported integration, he noted that “in the Army, a soldier out of step has a difficult time proving to the others that everyone is out of step but him.”²⁴

While the great majority of those non-church members who took the time to write Cartwright were disturbed or angry with his public stance, some were supportive. A self-described “colored man - a retired minister,” W. W. Holland of Cotton Plant, Arkansas, praised Cartwright while cautioning him that “[whites] must be brought to realize that the act of your fathers in their handling of their Negro servants, was a crime in the sight of God, -real, horrible crimes... a spiritual repentance must take place ... white people ought to be FORCED to make an honest study of their inherited evils” [all emphases his].²⁵ Cartwright agreed, replying “what is needed now is not repentance of the past but repentance of what we are now doing each day. We must be made to see the evil of our new position of separate but equal rights. I know of no simple answers to making people see this.”²⁶

In the fall of 1954, unbeknownst to Cartwright, and almost everyone else in Little Rock, for that matter, Virgil Blossom, superintendent of the Little Rock Public School System, began to present to the School Board the foundational elements of what came to be known as the “Blossom Plan.” In November, 1954, Cartwright wrote Blossom: “It is encouraging to me to see the basic outlook that you and the school board are taking in seeking to solve this very complex problem... I appreciate the unenviable and extremely complex situation in which you find yourself... I feel con-

fidant that Little Rock will come to an equitable solution to this problem with the quality of leadership you are giving.”²⁷ However, events would soon conspire to alter his view of the Superintendent, who was named “1955 Man of the Year” by the conservative state-wide daily *Arkansas Democrat* for his work toward de-segregating Little Rock’s schools.

In May 1955, The Little Rock School Board voted unanimously to adopt Blossom’s plan of gradual integration. The “Blossom Plan” called for integration to begin in September, 1957, at the high school level only. Over the next six years, lower grades would be added, so that by the fall of 1964, the city’s public schools would be completely integrated.

Throughout 1955 and 1956, Cartwright continued enthusiastically to preach his message of racial tolerance. At the baccalaureate service for the University of Arkansas Medical School’s Class of 1955, he called on the graduates, including the one African-American member of the class, to see “God as a champion of justice and righteousness... you [too] are called to champion unpopular causes, to work against the grain of apathy and prejudice in order to see that every person is respected as a human being with sacred personality.”²⁸

Publication in the *Arkansas Gazette* of excerpts from this address resulted in some of the most violent and profane letters in Cartwright’s archive. Writing from Stilwell, Oklahoma, H.L. Hunnicutt charged him with being “either an ignoramus or a crook,” and pointed out that “the anti-white, anti-Christ jew [sic] is the one that is raising all the trouble regarding the nigger, coupled with his stooges such as yourself... sir, I must say that of all the asses that ever brayed from the pulpit of judo-mongrelized [sic] Christianity, you are the biggest.”²⁹

Correspondents from Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi also shared similar sentiments: “These people who refuse to improve their lot and live in filth like animals, have the same moral habits and see no wrong in it, judge their preachers by their bedroom ability rather more than their ability in the pulpit... I am afraid you can be considered as doing the colored people a great harm by your... views.”³⁰ The two [Supreme C]ourt decisions, based upon the notions of one Gunnar Myrdahl [sic] and his 17 helpers who are communists, must be rated as holy decisions, since communists deny the existence of God.”³¹ “To [say] that racial separation is morally and scientifically indefensible is not only a disgrace to the better educated whites but to those Southern Negroes who take pride in the fact that they are members of the Negroid Race.”³² “Cartwright - only the lowest contempt can express my opinion of you intellectually, morally, or spiritually... why not practice what you preach — give up your present church and accept a negro [sic] church where you could turn your wife and daughter (if you have one) over to fraternization on the scale you seem to desire for others?”³³ “How many churches joined the Bleeding Hearts Club crying out against the stringent, vicious segregation of the American Indian for 165 years? Popularly, segregation’s being sinful seems to be something very new that applies only to negroes [sic]. Segregation of species, though, is a law of nature. Doves never associate with pigeons, even though they are closely related.”³⁴ “Because of Arkansas’ laws, no lay community has been free to mix races in the classrooms. But the church schools, such as Harding, Ouachita, and Hendricks³⁵[sic] have been completely free to avoid what you call SIN - have been free to operate mixed schools. Not a one has done so. They are still sinning. Churches have established and sup-

ported some schools for negroes [sic] only, compounding what WAS sin if it IS NOW sin" [all emphases his].³⁶ "You must not be white or something the matter with you and you should quit preaching either that - in [sic] your younger days you might have created some yellow children and now want to get them into white society."³⁷ "Put your children in the negro [sic] schools, and build your social life around the negro. [sic] They might let you pastor one of their churches, but I doubt that. Then when you get all integrated, why don't you shut up and let the rest of us alone?"³⁸ Despite this barrage, Cartwright would not be intimidated.

His papers contain a personal letter about his disappointment over the failure to integrate Little Rock Junior College, an angry note to radio station KXLR over its airing, out of context, of a confidential internal memo from the socially progressive Arkansas Council on Human Relations (affiliated with the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council, anathema to segregationists), of which Cartwright was an officer, and most importantly, an article in the July/August issue of *World Call*, written by Cartwright in which he warned that "the persons in the world who throw rotten eggs at a Negro girl have their counterpart in an usher who flashes his police deputy badge at a Negro attending a white congregation's worship service... the church has become infiltrated by the world in regard to racial attitudes... the church does not belong to the world but to God."³⁹

When the Arkansas Legislature threatened to pass several bills aimed at severely restricting the activities of voluntary associations and integrationist groups like the Council, Cartwright sent a letter to churches throughout the state urgently warning them that it was "clear from Section 10f of H.B. #322 that even ministers and church groups would not be exempt from the bill's requirements - providing the government with names of members, financial contributors, and other important information. Let me urge you at once in regard to stopping this legislation."⁴⁰ He was disappointed but not surprised when this "protest by churchmen succeeded in obtaining deletion of several of the most objectionable sentences from the bills, but was unsuccessful in defeating their general intention."⁴¹

When the then-named Little Rock High School opened its doors in 1927 it was, said the *New York Times*, the most expensive high school building in the United States. By 1957, it was also one of the nation's largest high schools, providing space for over two thousand students, all of whom were white. In May, 1957, there were 517 black students who lived within the boundaries of Central High's district. Eighty students initially expressed an interest in attending Central. Following interviews by Virgil Blossom and his staff, that number was winnowed down to seventeen candidates. Eight of those children, through peer pressure, intimidation, or simple fear, eventually decided to remain at all-black Horace Mann High School. That left nine.

As the "Blossom Plan" neared implementation, and as Cartwright began to ruminate on the events that had shaped his thinking and acting since the announcement of *Brown*, he was able to articulate, in a personal letter to a family friend, his struggles over religion and race:

My thinking on racial matters in Arkansas is continually shifting. I wish I had kept a log in the past three years concerning my attitudes and observations. It is hard for me to even think back to my thoughts at the time of the first Supreme Court decision. I was trained in seminary in a 'realistic'

school of Christian ethics and I have tried hard not to be a ‘muddling preacher’ disconnected from the realities of our social situation. I have tried hard to be aware of the actualities of our situation and to develop Christian strategy accordingly... none of us were prepared for the bills introduced into the last legislature with the governor’s [Orval Faubus, who had defeated Cherry in the 1954 Democratic primary] blessing... I was in the top circles of the leadership fighting those legislative measures, and know that [Winthrop] Rockefeller,⁴² who has tremendous prestige in Arkansas, put considerable pressure on Faubus - which resulted in at least getting a public hearing on them - but could do nothing more... [these] statutes are vicious and can be used to stir up racial hatred... the factors which will bring about racial amity in the South are complex. I have little idea as to which factors will have the strongest influences... there is no question but what the clergy are the strongest voice against segregation in the South... certainly ministers shall serve as the public conscience in the South in this matter... I am aware that the minister serving as a public ‘prodding conscience’ in this matter has a limited value so far as actually solving the problem is concerned. This is only one factor... I do believe that the answer must be in the last analysis a religious one... discrimination at heart is a sin stemming from pride in the hearts of men. The ultimate answer is to be found in religious conversion. It is much easier to state this conviction than it is to know how to bring this kind of conversion about.⁴³

The summer of 1957 was a time of tremendous turmoil in Little Rock. With desegregation of the city’s only white high school scheduled for September, opponents organized the Capital Citizens Council and the Mother’s League of Central High School. In early August, a member of the League filed a motion seeking a temporary injunction against the “Blossom Plan.” When a Pulaski County Chancellor granted the injunction “on the grounds that integration could lead to violence,” an appeal was filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.⁴⁴ On August 30, 1957, Federal District Judge Ronald Davies nullified the injunction, and the stage was set.

Cartwright’s files are strangely silent during those tumultuous summer months. Perhaps personal or congregational responsibilities kept him from expressing his concern over matters of race. Or it may be that sensing the coming storm, Cartwright hunkered down; during this time, he kept almost no personal records. Whatever the reason, there are no documents concerning racial matters in the Cartwright archive until those dated after the start of the crisis at Central High School.

September 2 dawned balmy but with the promise of heat and thunderstorms by days end. The Little Rock community expected a tense but hopefully successful beginning to the new school year. But it was not to be. Early that morning, Governor Faubus had called out the Arkansas National Guard, ordering them to surround Central High School in order to preserve the peace and avert violence he was expecting from extremists he claimed who were, even then, on their way to Little Rock “in caravans.”⁴⁵

Elizabeth Eckford, one of nine black students enrolled in Little Rock Central High School, walked to class, unaware of the turmoil about to unfold. Because her family did not have a telephone, she did not get the message that she, along with the

other eight black students, was to meet at the home of Arkansas N.A.A.C.P. president Daisy Bates, from which they would be taken together to school.

As Elizabeth approached the school building, she encountered an angry mob. Within moments, they were close on her heels, spitting on her and taunting her with threats: “Here she comes, get ready!” “Go home, nigger!” “Drag her over to this tree!”⁴⁶ She thought the National Guardsmen surrounding the school would protect her, but they stood silently as the crowd surrounded her. She was alone, afraid, and uncertain.

Arkansas Democrat photographer Will Counts remembered that “her imperturbable walk through the mob has become a slow-motion cinema vérité memory. I still find it difficult to believe that this display of racial hatred was happening in front of my high school and my camera.”⁴⁷ Counts’ photograph of Elizabeth Eckford’s brave march through the gauntlet appeared on the next day’s front page of newspapers world-wide. No black student was admitted to the building that day, and school was cancelled shortly after lunchtime.

The next morning, Judge Davies ordered that the black students must be admitted the following day. Again, they were denied entrance. September 3 also saw the arrival at the Cartwright home of a Western Union delivery boy bearing telegrams, one each from the editors of the *Christian-Evangelist* and the *New South*, asking him to provide full coverage of events in Little Rock. This gave Cartwright what would become an invaluable tool in his quest to document and put into perspective the events of 1957 – a press pass.

On Sunday, September 8, Cartwright, as usual, entered the pulpit, and for only the second time since becoming pastor of Pulaski Heights, preached specifically on race relations. In a sermon titled “A Portrait in Ebony” (later excerpted in the *New York Herald Tribune*), Cartwright recounted his interview the previous Friday with Elizabeth Eckford, the young, black girl whose determined yet innocent face was now known to millions around the world.

The Eckford family, knowing Cartwright as a compassionate friend of Little Rock’s black community, “greeted [him] warmly and invited [him] into their home. ‘The night before she went to school,’ Elizabeth’s mother told Cartwright, ‘I told her to be sure and read her Bible that night and again in the morning before she started out.’” Elizabeth herself continued the conversation: “‘I read the fourth Psalm the night before, and the 27th Psalm that morning before I caught the bus.’” Cartwright and Eckford “got out a well-worn Bible and... turned to the 27th Psalm. As I read it aloud to the family,” Cartwright remembered,

... with the little boys’ eyes upturned to me from their seated position on the floor, I knew the course of Elizabeth’s strength to face the most horrible and frightening moment of her life. ‘The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though [sic] war should rise against me in this will I be confident.’ I could picture her now with the words of the Psalmist seeping into her consciousness as she walked a walk which seemed never to end. When we think of the problems facing us, let us think of an Elizabeth Eckford, who has more guts than anyone present here

today... we shall be in danger of losing our own souls if in the midst of great impersonal issues, we lose sight of some very bright children of high moral character who want an education... not available to them in the formerly Negro schools... in my book, Elizabeth Eckford is one of the most noble spirits I have ever known.⁴⁸

The first three weeks of September saw the conflict grow and intensify. The Little Rock Council of Church Women issued a statement opposing segregation and calling for a city-wide prayer service on September 12. On September 20, Judge Davies ruled that Faubus had acted inappropriately in his use of the Guard, prompting the Governor to remove the Guardsmen from the building, leaving the Little Rock Police Department to fill the void created by the Guard's absence. Again, school was cancelled the next day. Finally, President Dwight Eisenhower, who had met earlier with Faubus, decided to intervene. In Eisenhower's view, Governor Faubus was acting in direct opposition to a ruling of a Federal Court.

Under cover of darkness on the morning of September 25, one thousand members of the crack 101st Airborne Division out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, entered Little Rock by caravan. Eisenhower also federalized the Arkansas National Guard, now 10,000 men strong. A few hours after sunrise, the nine black students, surrounded by a cordon of rifle-toting army troops, were escorted through the front door of Little Rock Central High School.

Within days of Eisenhower's action, Cartwright had also interviewed another of the "Little Rock Nine," Thelma Jean Mothershed. In doing so, he had a distinct advantage over all the other journalists who found themselves in Little Rock covering the crisis - Mothershed was a member of Mt. Sinai Christian Church, Pulaski Heights' African-American sister congregation in Little Rock and one of only three black Disciples congregations in Arkansas. The Mothershed children were active in state-wide Disciples youth activities, so there was little hesitancy on the family's part to talk at length with Cartwright, whom they all knew from repeated contact. Since "the Nine" were "instructed not to talk to reporters," Cartwright told the editor of the *Christian-Evangelist* that "what I have here, then, is an exclusive interview, which the secular press would have liked very much to have. In a way, there is a scoop here!"⁴⁹

Cartwright's first published article on the crisis appeared on September 30, and was a tenderly-worded tribute to the entire Mothershed family and their commitment to faith and justice in every aspect of their life together. Thelma Jean, the smallest and frailest of "the Nine," suffered from a heart condition, but was not at all reluctant about attempting to register and attend Central. Her parents, however, were somewhat more reticent, "'At first my folks wanted me to go, and yet they didn't. There are a lot of steps at Central and I have a weak heart. Horace Mann is all on one floor.'" The article continued, with Cartwright musing that "as I descended the porch steps I pondered Thelma Jean's description of what cannot but be one of the ugliest memories of her life. She had expressed no bitterness or resentment. I had to agree with Thelma Jean. The experience had not affected her heart - at least not from a spiritual point of view."⁵⁰

By early October, an uneasy pall settled over the Rose City. Troops still surrounded Central High, but violence had all but abated. The school and its students, however, were still topic number one for newspapers as well as

casual conversation. It was time for Colbert Cartwright to make his judgments known beyond the confines of Pulaski Heights' sanctuary and the relatively limited audience of a denominational publication.

He did just that, making himself a target for those in power on October 9, 1957, when the *Christian Century* published his "Lesson from Little Rock." Cartwright himself considered it "the most significant of my articles on Little Rock... the story I tell... has not generally gotten out in the secular press."⁵¹ Placing responsibility for the debacle squarely on Superintendent Blossom and the School Board, Cartwright accused them of deliberately excluding outside groups from participation in the creation of a plan for the district's integration. Blossom turned down offers of assistance from P.T.A. groups, clergymen, business people, and others. Blossom and the Board "in relationship to the community have consistently taken an autocratic approach... carefully avoiding consultation with either white or Negro patrons... the board announced its plan of gradual integration."⁵²

Cartwright considered it no surprise when Faubus called out the troops to block the desegregation of Central High; it "was the natural outcome of every step the Little Rock school board had taken... what they failed to consider was that their whole approach was playing directly into the hands of white citizen council members... [their] house of cards had fully collapsed. Little Rock citizens who had agreed to compliance, if there was no other way out, now took fresh hope."⁵³

He told family friends that "the tragedy... is that the policies of the superintendent and the school board continue to be such as to discourage absolutely any attempt to improve conditions either within or outside the school. The official policy seems to be to make the Negro children so miserable that they will want to withdraw, at the same time indicating that any other Negroes who seek to enter will have the same treatment. The situation is such that serious trouble could take place at any time. Yet the superintendent continues to paint a rather rosy picture of the situation for the public, and otherwise intelligent people are falling for it."⁵⁴

Answering the phone at his office just before leaving for lunch the day of the *Christian Century's* release to newsstands, Cartwright was surprised to hear the voice of Virgil Blossom, who made his displeasure clearly known: "I have never seen a human being act as low as you acted... I could have never been as disappointed in a human being as I am in you... you couldn't have acted any lower; you are only posing as a minister... I am going to tell all the other ministers in town what I think of you."⁵⁵ After lambasting him, Blossom hung up without allowing Cartwright to reply. Blossom then called Harold Fey, the editor of the *Christian Century*, where Fey noted, he "nicked the Little Rock taxpayers for a 10-15 minute long distance toll while he excoriated me [Fey] for printing [the] article without telling him about it in advance and giving him a chance to reply to it in the same issue... he said [Cartwright] was trying to dictate a program of complete integration, which he said he would be ready to accept when and if [Cartwright] presented Little Rock with an integrated church... he repeated the charges and condemnations... four or five more times, then he seemed to realize he had run out of ideas and hung up."⁵⁶

In a letter to his parents one year later, Cartwright mentioned that Blossom asked him to give the invocation at the School Board meeting "to apologize for all his nastiness toward me last fall in regard to my *Christian Century* article... he said that he didn't take anything back that he had said, but that he regretted the spirit it which he had said it! I guess his philosophy is 'Smile when you say that!'"⁵⁷

Cartwright's next published article, "The Improbable Demagogue of Little Rock, Ark.," came in the October 17, 1957, issue of *The Reporter* and lambasted Governor Orval Faubus as "'a patsy for a con story' by rabid segregationists [and] an executive who seldom seeks advice... 'the trouble is that often he does not hear all sides - or even the most important sides - to a problem'... the simple fact is that a small group of extreme segregationists at Little Rock sized up the governor and sold him a bill of goods based on fabrications... acting solely on the advice of those who had come to him, Gov. Orval Faubus went down the darkest blind alley of his career."⁵⁸

While he recognized that his was "an unorthodox view," Cartwright also argued that "no explanation fully 'explains Faubus,' but I still think I was on the right track. I got a note from [Arkansas state] Senator Yingling saying I had explained Faubus correctly."⁵⁹ Cartwright also received praise from his friend Dick Preston of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance: "Nowadays when they ask me about Faubus, I just say: 'Read Colbert Cartwright's piece in *The Reporter*.' Which is one newspaperman's way of saying, 'a heck of a fine job!' You'd be surprised how hard it is to convince people that there was no great 'plot' in Little Rock, that Orval was just a two-bit politician who had no idea what he was getting into, that the whole affair was pretty much a ghastly accident."⁶⁰

Cartwright felt a vital need to involve himself as much as possible in every aspect of this particular fight for racial equality: "In the Little Rock crisis I felt that probably one of my most significant contributions would be to keep as fully informed as possible as to what was actually going on. With my interest in writing I was able to be where the news was being made as an official correspondent. As a member of the working press I was able to observe developments at Central High, attending the governor's press conferences, etc. With various contacts in the community I was also able to gain other information that was not available to the press. So I feel I have probably as full and accurate a picture of the situation as anyone... the accuracy of my appraisal [of the School Board] has been privately attested to by both the woman and man assistant principals at Central... and others who are in a position to know."⁶¹

Concerned either with Cartwright's vocal stand on the issue of segregation, or more probably that coupled with his high visibility as a reporter, some of his parishioners asked for a conference with their pastor. On October 30, he met with concerned members, sharing later with his father that "everything indicates that some will leave. They are so mad and they pick at every additional thing I say and I imagine it will be that way from here on out. The thing has dragged along for nearly two months now... it is quite a strain [although] I haven't seriously thought of leaving. I don't think it would solve anything so far as church is concerned, for I think there really would be a knock-down and drag-out fight over the election of a preacher... those who leave will not seriously hamper the church."⁶²

He was fully prepared to deal with those who wanted to "leave for more comfortable pews... [and whose] discontent stem[med] from a conviction that the church should have no part in the discussion of social problems." In a display of optimism that was becoming all too rare, he noted that "actually from many points of view, the church will not be greatly hurt. Only a slight financial adjustment will need to be made, and it does not affect out church school staff or the choir."⁶³ By the end of November, around ten percent of the membership of Pulaski Heights Christian Church had moved their letters to "a church whose minister has assured them that segregation is the will of God."⁶⁴

The late autumn of 1957 was becoming for Cartwright a “lonely time,” when he found himself strengthened only by his family, a few supportive members of Pulaski Heights, and those friends who took time to write him, displaying their support and encouragement. He found little hope for any improvement in the city’s political and racial situation; nothing was being done by school officials, and the “leaders of the community still [were] not taking any strong leadership in building up a morale which would make it possible for the troops to leave with an assurance we can handle our problems from here on out.” He was especially frustrated that clergy were not providing the leadership he thought was vitally important for fear of “stir[ring] things up.”⁶⁵

Cartwright believed the “strongest force working for some kind of order” was the public school leaders across the state, even though they were put in a difficult position by their responsibility to support, in some way, Governor Faubus. They were beholden to him because of the Governor’s support of a one-cent sales tax for education which he shepherded through the Legislature in 1956. Around Thanksgiving time, Cartwright wrote to an old family friend: “the situation here is still quite desperate despite an outward calmness. Every force for good has been in one fashion or another neutralized and the trouble-making segregationists have the upper-hand. Everything points to more trouble ahead.”⁶⁶ Fall was giving way to winter, and prospects for the future were darkening even as the days grew shorter in their inevitable march toward the solstice.

When things seemed to be at their lowest point, Cartwright was threatened in a manner far more serious than anything he had heretofore experienced. The city of Little Rock requested the Arkansas Council on Human Relations, of which Cartwright was now Chairman, to comply with Ordinance #10,636 - that is, provide the city with information on membership, finances, and contributions. When city officials termed incomplete the report Cartwright submitted, he wrote his father: “There is a possibility I will be arrested for non-compliance... I hope, if I am arrested, there can be some vocal church denunciation of what is being done to us. They ought to be able to defend us as a respectable organization.”⁶⁷ The expected arrest never occurred, but authorities continued to harass the Council at every opportunity.

In the midst of this tremendous tension, however, there was opportunity for diversion. In December, 1957, Cartwright went on his first duck hunting expedition to the east Arkansas town of Stuttgart, nationally renowned as one of the best spots along the Mississippi River Flyway to bag one’s limit: “I just went along to see what it was all about. I got up at four o’clock and we sloshed around in icy water for about three or four hours. I had all the gear needed to try to keep warm. It was an interesting time, but once is probably enough.”⁶⁸

As winter gave way to spring, the budding trees brought with them a glimmer of hope, what Cartwright called in a letter to Andrew Young “a few streaks of dawn shortly after Easter. Some things are in the wind which may have promise. Let’s hope so.”⁶⁹ A plan to solve the integration impasse was put forth by Little Rock businessman Herbert Thomas, but it, too, fell victim to lack of consensus. By the summer of 1958, it was, for all intents and purposes, dead.

Cartwright continued to write. His article “The Southern Minister and the Race Question” was published in January, 1958, in *New South*, and in March readers saw his contribution to a multi-denominational look at “The Southern Churches and the Race Question” in *Christianity and Crisis*. In May, *Progressive* printed “Failure

in Little Rock,” an article he described as “a bomb shell... it is quite an indictment of our school board, but somebody needs to say it, and I don’t think I can become any more unpopular with the school officials that I became after the *Christian Century* article.”⁷⁰ Cartwright wrote:

...having interpreted its task from the beginning as one of avoiding as far as possible the necessity of allowing Negro pupils to enter white schools, it [the School Board] was as defenseless against those who sought within the school building to find ways of forcing the Negroes out, as it had been against Governor Faubus. After all, were not the militant segregationists siding [with] the school board in attempting to cut down the number of Negroes at Central High? This is the key to understanding the chaotic state of affairs that continued to exist at Central High through the school year. The result has been the fantastic phenomena of school officials being continually harassed in their work by militant segregationist pupils and adults, with the officials taking no firm action to stop it. For nine long weary months the school officials indulged in this strange form of flagellation. Caught in their own web of maximum avoidance of the law, they were prey to any segregationists who insisted that by systematic harassment they could either reduce the number of Negroes at Central High or prove that desegregation in any form at Little Rock would not work.⁷¹

He later noted that having only nine students (“one for each Supreme Court Justice,” he pointed out sarcastically), was the result of the Board’s attempt “to translate the law into terms of how many, if any, Negro pupils would be required by the federal government to enter the corridors and classrooms of white schools.”⁷²

By the end of the 1957-1958 school year, in addition to his published articles, Cartwright had also lectured at Yale University, Vanderbilt University, Texas Christian University, and several venues in New York City, sharing willingly with audiences from his reservoir of expertise on race and Christianity in the South.

In June, 1958, Cartwright looked back at nine months of hard work and sacrifice since the crisis began; he also reflected on a committed ministry of racial justice and reconciliation in Little Rock that had lasted over four and a half years. As he did so, he received a letter from a former instructor at Yale Divinity School, Halford Luccock: “My theological friends tell me that pride is a sin. Nevertheless, I am sinfully proud of you and I will take a chance on it. I really am tremendously proud of all that you are doing and have done, and I swell up like a powder [*sic*] pigeon and say, ‘Why sure Cartwright was one of my students, didn’t you expect a top performance?’”⁷³

There was much more work left for Colbert Cartwright to do. He would serve as pastor of Pulaski Heights Christian Church until 1964, and he would continue to publish, lecture, and remain active in the community’s efforts to achieve reconciliation and justice for all its citizens. In a long and illustrious career, he would go on to serve in congregational and area ministry in Texas and serve as co-editor of the *Chalice Hymnal*. But the crucible of Central High School had strengthened and purified Colbert Cartwright, and he, in turn, had brought a renewing and refining fire to those whom he touched. There would be many more “top performances” to come.

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⁴ Leon Jones, *From Brown to Boston: Desegregation in Education, 1954-1974* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1979), 1.

⁵ "Governor Speaks on Court Ruling," *Arkansas Gazette*, 19 May 1954, 1A.

⁶ L.C. Bates, "Editorial," *Arkansas State Press*, 20 May 1954, 2.

⁷ David L. Chappell, "Editor's Introduction," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56 (Autumn 1997), ix.

⁸ John A. Kirk, "The Little Rock Crisis and Postwar Black Activism in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56 (Autumn 1997), p. 275.

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¹⁰ Chappell, "Editor's Introduction," p. ix.

¹¹ Mark Newman, "The Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Desegregation, 1954-1968," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 294-313.

¹² Chappell, "Editor's Introduction," p. x.

¹³ Newman, "Arkansas Baptist State Convention," p. 297.

¹⁴ Colbert S. Cartwright, "The Ministry and Segregation," (addressed delivered to the Negro Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Little Rock, Arkansas, on 28 June, 1954), Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁵ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Liston Pope, New Haven, Connecticut, 27 May 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁶ Mrs. Robinson, North Little Rock, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 24 May 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁷ C.A. Bishop, Ashdown, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 30 May 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁸ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Liston Pope, New Haven, Connecticut, 27 May 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

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²⁰ *Ibid.*

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²² C. H. Thomas, Fordyce, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 30 June 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²³ C. H. Thomas, Fordyce, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 14 July 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁴ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to C. H. Thomas, Fordyce, Arkansas, 24 July 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁵ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to N.W. Holland, Cotton Plant, Arkansas, 2 October 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁶ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to N.W. Holland, Cotton Plant, Arkansas, 2 October 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁷ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Virgil Blossom, Little Rock, Arkansas, 22 November 1954, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁸ Colbert S. Cartwright, Baccalaureate addressed to the University of Arkansas Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy, Little Rock, Arkansas, 12 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

²⁹ H.L. Hunnicutt, Stilwell, Oklahoma, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 15 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁰ George Jefferson, Greenville, Mississippi, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 20 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³¹ J.R. English, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 13 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³² Richard Burrow, Milan, Tennessee, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 15 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³³ Joe Doakes, Tupelo, Mississippi, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 22 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁴ J.R. English, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 27 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁵ Harding College was a Church of Christ institution in Searcy, Arkansas; Ouachita Baptist University was a Southern Baptist institution in Arkadelphia, Arkansas; and Hendrix College was a Southern Methodist college in Conway, Arkansas.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ J.L. Porter, Batesville, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 13 June 1955, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁸ Unsigned letter, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 10 September 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³⁹ Colbert S. Cartwright, "The Church, the World, and Race," *World Call*, July-August 1956, 17.

⁴⁰Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to “Fellow Minister,” 13 February 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁴¹Lester M. Bickford, “Disciples Assail Segregation Bills,” *Christian-Evangelist*, 6 March 1957, 17.

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⁴³Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Wilma Dykeman Stokely, Newport, Tennessee, 23 May 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁴⁴*Arkansas Gazette*, 28 May 1957, 1A.

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⁴⁸Colbert S. Cartwright, “A Portrait in Ebony,” (sermon preached at Pulaski Heights Christian Church, 8 September 1957), Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

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⁵⁰Colbert S. Cartwright, “‘Exclusive’ from Little Rock,” *Christian-Evangelist*, 30 September 1957, 19.

⁵¹Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Ethel May Taylor, Orlando, Florida, 2 November 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁵²Colbert S. Cartwright, “Lesson from Little Rock,” *Christian Century*, 9 October 1957, 36.

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⁵⁴Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Dr. and Mrs. Hunter, 21 December 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

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Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

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⁵⁹ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Hayden C. Nicholson, Old Greenwich, Connecticut, 2 November 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁰ Dick Preston, Washington, D.C., to Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, 15 October 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶¹ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Dr. and Mrs. Hunter, 21 December 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶² Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Lin Cartwright, St. Louis, Missouri, 30 October 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶³ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Hayden Nicholson, Old Greenwich, Connecticut, 2 November 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁴ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Dorwin ?, 25 November 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁵ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Lin Cartwright, St. Louis, Missouri, 30 October 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁶ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Josephine Hamilton, Church Hill, Tennessee, 25 November 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁷ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Lin Cartwright, St. Louis, Missouri, 31 December 1957, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Andy Young, New York City, New York, 31 March 1958, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁷⁰ Colbert S. Cartwright, Little Rock, Arkansas, to Lin Cartwright, St. Louis, Missouri, 8 April 1958, Cartwright Papers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁷¹ Colbert S. Cartwright, "Failure in Little Rock," *Progressive*, June 1958, p. 24.

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Forrest H. Kirkpatrick Seminar

**"The Turn of the Century Division between Churches of Christ
and the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ."**

**June 28 and 29, 2006
Belmont Room of the Hyatt Hotel
Louisville, Kentucky**

**Sponsored by Disciples of Christ Historical Society
in conjunction with the North American Christian Convention**

Wednesday, June 28 2:00 - 3:15

"The Role of the 1906 US Religious Census in the Division"

**Douglas A. Foster, Abilene Christian University
Director of the Center for Restoration Studies**

Wednesday, June 28 3:30 - 4:45

"Geographical and Social Dimensions of the Division"

Henry Webb, Milligan College

Thursday, June 29 2:00 - 3:15

"The Division among African-Americans"

Edward Robinson, Abilene Christian University

**Hotel reservations should be made through the NACC website
at nacetheconnectingplace.org. It is not necessary to register for
NACC events to attend the Kirkpatrick Seminar but please
confirm your attendance by e-mail to mail@discipleshistory.org**

This annual lectureship was founded in 1992 by Dr. Forrest H. Kirkpatrick of Wheeling, West Virginia. Dr. Kirkpatrick was a Life Member of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society and had a long and deep interest in the Society and in sharing the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Dr. Kirkpatrick had a distinguished career as an industrialist and as an educator. He served as an Executive Officer and as a member of the Board of Directors of Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation. He served as Dean and Professor of Bethany College, Bethany, West Virginia, for 25 years. Dr. Kirkpatrick was also an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Each year historians gather to hear papers (usually three in number) and formally prepared responses. The papers and responses lead to open discussion. Presentations are most frequently delivered by members of each of the three streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

DISCIPLIANA

The Quarterly Historical Journal of the
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ANNOUNCING BICENTENNIAL TASK FORCE

The 2009 Task Force representing World Convention, Christian Church/Churches of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ seeks to promote the unity (not uniformity) of all believers on the basis of Holy Scripture, celebrated at the Lord's Table, so that the world may know God through Christ.

The 2009 Task Force will produce educational and formational materials that (1) interpret the Declaration and Address to a modern audience, (2) collect and republish items from the richness of Stone-Campbell theology of the Lord's Supper, (3) provide resources for local congregations from across the streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement to begin or continue dialogue, and (4) plan for and provide resources for a "Great Communion" Sunday October 18, 2009.

VISIT www.discipleshistory.org for detailed information.

— From the Editor's Desk

Reading the two articles in this issue of *Discipliana* is in both cases like witnessing a careful technician remove a heavy layer of dust and grime to disclose a fascinating and instructive fresco.

In the case of Jeanne Duke, "Journey of Faith: The Freedmen Congregations of Davis Bend," the fresco is the story of events and circumstances in antebellum Mississippi that appear to have contributed to the founding of Black Disciples congregations during Reconstruction. Among the characters are Joseph Davis, older brother of the future President of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis; Robert Owen, utopian promoter of New Lanark, Scotland and New Harmony fame; and a slave by the name of Levin Woods. As the culmination of this story, Duke traces the emergence of the Missionary Baptists in Mississippi and Woods' separation from that body to identify with the Disciples of Christ.

Paul Allen Williams, "Disciples of Christ at the Equator – 1897-1903: An Essay on the History of Christianity in Congo," discloses the story of the earliest years of the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission. This mission resulted in the establishment in 1903 of the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo, which today numbers nearly a million adult members in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Williams' "Disciples and 'Red Rubber': the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM), the Congo Free State, and the Congo Reform Campaign, 1897-1908" appeared in the previous number of this volume (Spring 2006). In this article he addresses relations among the missionaries and the critical role of Congolese Christians in the success of the mission.

As with frescos that have not received proper care, parts of both stories are missing and, for now, at least, can be filled in only by conjecture. The stories that appear, though not complete, are nevertheless fascinating. They are also instructive. In both cases, the stories that emerge, point to the role of "indigenous" leaders in the growth of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Both articles also testify to the value of careful and patient historical investigation to disclose important stories which have too long been neglected.

D. Newell Williams

— From the President's Desk

Out of Time. That seems to be the way we feel so often. If only we had the time, we would accomplish so much more. With more time, our personal evolution would be more complete. An extra hour here, an extra day there, would help us to increase our knowledge of all the things that make the world a better place. But time and space have us trapped. What do we say? 'We cannot be in more than one place *at a time*.' In one sentence we admit that we are captive. The poet/composer Tom Scholz says,

*It's been such a long time,
I think I should be going;
Time doesn't wait for me,
It keeps on rolling.*

Time is constantly moving. It is the watch that, once wound, never runs down.

God exists separate from space-time. The Spirit is within time, to be sure, but is not limited by it as we are. We are inside time. God is outside time. So, we look back and try to remember the past. We look forward and try to imagine the future. We stand still and try to experience the present. God is above the time-line. The Spirit can move back and forth; in and out.

In the same sermon where Augustine says "live rightly and you will change the times," he also says "the times have never hurt anyone." Maybe time is not the enemy after all. When we acknowledge our limitations, we also recognize our opportunities. For in the confines of our particular time we see a beginning and an end. And that knowing about the end pushes us to become the persons we want to be – the persons God intends for us to be. It's not time, or the times, that injure, but my unwillingness to yield to reality as it presents itself.

In spirit we are connected to God and through history we are related to our ancestors. As we come to know more of the Christ within each of us, we find ourselves floating above time, released from the chains that tie us to one perspective. In historical study we stand in the places our forebears stood and see the world as they saw it. We borrow knowledge from the past which lifts us out of our own time and teaches us the truths that apply to every generation.

Glenn Thomas Carson

Journey of Faith: The Freedmen Congregations of Davis Bend

Jeanne Scott Duke*

In the office of the Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), comprised of the churches in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, there hangs a map of the region's congregations. A star marks the town where each congregation is located; the color of the star indicates whether the congregation is predominantly Anglo, African American, or Hispanic. A cluster of overlapping stars, each representing an African American congregation, dot the area formed by drawing lines from Vicksburg to Jackson, Jackson to Natchez, and following the Mississippi River back north to Vicksburg. Did these congregations share a common origin, perhaps dating back to slavery?

The existing Disciples-related histories on African Americans in this area generally begin only after the conclusion of the Civil War. In 1929, the first history of Mississippi Disciples mentioned that William Ramey, a black preacher representing a congregation of 140 members in Carrollton, attended the 1870 annual meeting. Charles C. Mosley wrote the first history of the Black churches belonging to the Disciples in Mississippi in 1954. Not intended as a scholarly work, his small volume contained references to leaders from earlier times as repeated to him by other African American congregational leaders. It included no references before 1865. Hap Lyda wrote the first systematically researched history of nineteenth-century Black Disciples in 1972. It included an account of the development of Black Disciples churches in Mississippi after 1865 as recorded in the periodicals and official records of the Stone-Campbell Movement.¹

This article focuses, instead, on the events and distinctive circumstances in antebellum Mississippi that contributed to the founding of Black Disciples congregations during Reconstruction. It gives particular attention to the congregations formed on Davis Bend, a peninsula formed by the meandering Mississippi River, and their journey from slavery to affiliation with the Disciples of Christ in 1872.

Early Years on Palmyra Bend

Joseph Emory Davis, older brother of the future President of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, purchased land on Palmyra Bend, a peninsula on the Mississippi River south of Vicksburg in Warren County, Mississippi, in 1818. Davis added to his holdings over the next thirty years, eventually owning 5,280 acres, including a plantation once owned by J. G. Wood. As the Davis holdings gained fame for the wealth and influence they produced for their owners, the peninsula was renamed Davis Bend. From 1818 until 1833, Davis maintained his law practice in Natchez and accumulated slaves to clear and plant the land on the Bend. Davis discontinued his law practice, moved to the Bend, and managed his holdings full-time in 1833.²

*Jeanne Scott Duke is a former Regional Minister for the Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) currently studying law at Texas Wesleyan University.

Robert Owen's System and the Davis Family

In the spring of 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette toured the United States, including a twelve-hour visit in Natchez. One member of the entourage was Frances Wright, well-known utopian lecturer and writer. Wright had visited the site in Western Indiana that Robert Owen had recently purchased from the Rappites for his proposed community. She discussed the possibility of adapting Owen's methods to slavery with Davis and other Natchez planters.³

That summer, Joseph Davis and other family members traveled to West Point to visit his younger brother Jefferson, then a student at the academy. By chance, Robert Owen joined the Davises for the leg of the stagecoach ride through the Pennsylvania countryside eastward from Meadville to Erie. The next year, Davis visited New Harmony for a two-week stay ending on July 7, 1826. He observed both the social and educational organization of the community. Owen had delivered a fourth of July address; therefore, Davis had at least an opportunity to speak with Owen. In addition, Davis had discussed the possibility of visiting again in 1827.⁴

Owen had collaborated with William Maclure to establish at New Harmony an educational system similar to that which Owen had instituted at New Lanark, Scotland. Maclure secured the services of three European educators who had studied the educational ideas of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi: Marie Duclos Fretageot, Jacob Neef, and William Philquepal. Pestalozzi had advocated "natural education" could lead to personal and social transformation. Maclure, the education director for Owen's New Harmony community, was pessimistic about the usefulness of adult education, contending that extensive education for children would transform society. In contrast, Neef believed that using the Pestalozzian method for adult education would produce intelligent, self-governed, republican citizens. Neef, Owen, and Maclure uniformly rejected classical emphasis on Greek and Latin language and emphasized, instead, practical and utilitarian skill development.⁵

At New Harmony, Fretageot taught the infant school for children from age two to five; Neef, the higher school for children from age five to twelve; and Philquepal, adults over age twelve. Maclure described the implementation of their improved version of Pestalozzianism at New Harmony as an "apprenticeship of life." Although the infant school provided little more than socialization, children in the upper school chose or were assigned an occupation or trade. Their classes raised income to support the school. Adult classes included math, natural history, and experimental farming, and other income-producing work that could improve the colony.⁶

Maclure described Pestalozzianism as focused on useful rather than ornamental learning. For example, Maclure stated that:

To court pleasure and to avoid pain includes the greatest part of the motives of human actions; to accomplish which, children ought to be taught to avoid remorse, fear, misery, and ennui. To prevent the first, act always honestly and uprightly; do what you wish to be done by; secondly, retain all your instinctive courage, and view every thing as it really exists; thirdly, allow a moderate indulgence of the natural appetites, and enjoin a total prohibition against acquiring any artificial

tastes or appetites.

Observe frugality, and the strictest economy of the smallest expenditure; recollecting the old proverb "take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves." Fourthly, obtain a knowledge of the objects of nature and art, and an early habit of receiving pleasure from the examination of them.

Thus, the schools at New Harmony prepared ordinary people to face hardship with dignity and moral integrity. In addition, Maclure believed that the advantages of the educational system used at New Harmony were best suited for the laboring classes.⁷

The teachers at New Harmony served as guides to their students. Neef, in particular, was a permissive teacher who used no corporal punishment, ridicule, or fear. Neef believed that fear and authoritarianism restricted children from learning. Neef incorporated Pestalozzi's insistence that the teacher progress slowly and gradually so that each child learned at his or her own pace. Neef encouraged students to observe the qualities and behaviors of objects in the natural world, to manipulate these objects, and learn the results of actions on the objects by observation. To Pestalozzians, a child could understand how to perform the tasks of ordinary trades only if they could define the task in terms of the objects to manipulate and the results to accomplish. The system of education sought to allow each learner to discover these critical connections on his or her own.⁸

Owen designed his communities so that both those with and without investment capital might benefit. At both New Lanark and New Harmony, those with capital earned an annuity in return for their investment. These communities employed those without capital in various tasks to support the community in exchange for food, clothing, and lodging and provided them support in sickness and old age. When the New Harmony community disintegrated in 1827, Neef identified this system design as one cause of the community's failure. He stated that people who did not own the land on which they lived and were at risk of expulsion at any minute had no interest in being "frugal, industrious, economical[,] or careful." He compared Owen's strategy at New Harmony to that of a Southern planter:

To make any set of human beings industrious, careful, &c. &c. you must make it their palpable interest to be so. But what interest had the people here to be industrious? Just as much as the [slaves] in any of our black communities, called cotton or sugar plantations.

Had you followed my earnest advice, and made this place our real and permanent home, by giving, or selling it to us at the reasonable price I proposed, an excellent commonwealth would have been established in the twinkling of an eye.⁹

This critique proved to be insightful. New Harmony would dissipate because its residents were not like the mill workers of New Lanark; economic necessity did not bind them to the colony. In the South, slaves were legally bound to their owners and by extension to their owners' property. In the South, it would be

easier to implement Owen's methods.

Owen's Influence on Life on the Bend

Davis completed building the family home, Hurricane, in 1833. There he strove to emulate what he had learned from Robert Owen and New Harmony. His maxim, "the less people are governed, the more submissive they will be," demonstrated a peculiar brand of paternalism. Davis devised a system where slaves had a reason to be industrious, frugal, and careful. He encouraged slaves to form families and permitted slave wives to purchase time out of the fields to care for children. He created slave courts, sheriffs, and an appellate system with Davis as the judge of final appeal. He permitted slaves to develop trades and to practice self-expression. For example, Davis' slave Benjamin Montgomery gained proficiency as a civil engineer, learned several foreign languages, and operated the general store on the Bend. Many slaves learned how to read, write, and perform basic mathematical calculations. Thus, Davis created a world on Davis Bend that the slaves would not expect to find elsewhere in the South.¹⁰

Davis encouraged slaves to embrace white culture and entertainment. George Johnson, a former Bend resident described the Bend as a place where all the Davis slaves had a common education. Davis' commitment to education included hiring a musician from Vicksburg to teach slaves music and to organize them into an ensemble known as the "Davis Bend Band." In addition, Davis allowed the slaves to observe whites racing their horses, to construct their own horeseracing track, and to race their own horses. The process by which students learn useful skills by careful observation and imitation was consistent with the New Harmony -- improved Pestalozzianism.¹¹

Joseph Davis gave Brierfield, a tract of 890 acres adjacent to Hurricane, to his brother Jefferson in 1835. Jefferson copied many of Joseph's Owen-inspired practices to manage his estate.¹²

Religion on Davis Bend

Just as Davis permitted his slaves to learn otherwise prohibited knowledge such as trades, reading, and mathematics, he may have permitted them to read the Bible and to organize their own worship. This would have been consistent not only with his Owen-inspired practices at Davis Bend, but with church practices in Natchez as well.

But it was against the law. The Mississippi Code of 1848 prohibited "any slave, free negro, or mulatto" to serve as a minister of the Gospel. A master could permit one of his own slaves to preach on the master's premises, but only that master's slaves could attend. By 1857, the Code required either that an ordained minister lead worship or that two white people, appointed by a "regular church or religious society" attend black worship. Yet, the white members of Wall Street Baptist Church in Natchez seemed to have skirted the law for the benefit of its slave members. Wall Street listed only 62 whites of its 442 members in 1846. Perhaps to avoid expanding its own facility, Wall Street's white members encouraged their slave members to raise funds and build Rose Hill Baptist Church in the 1850s. These two congregations may have worshipped at the same time and may have allowed black worship leadership in spite of the Code.¹³

Religious life on the Bend mirrored developments in Natchez. Old Bob, one of the first slaves to arrive on Brierfield, served as preacher on the Bend.

Although the Davises were Episcopalian, they occasionally paid a Southern Baptist evangelist to provide religious services for residents of the Bend. This indicated sensitivity to the possibility that their slaves, like the members of Rose Hill Church in Natchez, preferred the teaching, congregational polity, and worship style of the Baptists. In addition, the minister would have been both a resource for learning how to interpret the Bible and a model for those wanting to follow Old Bob as evangelist. At other times, deferring to his family's preference, the Davises paid an Episcopal priest to visit Hurricane. The Davises usually arranged for hired ministers to lead two services each week -- a morning service for family and an afternoon service for slaves. Jefferson, on the rare occasions when he participated, did so in the afternoon.¹⁴

The Quitmans, who owned Palmyra Plantation on the Bend, were also Episcopalian. John Quitman had married a daughter of Fielding Turner, brother of the original owner of Palmyra. Turner's other daughter had married John McMurrin. Quitman eventually bought out the Turner interests and hired a member of the Turner family to run Palmyra. John Quitman, like Jefferson Davis, rarely attended church. But his wife, Eliza, was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge in the Diocese of Mississippi. The Quitmans and McMurrins spent most of their time at their Natchez plantations, Monmouth and Melrose.¹⁵ But Natchez was over thirty miles from the Bend, and so it is likely that Palmyra's permanent residents -- slaves and white employees -- may have attended the Davises' religious services at Hurricane.

Near Davis Bend lived people associated with William T. Withers and Thomas W. Caskey, who were well-known Mississippi Disciples. The 1850 slave schedules for Warren County included not only slaves on the Davis, Quitman, and Turner plantations on Davis Bend but also sixty-seven slaves in nearby Warrenton belonging to Withers's law partner, William L. Sharkey. The 1850 free schedule for Claiborne County, south of Davis Bend, included Withers's future father-in-law, Robert L. Sharkey, as well as Caskey's uncle, Hugh M. Coffee. The Withers and Sharkeys later moved to Jackson, the state capital, and continued to manage properties in Claiborne County. The 1860 slave schedules for Jackson, Mississippi included Withers with eleven slaves, Caskey with five slaves, and W. L. Sharkey with nine slaves.¹⁶

William Withers was a life-long Disciple and graduate of Bacon College. In 1850 he had married Martha Sharkey, who had united with the Disciples while she was a student in Kentucky. The Robert Sharkeys and Witherses were members of the Disciples church at Grand Gulf, a town south of Davis Bend roughly midway between Natchez and Vicksburg, and later at Jackson, Mississippi. Caskey served as minister of the Jackson church from 1855 to 1861. In addition, William Sharkey and Caskey were active in Mississippi politics. Caskey was a chaplain to the Mississippi Secession Convention, led by Sharkey, and Sharkey was former Chief Justice and future Governor and Senator of Mississippi.¹⁷

War and Davis Bend

Jefferson Davis moved to Richmond, Virginia when the war came in 1861. Joseph once again managed both Brierfield and Hurricane. Joseph fled to Alabama soon after the fall of New Orleans in April 1862 and arranged for some

of the Hurricane-Brierfield slaves to relocate to Hinds County, Mississippi. His aim was to minimize the loss of slaves if Union troops attacked on their approach toward Vicksburg. Many Bend refugees found the Hinds County accommodations unacceptable, and they returned to the relatively familiar but risky life beside the Mississippi River. Union military activity soon prompted Davis's two white overseers to flee the plantations in December 1862. Benjamin Montgomery, Davis's slave and *de facto* leader of the community, tried to provide for those who remained. After the Union Navy secured the Bend on its way to Vicksburg, Admiral Porter arranged passage to Cincinnati for the Montgomery family, and the Union assumed responsibility for the residents of the Bend. As Grant approached Vicksburg by land, refugees seeking to live under federal protection swelled the population of the Bend. Grant proposed to transform the plantations and residents of Davis Bend into a model community, where newly freed slaves could work the land to provide for their own needs. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, called the Freedmen's Bureau, accepted the challenge of managing the project in December 1863.¹⁸

Former Davis slaves were a minority of the freedmen living on the Bend under Bureau management. The others were friends, neighbors, or refugees from surrounding counties. The Davis residents claimed their former slave cabins, while the "newcomers" lived in poorly constructed shanties and huts. By 1864, there were 1,750 men, women, and children working 5,300 acres as part of the project. The men of the Montgomery family returned to the Bend in early 1865. The Montgomery women arrived soon thereafter, when the eldest Montgomery daughter completed studies at Oberlin. Finding a community in need of supplies, they established a merchandise store and began to reclaim their positions as community leaders. In October, they completed lease negotiations with Joseph Davis to manage the Davis properties. Davis petitioned the United States to have his lands returned to his family. During Davis' long dispute with the Federal government many of the freedmen working on sub-leases or shares left the Bend for more secure land contracts. The Freedmen's Bureau ceased their management of Bend community and other land operations in Mississippi in mid-1866.¹⁹

Missionary Baptists on the Bend

The Freedmen's Bureau conducted only one survey of the religious life of Bend residents; this occurred at the close of operations in 1866. The report described Davis Bend inhabitants as "religiously inclined." They held weekly Sunday services and mid-week meetings, but lacked a minister to perform marriages legally. This would soon change.²⁰

Newly-freed blacks began to create religious communities in complete independence from their former masters' churches. Building on the work of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society with soldiers, Baptists in the Midwest and Northeast joined with some in the South to form the Northwestern Baptist Missionary Convention (NWBMC). In 1865, the Rose Hill Baptist Church of Natchez became the first African American congregation in Mississippi to report to the NWBMC. Rose Hill's minister, a Northern Baptist, organized the Antioch Baptist Missionary Association in 1868 for the emerging congregations in Adams and surrounding counties.²¹

Following the lead of Rose Hill and the Antioch Baptist Missionary Association, King Solomon Baptist Church in Vicksburg hosted the inaugural meeting of the First Saints Baptist Missionary Association on March 4, 1869. The roster of attendees included Bend ministers and Bend-related congregations:

First Church Davis Bend, Elder Levin Wood[s], Brother James Thomas, Brother Jacob Rice, Brother Alfred Johnson, Brother Simon Calvin, 160 members.

Second Church Davis Bend, Elder Frank Hutton, Brother Ben Ousley, Brother Isaac Green, Brother Warren Watt, Brother William Robinson, Brother Philip Gaytor.

Point Pleasant, Tensas Parish, represented by letter, 125 members.

The purpose of the new association was “the advancement of the cause of Christ, and unwavering fidelity to the colored race. Let come what may, in weal and woe, in victory or defeat.” Its members organization resolved “to strive to the extent of our ability, for the maintenance of liberty and the elevation of our race, and advising them to become educated.”²²

The General Baptist Missionary Convention of Mississippi (GBMC) held its first meeting on July 12, 1869, in Port Gibson, Claiborne County. Delegates from First Saints, Antioch, and other Baptist Missionary societies in the state included A. Johnson, L. Woods, J. Smothers, John Johnson, P. Brown, and H. Green. Congregations included Salem Baptist Davis Bend, 152 members and Point Pleasant, 45 members. At the conclusion of the service dedicating the organization, one leader commented, “Many poor old elders who had been slaves, [sic] rejoiced that they had been spared to see these happy days, and females not a few played well their happy part in the scene of triumph.”²³

The United States Census for 1870 listed two ministers as inhabitants of Davis Bend. One was Levin Woods, a fifty-four year old black male, born in Virginia, who was married to Susan Woods, a twenty-one year old black Mississippian. The census listed Mrs. Woods’ occupation as keeping house. The other was Jacob Rice, a forty-eight year old black male who was born in Mississippi. Rice owned taxable property worth \$300. He was married to Agnes Rice, thirty year old black female who, like Mrs. Woods, kept house. Levin and Susan Woods could read and write, as could Jacob and Agnes Rice.²⁴

A Slave Called Levin

The Bend-related congregations that joined the Mississippi Missionary Baptists had already been in existence before the associations began. How did Levin Woods become one of their ministers?

There are some clues that may point to Levin Woods’ life before the war. For example, a fifty-two-inch tall, nine year old slave called Levin was part of the cargo on a ship, the *Budget*, that had sailed from Baltimore and landed in New Orelans on November 26, 1821. Its slave manifest lists Levin as part of a consignment for Robert Bradley of Natchez. Levin Woods of Davis Bend would be roughly the right age to have been Bradley’s Levin.²⁵

Also, John Quitman’s law partner and brother-in-law, John McMurrin, purchased a slave named Levin in 1839. McMurrin’s Levin would have been part

of the Quitman-Turner enterprise that included properties in Natchez and on the Bend. As a member of McMurrans' Natchez household, Levin would have been familiar with the Rose Hill Baptist congregation. As a worker at the Palmyra complex on Davis Bend, Levin would have known of and benefited from the unusual opportunities Davis provided his slave community, including access to worship and learning to read the Bible.²⁶

In addition, Davis may have acquired Woods at the time he purchased the Woods plantation on the Bend. If so, then Levin would have been a long-term resident of the Hurrucaine-Brierfield complex.²⁷

Whoever Woods was before the war certainly contributed to the respect granted to him by freedmen congregations on the Bend and beyond. Levin could read. The residents of the Bend respected him. They called him to be their minister and they worked with him to form associations with other freedmen churches. The GBMC congregations respected Woods, too, including the Rose Hill church in Natchez. They called him to be their only paid missionary.

Levin Woods: Missionary

The second meeting of the GBMC was held in May 1870, again in Port Gibson. Its president, Elder Jacobs, said:

To elevate [our] race, and to save it from idolatry and corruption, we must educate... had the Southern people been educated up to that high and moral standard that should characterize the civilized world, all this war and devastation, and carnage, would not have happened.... But we praise God...that slavery is dead; and as such as we ought to be engaged together in building up the old waste places.... [W]hen we used to go to the white churches, we had to sit behind doors or in the galleries; but that was on account of our condition... [but now] God has made one blood of all nations of men.

Jacobs also announced the appointment of several missionaries. Among them were Rev. A. M. Rice, perhaps referring to Jacob Rice, and Rev. Seven Wood, probably meaning Levin Woods. The GCMC only employed one missionary full time -- Woods. GBMC had promised Woods \$500 and travel expenses for his one-year commitment.²⁸

The GBMC adopted its first "Constitution and Rules for Decorum." According to the new constitution, the purpose of the organization was to "supply missionaries to destitute congregations, to promote their needs, and to resolve differences between congregations." The rules of decorum described how business was to be conducted, and the rights and processes to appeal decisions of the convention.²⁹

The GCMC also approved a Church Covenant and Articles of Faith and Practice. The covenant included a commitment to submit to the discipline of the church "as directed by the word of God, and conducted in the spirit of the Gospel." There were twelve articles of faith, ranging from belief that "the scriptures are all given by inspiration of God, and contain the only authoritative rule of faith and practice" to "the children of God are created in Jesus Christ unto good works." Most important to church order was Article 9:

We believe that a visible Gospel Church should consist of such persons only who have experienced the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit; and having received the Gospel obey its precepts; and that every such church, regularly constituted, is a society independent of every other ecclesial body, having spiritual authority and direction itself to choose and remove its own officers, and to discipline its own members.

But even though the congregations were free to call their own officers, the GBMC controlled the ordination of ministers. The examination of a candidate for ordination must include not only a narration of the candidate's "experience of religion" and call to ministry but also answers to the following theological questions:

How many ordinances are there in the Baptist church, and what are they called?

What are meant by Faith and the Holy Ghost?

[What are t]he fall of man and the resurrection of the body[?]

[What are f]inal Perseverance of the Saints, justification[,] and sanctification[?]

No minister had a right to be a pastor simply because he organized a congregation, unless the church called him as pastor. In addition, the GBMC required each minister to report the activities of the congregation, to pay the congregation's annual dues, and to teach the congregation that they could not be a branch of any other church and remain within the Baptist fold.³⁰

During 1871, the GBMC met twice, spending May 13 in New Orleans and December 12 in Greenville, Mississippi. At Greenville, the GBMC approved a charter of incorporation and standing rules for recognition of ministers and congregations of the association. With these rules, the GBMC could impose conformity on its ministers and congregations.³¹

A religious revival occurred on the Bend in 1872. Services were held every evening from June 19 through August 4. The meetings attracted entire families from the Bend itself and neighboring plantations. On July 28 there were 130 baptized; on August 4, an additional 114. By the time the revival was over, nearly twelve percent of the population of the Bend had converted.³² There is no record of who led the revival.

Early Disciples Connections

George Johnson, grandson of Benjamin Montgomery and Bend resident, recalled that he had converted to Methodism during a revival on the Bend. He said that most people on the Bend were Baptists, but that the Baptists and the Methodists sang together and mixed into one church. He described this mixing as "going to one church." He said that all the churches on the Bend were "Christianized."³³

How did the Bend churches become "Christianized?" Perhaps Woods had known of the Diciples church at Grand Gulf where the Withers and Shark-

eys worshiped. Perhaps Woods met Withers at the Disciples church at Jackson. In any case, it is certain that Woods learned about the Disciples and the possibility of assistance. The General Christian Missionary Convention (GCMC) of the Disciples sent Bibles and hymnals to Woods in the summer of 1872. Woods was a GCMC employee by the end of 1872.³⁴

Other non-Baptist evangelists proclaimed the Gospel along the Mississippi and in the Yazoo Delta region; these congregations would call themselves “Christian” in the 1880s. J. J. Keyes, A. J. Johnson, and William Ramey established churches in Carroll County, Mississippi. Elder Bell established Mundal Grove, a brush arbor congregation in rural Claiborne County, not far from Port Gibson and Grand Gulf.³⁵ Perhaps these evangelists knew of Woods and Rice, or perhaps they benefited from the GCMC hymnals. Most likely, they worked with Woods during his years with the GBMC, and followed Woods in his relationship with the Disciples.

Lacking a firsthand report, what led Woods and the Davis Bend congregations to collaborate with the Disciples can only be gained by conjecture. The churches’ desire for hymnals and Woods’ need for additional income seem unconvincing. More likely, the Disciples offered a relationship that the Missionary Baptists could not.

One story is that Withers received Woods into membership at the Jackson church. Woods’ main complaint with the Baptists, so the story goes, was that the Baptists required “an ‘experience’ necessary for salvation.” Woods, on the other hand, “preached only confession of faith and baptism by immersion” were required for church membership. The GBMC, however, required testimony of religious experience only for its ministers. The Disciples did not require an examination of the theological doctrines, a narration of religious experience, or call to ministry and yet treated Woods as a minister. In contrast to the GBMC’s required conformity to doctrine and practice, Woods probably saw the Disciples as presenting an opportunity to be partners in mission while permitting the Bend congregations to organize as they saw fit and call the ministers they wanted.³⁶

Perhaps also compelling would be the difference in personal responsibility for reading and interpreting the Bible. Under the GBMC, ministers were required to teach the faith by looking to the Bible and the Articles of Faith. The Disciples, however, encouraged each member to read and interpret the Bible for him or herself. Younger Disciples learned from elders. The simple Gospel as revealed in the word of God mattered more than the theological doctrines of organizations. This understanding of how to learn about faith and how to be faithful in the world conformed to the educational environment of the Bend. The Disciples probably related to the Bend communities as mentors and teachers, just as Davis’ paid ministers had been to the slave residents on the Bend.

From Missionary Baptists to Disciples of Christ

The GBMC (Baptists) met again on December 12, 1872, in Columbus Mississippi. Its president reported on the strained relationship that had developed between Levin Woods and the GBMC. The GBMC had hired Woods in 1869 and the arrangement had worked at first. But Woods had gone to the North to raise funds for the GBMC’s seminary. There he met a white “[C]ampbellite preacher.” Woods “sold out” to that preacher, escorted the preacher to meet with the GBMC,

and allowed the preacher to present a “proposal he had.” The GBMC told the Northerner that the “[B]aptist name is not for sale” and that the GBMC could not accept financial support if they had to change their name. But Woods accepted the offer and introduced the Northerner to Woods’ churches. Woods convinced the congregations that they should call themselves Christian rather than Missionary Baptist. Furthermore, the GBMC president claimed that the churches followed Woods because they were “babes in the doctrine.” The convention agreed to let the president investigate whether Woods was preaching “spurious doctrine.”³⁷

In July 1873 the GBMC heard the results of the investigation:

[Woods] has, and is now, preaching contrary to our Baptist faith; and says he intends to, and will, break us up, and has succeeded in leading astray three churches, and caused them to change their name from Baptist to Christian.

The GBMC voted both to exclude Woods and his associates from Baptist fellowship and to send missionaries to attempt to win the congregations back.³⁸

Meanwhile in 1873, the GCMC (Disciples) hired George Owens, a white evangelist from Illinois, to assist Woods. Reports to the GCMC described Woods as pastor of five congregations with 800 members on the “former plantations” of Joseph and Jefferson Davis. A series of protracted meetings in early June 1873 led to the founding of ten congregations totaling 1,261 members at the following locations:

Woods plantation, [Davis Bend]
Point Pleasant, Louisiana [across the river from Davis Bend]
Hurricane, Davis plantation
Palmyra, Quitman plantation
Grand Gulf [near the Withers and Sharkey plantations]
Baldwin plantation
Bowling Green
Wright plantation
Patterson plantation, and
Shiloh

In 1874, Woods reported a gain of 3,500 members, a total membership of 4,300 members in twenty-five churches, ten Sunday schools, and twenty-four meeting houses. Reports stated that many of these new Disciples came from the Baptists as entire congregations.³⁹

In the fall of 1873, Thomas Munnell, secretary of the GCMC, began discussions with Ovid Butler of Indianapolis to establish an independent mission that would build on Woods’ success. On April 5, 1875, the Southern Christian Institute was chartered. Butler had drafted the charter, which the Reconstruction-era Mississippi legislature, then dominated by Republicans, and James Hill, former slave and Republican Secretary of State, approved. The original trustees included the following: several men from Indianapolis, including Ovid Butler and William Wallace; several men from Jackson Mississippi; Benjamin Montgomery, scion of the slave family on Davis Bend; and Levin Woods.⁴⁰ Thus during Reconstruction, the congregations on Davis Bend found the GCMC to be a friend that was willing to

support the tradition of educational emphasis that the Bend residents had known under the Davises and the Freedmen's Bureau.

Beyond Davis Bend: Epilogue

Joseph Davis died in 1870. His will left the Davis Bend properties to his heirs only if the Montgomerys defaulted on their mortgage, which happened in the early 1870s. Jefferson sued to contest the will and to regain the family property on the Bend in 1874; he won his case in 1878. The Montgomery family remained on the Bend as tenants.⁴¹

Withers was successful after the war as a broker for Northern investors seeking to purchase Mississippi plantations. By 1870, this was no longer profitable. Withers relocated his family to the relative comfort of Kentucky in 1871.⁴²

Also beginning in 1870, whites, who were resentful of black participation in Mississippi government, began to intimidate black voters. Their early efforts were successful for two reasons. First, under the slave system, blacks had been accustomed to deferring to the wishes of their white masters. In addition, many landowners who rented to blacks used the threat of withdrawing loans as economic blackmail and to secure compliance.⁴³

When Vicksburg elected a black sheriff in 1874, a white para-military organization attempted to force all the city's black elected officials from their offices. The sheriff, Crosby, sought aid from Mississippi's radical Republican Governor, Ames, who ordered county militia to suppress the white mob. Reinforcements, both black and white, poured into the city, resulting in ten days of violence that left twenty-nine African Americans dead and Crosby imprisoned. The white success in Vicksburg served to embolden similar efforts in 1875, called the Mississippi Plan.⁴⁴

Democrats organized, self-confessedly, to "overawe the negroes" and regain political control of the state. In a strategy that began in August 1875, they planned torchlight parades through each targeted county seat while wearing red and gray shirts -- harking back to the Confederacy. They trained military companies of 60 to 70 each, amassed rifles and cannon, and broke up Republican political assemblies by heckling and making a general show of force. One such effort to interfere with an assembly spurred the Clinton riot.⁴⁵

Clinton is in Hinds County, near Jackson and Edwards, the site of both the Withers' farm and the future Southern Christian Institute. At least five or six hundred black men arrived in Clinton the first week of September carrying clubs.. Some were on horseback. White detachments chased after them. One observer stated that:

For two weeks after the Clinton riot the fields were empty, and when peace and order were restored in our midst, the militia question was agitated, and finally the negroes were organized, and arms put in their hands, and of all the sad spectacles, we then had the saddest presented; the fields were then again deserted, not only by the negro militia but all seemed to hope that their long deferred hopes were about to be realized. All we had to hope for the coming year was in the fields. They were white to the harvest, but no laborer was there.

Similar riots occurred throughout the state. White Democrats restored their rule over Mississippi in the 1874 elections. The Republican leadership that had ap-

proved Southern Christian Institute's charter just months before had passed into history.⁴⁶

Benjamin Montgomery died in 1877. His family left the Bend in 1883; they were among the last of the Freedmen's Bureau era residents to depart. Many of the residents who left with them eventually settled Mound Bayou in the Yazoo River delta. The Bend's Methodist church, Bethel A.M.E. also made the journey to Mound Bayou.⁴⁷

After 1870 the Bend's Disciples-related congregations also went their own way. Some may have joined one of the congregations led by Elder Bell, A. J. Johnson, and other early evangelists that eventually called themselves Disciples. Perhaps some returned to the Missionary Baptists. Yet others may have maintained their connection with the Disciples. Salem Christian Church, Grand Gulf, Mississippi, may be the descendant of either the Salem Davis Bend congregation that had joined the GBMC (Baptists) or the Grand Gulf church that George Owens reported to the GCMC (Disciples). If so, Salem may be for us a link to the journey of faith the Davis Bend slaves made almost 150 years ago.

Conclusion

The Freedmen congregations on Davis Bend did not require outside leadership for effective development of congregations. Instead, they agreed to receive assistance from like-minded Northern Disciples to enhance a growing ministry. These congregations chose to leave the safety of the emerging Missionary Baptist polity behind so that they could continue the self-organized system of worship and ministry they experienced on Davis Bend before the war.



Salem Christian Church, Grand Gulf, Mississippi
July 2004

NOTES

¹ Marion Franklin Harmon, *A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Mississippi* (Aberdeen, MS: [no publisher], 1929, 22; Charles C. Mosley, *The Negro in Mississippi History* (Jackson, MS: Herderman Brothers, [1950]); Hap Lyda, "A History of Black Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in the United States Through 1899" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1972). Lyda's work in abbreviated form also appears in Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, and D. Newell Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), s.v. "African Americans in the Movement" (by Hap C. S. Lyda, William K. Fox, Sr., Edward J. Robinson, and W. Ray Kelly), 11-12.

² Thavolia Glymph, "The Second Middle Passage: The Transition from Slavery to Freedom at Davis Bend, Mississippi" (Ph.D. Diss., Purdue University, 1994), 9-14; Janet Sharp Hermann, *The Pursuit of a Dream* (1981; repr., Jackson, MS.: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 34; the purchase of the Woods' plantation may have been an origin of the evangelist, Levin Woods.

³ Janet Sharp Hermann, *Joseph E. Davis: Pioneer Patriot* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 38-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43; Marie D. Fretageot to William Maclure, 7 July 1826, in *Partnership for Prosperity: The Correspondence of William Maclure and Madame Marie D. Fretageot, 1820-1833*, ed. Josephine Mirabella Elliott (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1994), 382.

⁵ Gerald Lee Gutek, *Joseph Neef: The Americanization of Pestalozzianism* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 31-37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁷ Communication by William Maclure to Sillimon's Journal, *New-Harmony (IN) Gazette*, February 15, 1826, in Elliott, *Partnership for Posterity*, 1054-57.

⁸ Gutek, *Neef*, 91-95.

⁹ William Lucas Sargent, *Robert Owen and His Social Philosophy* (1860; repr., New York: A. M. S. Press, 1971), 234 (describing the society of New Harmony in a presentation in the Hall of Representatives of the United States in 1825); Joseph Neef to Robert Owen, 13 May 1827, in Paul Brown, *Twelve Months in New Harmony* (Philadelphia, PA: Porcupine Press, 1972), 108.

¹⁰ Glymph, "Middle Passage," 15, 19-21; Hermann, *The Pursuit of a Dream*, 34. For more information on Owenite influence in Mississippi, see Joel Nathan Rosen, *Mound Bayou: Owenitism in the Mississippi Delta* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, forthcoming).

¹¹ *Interview with Mr. George Johnson, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, September 1941*, parts 1, 2, and 6. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query> (accessed August 8, 2006).

¹² Glymph, "Middle Passage," 21-22. This gift was less than fee simple absolute and contributed to Jefferson's decision to sue Joseph's heirs in 1874 (see n. 41).

¹³ Michael P. Mills, "Slave Law in Mississippi from 1817-1861: Constitutions, Codes, and Cases," *Mississippi Law Journal* 71 (2001), 166-168; Patrick H. Thompson, *The History of Negro Baptists in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: R. W. Bailey Printing, 1898), 22-25.

¹⁴ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 16.

¹⁵ Robert E. May, *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 219.

¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *7th Census, Population Schedule*, Microfilm M653 Roll 597; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *6th Census, Population Schedule*, Microfilm M432 Roll 389; G. G. Mullins, ed., *Caskey's Book: Lectures on Great Subjects, Selected from the Numerous Efforts of that Powerful Orator and Noble Veteran of the Cross, Thomas W. Caskey* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1891), 13; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *6th Census, Population Schedule*, Microfilm 432 Roll 370.

¹⁷ Ida Withers Harrison, *Memoirs of William Temple Withers* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1924), 22, 32, 34, 36; B. F. Manire, ed., *Caskey's Last Book Containing an Autobiographical Sketch of his Ministerial Life with Essays and Sermons* (Nashville: Messenger Book Co., 1896), 21; *Proceedings of the Mississippi State Convention, Held January 7th to 26th, A.D. 1861*, J. L. Power, reporter. (Jackson, MS: Power & Cadwallader, 1861). <http://docsouth.unc.edu/missconv/missconv.html> (accessed August 8, 2006).

¹⁸ Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 34-46. Here, "Freedmen's Bureau" or "Bureau" refers to the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands and "Freedmen" refers to slaves freed by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and by Amendment XIII to the U. S. Constitution.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51, 62, 66, 74.

²⁰ Glymph, "Middle Passage," 224.

²¹ *Mississippi Baptists*, 25-28.

²² *Ibid.*, 46-49.

²³ *Ibid.*, 53 - 55.

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *8th Census, Population Schedule*, Microfilm M593 Roll 751.

²⁵ *Inward Slave Manifests for the Port of New Orleans*, Roll 3, January-March 1822. www.afrigenes.com/slavedata/Roll.12.1837-1839 (accessed August 8, 2006).

²⁶ *McMurrin v. Soria*, 5 Miss. 154 (4 Howard 154), 1839 WL 1413 at *1 (1839).

²⁷ See n. 2.

²⁸ Thompson, *Mississippi Baptists*, 60-67. In 1873, the GBMC disciplined a missionary it had hired in 1869 named Levin Woods; this is probably the "Seven Woods" referred to here (see n. 37).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 68-71.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80-90.

³² Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 187-189.

³³ *Interview with George Johnson*, part 3 of 6.

³⁴ Lyda, "Black Disciples," 61-67.

³⁵ William J. Lahmon, *Missionary Fields and Forces* (Chicago and New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 37; Harmon, *Disciples of Christ in Mississippi*, 22; T. Elias Harris, minister, "Dedication Services: June 24-30, 1974" (unpublished program, Port Gibson, MS; Christian Chapel Church (Disciples of Christ), 1974).

³⁶ Lyda, "Black Disciples," 63.

³⁷ Thompson, *Mississippi Baptists*, 97-98.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

³⁹ Lyda, "Black Disciples," 63-67.

⁴⁰ John Cornelius Long, "The Disciples of Christ and Negro Education" (PhD dis., University of Southern California, 1960), 52-53, photocopy of the Charter for the Southern Christian Institute is on pages 277-86.

⁴¹ *Davis v. Bowman*, 55 Miss. 671, 1878 WL 7345 at *1-3, *31 (1878).

⁴² Harrison, *William Withers*, 103-07.

⁴³ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 229.

⁴⁴ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 297-98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 298-99.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 299-302; Letter to William Withers, [undated,] in Harrison, *William Withers*, 104.

⁴⁷ Glymph, "Middle Passage," 286-293; *Interview with Mr. George Johnson*, part 2. See plate 1, Salem Christian Church, Grand Gulf, MS, July 2004.

Disciples of Christ at the Equator – 1897-1903: An Essay on the History of Christianity in Congo

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Introduction

North American Disciples of Christ first sent missionaries to the Congo Free State in 1897; soon, the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM) stimulated the formation and development of an African church, now known as the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo (CDCC). Established in 1903 with twenty-four members, the CDCC has nearly one million adult members within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and is the most important Protestant group along the Ruki-Busira-Tschuapa network of rivers tributary to the Congo River east along the Equator. Commonly referred to as the Disciples Community, this church is a constituent member of the Church of Christ in Congo, a confederation of some eighty communities including Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and other Protestant communities.

Although many competent histories and historical studies of Disciples of Christ in North America exist, historical research on American and African Disciples in Africa is sparse. Beyond periodical and other promotional literature produced by the mission society, some of the missionaries themselves published accounts of the early history of the DCCM/CDCC. Eva Dye, Andrew Hensey, and Herbert Smith proved to be the most productive missionary writers from the DCCM. The most significant early publication was Eva Nichols Dye's book, entitled *Bolenge: The Story of Gospel Triumphs on the Congo* (1909). She also edited a privately mimeographed text called the "Chronicle of Congo" (ca. 1943). Given their ecclesiastical commitments and their promotional motives, the missionary writers portrayed the missionary community as dedicated to the gospel, overcoming obstacles imposed by external factors (e.g., limited financial resources, language and cultural barriers, and depression and two world wars). Despite their lucid and informative accounts of the mission history, two lacunae and one matter of emphasis stand out. Interestingly, the missionary writers rarely mentioned the colonial state; they ignored internal tensions in the missionary community; and, although they acknowledged the importance of the Congolese Christians in the development of the Christian community, their attention to missionary labors tended to occlude the agency of the Congolese themselves.

A more adequate understanding of the history of Disciples of Christ in Congo is essential to better understanding of the history of Disciples in North America and of the Stone-Campbell movement generally. Achieving this 'more adequate understanding' requires a re-evaluation of known sources, both published and archival, and the utilization of previously unknown sources with the following issues in mind: the relationship between the missionaries and the colonial system, internal tensions within the missionary community, and the role of African Christians in the development of the churches in Africa. In a previous article in *Discipliana*, I explored the relationship between the DCCM and the Congo Free State; in this

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study, I consider the evidence both for problems within the missionary community and for the role of Congolese Christians in the formation of the CDCC. Thus, the following study is a reassessment of the early history of the DCCM/CDCC and a contribution towards a history of Disciples of Christ in Congo.¹

As an initial effort towards such a revision, this article presents the origins of Protestant Christianity on the Equator in Congo in two parts. First, I identify some of the difficult interpersonal, interdenominational, and mission-state relations during the itinerant years of the Disciples in Congo from 1897 to 1899; and, second, I review the early years at the Bolenge station from 1899 until the establishment of the first Disciples church at the Equator in 1903. Both the challenges posed by changes among the mission personnel and the initiative of African Christians in the development of the church will be highlighted.

Disciples of Christ in Congo: The Itinerant Years from 1897 to 1899

Before the Disciples of Christ reached Congo, Baptist missionaries were the principal representatives of the Protestant tradition at the Equator, working from a station called Wangata, near the mouth of the Ruki River on the left bank of the Congo River, beginning in 1883 or 1884. The Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM) turned its stations over to the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU) in December 1884. ABMU missionaries at the Equator included American, British, and Swedish citizens, and they engaged in a wide variety of activities: language study, preaching, Bible translation, construction of buildings, and medical work.

The first conversions to Protestant Christianity among the Nkundo and neighboring peoples occurred during the Baptist period at Wangata, marking the beginning of an indigenous Christian community on the equator. The Baptists' first convert was a man named Joseph Mangi, hereafter called Josefa. He was baptized on Sunday, 8 September 1889, in the Congo River in front of the Wangata station. After the baptismal service, Josefa joined Charles Banks and other Baptist missionaries in a celebration of the Lord's Supper.² In 1891, Banks moved the station downriver from Wangata to a new site near the village of Bolenge.

Ultimately, the Baptist mission in the Congo Free State was strained to exhaustion. Like the LIM before, the ABMU had overextended itself. The mission society looked for an opportunity to withdraw from Bolenge and other upriver stations. Conversations between ABMU and FCMS officials in Boston in 1897 and subsequent contact between FCMS and ABMU missionaries in the Congo led to a transfer of ownership of the Bolenge station. The ABMU ceded Bolenge to the FCMS in 1899, for a monetary consideration of \$2,500. The actual transfer of deed took place at Bolenge on 17 April 1899.

There was considerable continuity from the Baptist period to the Disciples period at Bolenge. The groups shared a similar evangelical Protestant theology and practice. Their common language, English, and their shared practice of "believer's baptism" by immersion must have made them appear very similar to the residents of Bolenge and the neighboring region. The continuity also extended to the buildings of the station and numerous but easily overlooked details like dress, eating, and toilet habits, expectations of African associates, and the elements and style of worship. In a sense, the DCCM missionary community was the heir to a nascent religious culture, which the Baptist missionaries had begun to create among themselves and in collaboration with their African associates. Despite the similarities between

Baptists and Disciples, the African associates themselves (especially Josefa) provided the true continuity between the Baptist and Disciples periods at Bolenge.

Stories of that nascent religious culture and the missionary collaboration with African associates are beyond the scope of this study; however, I will trace the outlines of the history of the DCCM missionary community from its beginning in 1897 until the formation of the first church in 1903. Before continuing the story of the transition of Bolenge from Baptist to Disciples of Christ control, we need to turn briefly to the story of the FCMS and the development of its nineteenth century mission to Africa generally and to the Congo specifically.

The first attempt among Disciples of Christ to send a missionary specifically to Congo took place in 1885. After volunteering on 19 January of that year, S. M. Jefferson was appointed and sent to London to explore the possibilities of such a mission. He consulted with J. T. Comber, W. H. Bentley, and Henry M. Stanley about the feasibility of a mission, but he was discouraged by the cost of the project. At the time, Jefferson was advised that it would cost \$25,000 in the first year to establish a mission station. This estimated cost was considered prohibitively expensive. Disappointed, he returned to the United States where the project was tabled by the Board of the FCMS.³ From 1885 to 1895, the FCMS continued to discuss the possibility of a Congo mission. By 1895, the FCMS made a firm decision to start a Congo mission, and one mission volunteer was under appointment.⁴

Ellsworth E. Faris was the first missionary appointed by the FCMS for the Congo who actually reached Africa. The Annual Report of the FCMS indicated that Faris “. . . has given himself unreservedly to the work in the dark continent.”⁵ Faris was born 30 September 1874 in Salem, Tennessee. Ellsworth’s father, George A. Faris, had been a state evangelist, and from 1901 to 1913, George Faris was the editor of *Christian Courier*. Like many of the other early Disciples missionaries to the Congo, Ellsworth Faris was a college graduate prior to his missionary appointment. He had received a bachelor’s degree in 1894 from Add-Ran University (which later became Texas Christian University). His work in Congo extended from 1897 until 1904.⁶

Although the FCMS appointed Faris as a missionary to the Congo on 19 July 1895, they delayed his departure until another missionary was located to accompany him. The directors of the FCMS were especially interested in finding a medical doctor. (That concern to have a medical missionary on staff was characteristic of the Congo work throughout the history of the DCCM.) By 1897, they had decided to send a young doctor, Harry Biddle, with Faris.

Henry (“Harry”) Nicholas Biddle was born 17 January 1872 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Educated in the local schools, he also attended Pulte Medical College and the Chicago Medical Mission Institute. A member of the Richmond Street Christian Church, he had long wanted to become an overseas missionary. One of his friends in Cincinnati was a medical student named Butchart. When Butchart went to China as a medical missionary in 1891, Biddle decided to enter medical college to prepare himself for missionary work to Africa. After applying to the Board of the FCMS on 2 September 1896, Harry Biddle received an appointment as a missionary to Africa the following New Year’s Day.

Faris and Biddle met for the first time in Mount Healthy, Ohio, on 27 February 1897.⁷ They traveled to Boston where they were joined by F. M. Rains, an FCMS official, for a conference with Mr. Duncan, Secretary of the ABMU, on 4 March 1897.⁸ They discussed the possible transfer of a station from the Baptists to the Disciples.

Duncan recommended the Irebu station or all for former LIM stations; Rains recommended they visit most of the stations on the Lower Congo, observe methods, and consider any more promising opportunities, as he said, “. . . than a place about to be twice abandoned by other missions.”

After this consultation, Biddle and Faris sailed from Boston on 6 March 1897.⁹ The two young missionaries arrived in London on 23 March 1897 and went to Harley House, a residence made available to traveling missionaries by the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions. During their time in England, they spoke at Disciples related churches, attended a conference of Protestant missionaries, and visited the Parliament during a debate on Congo. They departed for Antwerp on 3 May 1897. Five days later, they left Antwerp (8 May) with twelve Congo missionaries aboard the *S.S. Leopoldville*. During this journey, Biddle wrote home to his brother, complaining about Faris. Biddle so disliked traveling with Faris that he indicated that he was silent for several weeks!

On 28 May 1897, the two young missionaries arrived at Banana, visited the ABMU station at Mukimvika as guests of Dr. Lynch, and then they visited Adventist, Roman Catholic, and Bishop Taylor mission stations.¹⁰ They went to Londe, the Swedish Mission below Matadi, on 26 June, where they waited several weeks for their baggage to arrive from Banana. Biddle practiced medicine, and Faris preached with the aid of an interpreter. Early in August, they traveled by train to Tumba and then continued their journey on the old caravan trail to Leopoldville.

Faris and Biddle arrived in Leopoldville on 22 August 1897. After ten days, they departed on the State steamer *Archduchess Stephanie* to Lake Leopold II, up the Kasai River. They stayed in the Lake Leopold II area until mid-October as guests of District Commissioner Alphonse Jacques and other officials. They had their eye on a location called Mushie, upriver from Kwamouth near the fork of the Lukenie and Kwamouth-Kwilu-Kasai Rivers. They were “courteously treated, but no promises made” regarding the possibility of beginning mission work at Mushie. They returned to Leopoldville, and while waiting for word from the Governor General, they decided to visit ABMU stations on the Upper Congo.

Faris and Biddle went on the mission steamship *Pioneer* and stopped at all the mission stations up to and including Bolenge. They returned to Leopoldville on 1 January 1898. According to Biddle’s correspondence,

We visited the A.B.M.U. stations at Irebu, Ikoko, Bolengi & Bwemba, & just as we had completed the task, a letter came from the Sec. of the A.B.M.U., saying that they had accepted the recommendations of the missionaries on the field (who held a conference as soon as F. & I came out), & that they would end the negotiations which had been begun with our society. Bolengi will be transferred to the C.B.M. . . .¹¹

This letter demonstrates that the first time Disciples missionaries visited Bolenge was at the end of 1897, about nine months after they left Boston. Further, it is apparent that the Baptist missionaries in Congo opposed the transfer of any stations to the FCMS, raising additional questions about the relationship between the ABMU and its missionaries in Congo, as well as the opinions or motives of the Baptist missionaries in Congo. Back at Leopoldville, the Disciples missionaries learned that the ABMU missionaries in Congo had persuaded the ABMU officials in Boston to

refuse to transfer their station at Bolenge to the FCMS. Despite this official stance on the part of American Baptist missionaries, they were nonetheless hospitable.¹²

While Faris and Biddle received “courteous” treatment by state officials, they also received an official run-around, depriving them of a stable base from which to begin their work. The overt objection to a Disciples of Christ mission station at Mushie concerned a government regulation that prevented mission stations being placed within seventy-five miles of each other, but there were other reasons that were not made public at the time. Due to the, at that time, recent outcries of protest against the abuses of the rubber tax/trade, the officials of the Congo Free State were opposed to the establishment of any new Protestant mission stations. Some of the most outspoken critics were the ABMU missionaries at Bolenge, Charles Banks and E. V. Sjöblom. According to Marchal,

because of the criticisms launched from Bolenge, the king paralyzed the extension of Protestant missions, and his functionaries on the ground in Africa found some pretext for refusing new posts. This was notably the case for Alphonse Jacques, the commissaire of the district of Lake Leopold II, who invented a bunch of reasons for refusing to the FCMS ground at Mushie.¹³

As they awaited permission from the Governor General, Biddle and Faris made several scouting trips. By April 1898, both men were “spent with fever.” Biddle suffered from dysentery; later a worm infection was discovered. On the last exploratory trip of thirty-nine days up the Kasai River, Biddle became ill and never fully recovered. On 22 June 1898, Faris and Biddle left Kinshasa for Ikoko, invited by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Clark.¹⁴ Soon after, the ABMU reconsidered its financial situation and offered to sell their Bolenge mission station to the FCMS.

Biddle went to Ikoko, and Faris left for Bongo. At Bongo, Faris received word to return to Ikoko because of Biddle’s declining health. Faris arrived at Ikoko on 24 August 1898, and Captain McGregor of the *Pioneer* took both of them back to Stanley Pool, where they arrived on 3 September 1898. Biddle was sent by rail, the line having been completed that year, to Tumba and then on to Matadi. Because Faris stayed behind due to the cost of the trip, other missionaries put Biddle aboard the *Brusselsville* at Matadi. When the *Brusselsville* arrived at the Canary Islands on 6 October, Biddle was too ill to continue, so the captain of the ship placed him in the English hospital. Two days later, on Saturday, 8 October 1898, Henry Nicholas Biddle died. According to witnesses, “he gently passed away,” and was buried in the English cemetery at Las Palmas, Grand Canary Islands.¹⁵ Soon, the FCMS and its supporters portrayed Biddle’s death as a martyr’s death, inspiring missionary vocations throughout the churches that heard his story. Left alone in the Congo, Ellsworth Faris went to the Baptist station at Bolenge, and arrived there by 1 February 1898.¹⁶ He enjoyed the hospitality of Charles and Emily Banks, studied Lonkundo, and learned all he could about the area around Bolenge, while he waited for the arrival of two missionaries sent to replace Biddle.

Royal J. Dye was born 23 October 1874, and Eva Nichols was born 27 August 1877. At the time of Biddle’s death, they were living in New York, studying to be missionaries, and engaged to be married. Royal heard the news about Dr. Biddle’s death while riding a streetcar in New York City on Thanksgiving Day, 1898. After speaking with his fiancé, they decided to apply to the FCMS to go to the Congo.

Royal had been trained as a medical doctor, and Eva had studied at the Union Missionary Training School, Brooklyn, N.Y., to prepare herself for missionary work. On 16 January, they were married; the day after their wedding, they left for Congo. After exactly three months, they reached Bolenge on 17 April, where Faris had been waiting for ten weeks as the guest of the ABMU missionaries Charles and Emily Banks. At that time, Ellsworth Faris was twenty-five years old, Royal Dye was twenty-four, and Eva Dye was twenty-one.

Disciples of Christ at Bolenge from 1899 to 1903

When Royal and Eva Dye arrived at Bolenge on 17 April 1899, they carried papers authorizing the transfer of the mission station from the ABMU to the FCMS. Along with Ellsworth Faris, they pursued the same range of activities common to missionaries throughout Congo: language study, teaching, medical work, and maintenance and construction of buildings at the station. All three worked to learn Lonkundo, the language spoken at Bolenge. Faris began a school 15 May 1899 with twenty-three men.¹⁷ Soon after, with the assistance of a state soldier, he organized a school of nearly 150 children. Dr. Dye began medical work and took charge of station maintenance. “Mrs. Dye made her home and began to work among the women.”¹⁸ Eva Dye “... kept house, training bush boys to do the work, and also teaching about thirty or forty raw heathen lads to sew and make themselves clothes.”¹⁹ The broad range of missionary work inscribed their presence in the landscape, reshaped social patterns, and the bodily practice of the Africans. They also came into conflict with indigenous leaders.

When Faris and the Dyes arrived at Bolenge the chief healer was Bonkanza, an *nkanga* or “witch-doctor” of wide repute. Dye himself told how he and Bonkanza came into conflict over a “charmed” rock in a path to the station, which was demoralizing the workers employed on the station. Threatening Bonkanza with a club, Dye insisted that the *nkanga* remove the rock in question. When the traditional healer complied under duress from the missionary doctor, the workers returned to their routine. Whether for this or other reasons, Bonkanza seems to have decided that he could not compete with the missionary doctor, and he generally maintained a friendly relationship with the early Disciples missionaries. His sons, Bosekola and Njoji, were to play important roles in the development of the DCCM missionary community.

In addition to Bonkanza and his sons, there were three African Christians present at Bolenge when the Disciples missionaries arrived: Ikoko, a carpenter; Bokama, Ikoko’s wife and “the first woman in Bolenge to clothe herself decently”; and Josefa, a crippled fisherman of the Lokele tribe from the Stanley Falls area.²⁰ We know little else about the Bolenge community or about what became of the rest of the early Baptist converts.

Among all the “firsts” for the DCCM in 1899, the missionary community grew by one on 3 November, when Polly Caroline Dye, the first missionary child, was born at Bolenge. In a tradition that continued throughout DCCM history, the community gave the child a local name, in Polly’s case, Okuki. As evidence of the missionaries’ commitment to their new home, Okuki’s presence made an impact among missionaries and Africans alike.²¹ In the story of the early DCCM, Polly Dye’s birth also highlights the fact that most of the DCCM missionaries were married.

As the years passed they came to raise their children in Africa. This constituted a different kind of missionary community compared with the previous ABMU missionaries at Bolenge and the Trappists at Bamania.

A few months later back in the United States, Disciples of Christ representatives attended an historic interdenominational gathering called the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York from 21 April to 1 May 1900. At least forty-nine Disciples, representing the Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM) and the FCMS, attended the conference. These included Archibald McLean, President of the FCMS, and S. T. Willis as members of the General Committee. According to the official record, F. T. Lea, FCMS missionary of Africa, also attended as a member of the conference.²² This interest in and commitment to ecumenical cooperation on the part of the Disciples mission societies (the FCMS, the CWBM, and their successor, the UCMS) was also characteristic of the DCCM missionary community, evident in their work with other Protestant missionaries in Congo and in North America.

In addition to the conflict with Bonkanza and the work involved in maintaining the station, there were also difficulties in the relationships among the Bolenge missionaries. Faris and the Dyes were not particularly compatible. Polly Dye later referred to Royal, her father, as "this zealous young man" when describing her parent's departure from Ionia, Michigan, in 1899.²³ Faris, a single man and as strong-willed (or 'zealous') as Dr. Dye, had been an able co-worker since 17 April 1899 until he left for Angola in October 1900 to visit the Leas. Nevertheless, he and Dr. Dye did not always get along. Shortly before Faris' departure, Eva Dye had written an aunt that

There are plenty of things here that *a thoughtless young man* would never understand and sympathize with, that Frank [Lea] will appreciate. I can hardly wait until *the time* comes . . . The *dark clouds* which have seemed to be over us are beginning to show a silver lining.²⁴

The "thoughtless young man" to which Eva referred was Ellsworth Faris. Although the correspondence upon which the authors rely is not available to me, they do subsequently explain the significance of the phrases "the time" and "the dark clouds."

One of "the dark clouds" mentioned by Eva was a certain coolness developing between the young Dyes and Mr. Faris. Ellsworth, only a year older than Royal, was a most positive and self-assured young man. He was inclined also to be critical. Since Royal's own strong personality was quite similar, there is little wonder that tempers sometimes flared, or relations grew polite and strained.

"The time" was May, 1901. Mr. Faris had gone on furlough, ...²⁵

The tension between Faris and the Dyes is reminiscent of the difficulties between Faris and Biddle. Ellsworth Faris left Royal and Eva Dye at Bolenge on 3 October 1900. Faris went to Angola for six months to meet with Frank T. and Grace Fortier Lea, missionaries related to the FCMS.²⁶

Although not raised in "restoration movement" churches, the Leas had strong Disciples connections. Frank T. Lea was from a Quaker family in Maryland, and Grace Fortier came from France. Both of the Leas were students in Bethany

College where they married in 1896. They moved to New York where Frank Lea studied to become a medical missionary while serving as assistant pastor in a church and working with a mission in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood. One of his fellow students and mission volunteers was Royal J. Dye. In addition, the Leas met Harry Biddle when he passed through New York on his way to Africa in early March 1897. That same year they became involved with a self-support colonizing league in Africa. As noted above, a "Rev. F. T. Lea (FCMS, Africa)" was present in New York in April 1900.

Within a six-month period, the Leas had gone to Angola with the mission league, the mission had fallen on hard times, and the DCCM missionaries at Bolenge received news about the failure of the mission in Angola. According to Browning, ... news reached Bolenge that the missionary colonizing had not worked out successfully, and that the Leas, unwilling to leave the people and the work in which they had become deeply interested, were staying on in Portuguese Angola as independent missionaries.²⁷

It took Faris ten weeks to reach Angola, and he stayed there with the Leas for eight weeks. The purpose of Faris' visit was to discuss with the Leas the possibility of consolidating the mission work in Africa. Because they were considering Angola as a mission field, Faris conducted his own survey of the possibilities there. In the end, the decision was made to consolidate in the Congo, and the Leas prepared to move to Bolenge. They both possessed skills beneficial to the DCCM: Grace Lea was fluent in French, and Frank Lea was an expert builder. Together Faris and the Leas traveled to the coast. When Faris went back to the United States on furlough, the Leas continued on to Bolenge to join the Dyes.

After a two month journey from Congo (1 April 1901 - 1 June 1901), Faris arrived in Texas. Although recuperating from health problems, he spoke to Disciples churches to promote the Congo mission: "I have been able to tell the brethren a little something of the work that we have been trying to do."²⁸ During that period he also married Bessie Homan, with whom he returned to the Congo in the fall of 1902.

Meanwhile, back at Bolenge, Eva Dye was hard at work. In addition to the school that Faris had organized in 1899, she began to develop classes for girls at Bolenge in 1901. Again, this happened with the cooperation of the state officials.

The last letter received from Africa is dated March 24. In it, Dr. Dye says that he and his family are in good health. The Commissioner sent down and offered to send girls to the school. Dr. Dye consented and thirty are now in attendance. They seem interested, and some of the parents are interested also. These girls mean an added task to Mrs. Dye, but she gladly takes it, as it gives her an opening to them, and also to their parents.²⁹

This concern with organizing children into schools with a regular curriculum was characteristic of the DCCM throughout its history. Faris' school ran from June to September 1901. Eva Dye's supervision of the educational work began soon after Faris left. According to her own account,

A little while after we were left alone, the way opened for us to ask that the little girls of our immediate town be sent to school, so that since then we have had twenty girls in very regular attendance. The 133 students now enrolled are divided into eight distinct classes or grades with reg-

ular lists and promotions twice a year.³⁰

Apparently, she picked up where Faris left off, and she supplemented his student body of boys with these girls.

Soon, while Faris was still in transit, Frank and Grace Lea arrived at Bolenge to reinforce the small community in May 1901. "The time" anticipated by Eva in her correspondence had arrived.

Frank T. Lea and wife reached Bolengi, Africa, from Angola, on the 20th of May. It was a day of great rejoicing at the station. The town's people turned out in large numbers, and gave them a right hearty reception. A new house is needed at Bolengi. Mr. Lea will begin at once to prepare materials. He will have to go to the forest for timber, and to the quarries for stone. The hardware will have to be sent out from this country.³¹

It was a great relief for the Dyes to have the Leas present on the station. Royal Dye and Frank Lea had worked together at the Sunshine Mission in the Hell's Kitchen district of New York while Royal was in medical school, so this was an opportunity to renew their friendship.³² Despite this promising new start, Mrs. Dye had been bed-ridden for months at a time, and, unfortunately, Grace Lea was not well either. Although Dr. Dye and Frank Lea had known each other in New York, they did not have much of an opportunity to reestablish their friendship at Bolenge.

A new couple, Edwin A. Layton and Jessie Trunkey Layton, were under commission by the society and on their way to Congo. Like Biddle and R. J. Dye, Edwin Layton was a trained physician.

The Leas left soon after the Laytons arrived and it was almost time for the Dyes to go on furlough, which Dr. Layton advised should not be postponed because of the serious condition of Mrs. Dye. . . .

We [the Dyes and the Laytons] had a few months of the happiest, most congenial fellowship from October, 1901 to March, 1902. The day we left for home the very skies were sorrowful and we embarked in a tropical rainstorm. We can never forget those two dearly beloved friends standing all alone as we went away. . . .³³

Since the Laytons arrived on 29 August 1901, and the Dyes returned home on furlough in March 1902, the Dyes had an opportunity to get to know the Laytons over a period of several months. The "happiest, most congenial fellowship from October, 1901 to March, 1902" reported by Eva Dye perhaps reflects how well the little missionary community functioned during this period after the departure of Faris and the Leas. Part of the congeniality may stem from the fact that Jessie Layton and Eva Dye were pregnant at about the same time, bringing the two couples closer together.

In her *Chronicle*, Eva Dye makes the following observations about Dr. Layton and the impact of his work.

Dr. Layton was a fine linguist and gave himself to the study of the language as they were so soon to be left alone on the station. He soon became known up and down the river and he went to adjoining mission stations to care for sick missionaries where hundreds of the sick and afflicted were carried on backs and in hammocks and laid on the ground for him to lay his healing hand upon.³⁴

Layton's medical itinerations opened up new relationships with other missionaries and government officials. Perhaps more importantly, his medical work continued to develop relationships with the residents of Bolenge and neighboring villages. In addition, Dye's reference to 'his healing hand' is a clear allusion to the healing ministry of Jesus, the 'Great Physician,' an indication of the rhetorical style of these missionaries and their successors.

After three years in Congo, the Dyes left Bolenge on March 1902. For health reasons, they needed the furlough, but they left "with real grief, and some anxiety," because they were concerned about leaving the Laytons "alone" on the station.³⁵ On their furlough, Royal Dye went to New York for additional study in medical school, and Eva Dye went to their home in Ionia, Michigan, with two and a half year old Okuki.³⁶

Josefa's Prayer Meetings and the Church of Christ at Bolenge

Left "alone" on the station, the Laytons continued to pursue language study and the tasks associated with maintaining buildings and gardens, including supervising African workers. However, Layton's skills as a physician or a station manager are less significant than his work as an observer of and participant in an emerging African church. Towards the end of 1902, Dr. Layton reported on the development of the mission work and his attitudes toward the Africans as follows:

As might be expected of heathen, the natives have tried us in every conceivable way. But we feel that everything has been turned to the best interests of the work. The sick have been healed, the children taught, the gospel preached daily; an interest in the Sunday services particularly has been shown by an increasing attendance.³⁷

In addition to these professional responsibilities of healing, teaching, and preaching, the Laytons assumed the additional responsibility of parenting. During that period after the Dyes left and before Faris returned, a new missionary baby was born in Bolenge on 24 June 1903, Evelyn Azalia Layton. The child's nickname was Lita. After this, Dr. and Mrs. Layton became known among the Africans as *Isea 'Lita* and *Nyange 'Lita*, father of Lita and mother of Lita, respectively.

The missionaries were not responsible for the single most important development toward the formation of a church at Bolenge during the period from 1899 to 1902. It came to Edwin Layton's attention that there was some religious activity on the Bolenge station that was not under direct missionary control. A resident from upriver who had come to Bolenge during the Baptist period was demonstrating leadership in a quiet but significant way. According to Eva Dye, "although there was still no organized church, there was a group of people who had been meeting with our one strong Christian man, a cripple, Joseph [Josefa]. This movement had started by itself and continued to grow."³⁸ Mentioned above in connection with the Baptist mission period, Josefa was a fisherman from upriver near Kisangani. After contracting a crippling disease, he made his living by repairing nets and keeping chickens, and, apparently, he was viewed by the other Africans as both trustworthy and having some authority in religious matters. Although we only have the missionary accounts, it is important to include Josefa in this discussion because of his role in the formation of this early Disciples community. Josefa, the crippled fisherman from the Lokele tribe, appears to have been the DCCM missionary community's chief ally in the development

of the early Christian community at Bolenge and in the formation of the first Church of Christ at Bolenge.

Josefa led evening meetings for prayer and teaching about the “Jesus story” in front of his hut, and the early missionaries credited him with the first breakthroughs in their work among the people of Bolenge. The Dyes and Faris had known Josefa since they arrived at Bolenge in 1899, but there is virtually no indication in their writings that they were aware of his religious activities. Andrew Hensey, a DCCM missionary author, pointed out that,

The first mention of Josefa appears to have been in a letter written by Dr. Layton under the date of April twentieth, 1902. Some months before writing that letter he had discovered that every night a wonderful prayer-meeting was being held in front of Josefa’s house.³⁹

Layton’s discovery must have preceded the Dye’s departure in March 1902. His reports documented an informal prayer meeting led by Josefa that included prayers, hymns, quotations from the Bible, and discussion about the missionary’s messages on Sunday. The highlight of each meeting was Josefa’s own teaching. Hampered by his affliction and his lack of fluency in Lonkundo, he was nonetheless a charismatic leader who attracted larger and larger groups to his nightly meetings.

In July 1902, Josefa presented a list of twenty people seeking baptism to Dr. Layton.⁴⁰ Rather than act on this request, Layton decided to wait until the return of Faris and the other missionaries; he did not feel sufficiently experienced to make a decision of this significance. Because the gatherings began to attract as many as seventy or eighty people, Layton gave permission for Josefa to use the church for his prayer meetings. In addition to cooperating with Josefa’s efforts, he began to complement Josefa’s nightly meetings with his own morning meetings. In addition to this evangelistic work within the African community at the mission station, another development caught the missionaries by surprise, the first known example of indigenous itineration from Bolenge for evangelistic purposes. One day in his sermon, Dr. Layton spoke of the obligation of letting others know of the Good News. To his surprise, he found that a group of inquirers led by Iso (later identified as Iso Timothy) left that afternoon for several days preaching in distant villages!⁴¹ This initial evangelistic itineration took place between May and October 1902.

At the conclusion of his furlough, Ellsworth Faris departed from New York on 2 August 1902, arriving back at Bolenge on 2 October, along with his wife Bessie Homan Faris and a new missionary couple, Robert Ray Eldred and Edith Byers Eldred.

Mr. Faris took over the evangelistic work which had continued with unabated interest. Mr. Eldred took charge of the industrial work and Dr. Layton, for the first time, was able to give himself wholly to his medical work. Because of her rare training and experience, Mrs. Layton had made great contributions to the school work at Bolenge.⁴²

When Faris returned to the evangelistic work, he began nightly preaching meetings for two months. Whether this replaced or supplemented Josefa’s nightly meetings and whether Layton continued his morning meetings is not clear in the literature, but the combination of Josefa’s and the missionaries’ teaching apparently had the desired effect.

"The first convert baptized was a man named Lonkoko," according to a section on the Congo in the official history of the FCMS.⁴³ In her *Bolenge*, Dye reported "He was not a native of the village of Bolenge, but was one who came for teaching."⁴⁴ The missionaries had been looking for people who both understood their (the missionaries') message and also changed their (the Africans') lifestyle. Lonkoko became the first of a series of individuals whose baptism was used by DCCM missionaries in English language publications as an example of conversion to Christianity. These publications (books, periodical articles, pamphlets) were intended to inspire the American readers with accounts of the fruits of their mission offerings. What particularly interests us here is not Lonkoko himself as an historical individual but how the missionary authors portrayed his conversion to the churches in America.

In his account of the "Story of Josefa," Dr. E. A. Layton briefly described the baptism of Lonkoko:

It took courage for Lonkoko to stand alone and, facing his fellows, make the "good confession" -- "Njolamba Yesu; njolimeja te, ale Bona wa Nzakomba, Boskikoji okam." He was then buried by baptism in the water of the Congo and arose indeed "to walk in newness of life."⁴⁵

The Lonkundo text may be translated simply, "I wait for Jesus. I believe that he is the son of God, my redeemer."⁴⁶ The repetition of the "good confession" prior to immersion in the river was a key part of the conversion story for the DCCM missionaries. This ritual act embodies the doctrine of "believer's baptism," a doctrine Disciples shared with Baptists and some other Protestant groups.

In Eva Dye's account, Lonkoko gave up his "heathen life," and his neighbors mistreated him for it. Whether these "neighbors" were in Bolenge or in his home village is not clear. The changes in his lifestyle included giving up "his numerous wives," legally marrying one woman, freeing his slaves, and giving up smoking. He also carried water, cut firewood, and worked in the garden, activities locally considered "woman's work." This list highlights what "conversion" among the Mongo "looked like" from the missionary perspective. Changes in social practice, especially gender-marked behavior, were pre-eminent. According to Dye, his status in the fledgling church community was high. Not only was he a deacon of the church and one of the first evangelists, but also he was courageous in his work. He went alone and unarmed to a village among "cannibal tribes" to preach, a feat of bravery for which he was respected and renowned. Having perserved in spreading the Christian message as one of the first evangelists supported by the "native church," he finally triumphed by his personal mission to a "cannibal village" across the Boloko river.⁴⁷

Mark Njoji was another early convert baptized in November 1902. His father, Bonkanza, had been the chief *nkanga* in Bolenge during the time of the American Baptists and at the beginning of the DCCM period. Njoji's brother, Bosekola, was the resident *nkanga* during the early days of the DCCM, and he tried to pass his practice on to Njoji. Njoji refused because he had become a member of the new religious community. He spent a considerable amount of time with Eva Dye in preparing the early translations of the New Testament and in preparing a grammar of the Lonkundo language; later, he became known as one of the great preachers of the church.

Conversion is evident in practice, and changes in dress, marital practice, and other matters are common tropes in conversion stories. When matched with suffering on the part of the convert for making these changes, these accounts parallel similar stories that go back to the origins of Christianity. Inter-textual allusions to the sufferings of Jesus, Paul, and early martyrs of the church provided an important stimulus for missionary recruitment and continued financial support from American churches. This pattern of telling a story of conversion “from heathenism to Christianity” appeared in DCCM literature throughout the period. Successful conversions were a principal currency on which the missionaries depended and the evident return on the investment in missions made by American congregations.

In their writings, the missionaries considered the first baptisms to be the “first fruits” of both Josefa’s and their own labors. They wrote of Josefa, Iso, Lonkonko, Njoji, and other African Christians with a distinct tone of respect and admiration. That attitude was characteristic of most of the DCCM writings about the African Christians. That tone of respect did not always extend to the non-Christian Africans. In DCCM literature during the early decades, a patronizing or condescending tone crept into the rhetoric of the missionaries about non-Christian Africans in general, yet at the same time there was genuine affection and admiration for the individuals they knew personally.

A new missionary couple arrived with Ellsworth Faris and Bessie Homan Faris during the fall of 1902, Robert Ray Eldred and Edith Byers Eldred. Ray had been raised on a farm in Michigan. He attended both Eureka College and Transylvania University. In his missionary service, R. R. Eldred was noted especially for his proficiency with tools, and he undertook the “industrial” work of the mission: supervising the sawyers and carpenters in the construction of the station. Edith Byers came from South Bend, Indiana. In perhaps the only book-length biography of a DCCM missionary, the story of the Eldreds’ life in Congo was later told by Andrew Hensey in *A Master Builder on the Congo*.⁴⁸ While the Eldreds were still settling in and learning the language, a singular moment occurred in the history of the DCCM mission work.

On 5 March 1903, the Bolenge Christians organized the first Disciples church in the Congo, consisting of twenty-four members. Three deacons were selected, however no elders were chosen at that time. Undoubtedly, Lonkonko was one of the deacons; the identity of the other deacons is not yet clear. We know little more about this day, but it marks the true beginning point of the CDCC. According to Smith, the newly organized Christians called themselves *bocweji*, and they called the church, *iboko*.⁴⁹ This continued a process of translation on the Bolenge station, a process which included both missionaries and African associates. From the time that Faris arrived at Bolenge in March 1899, Disciples missionaries had been learning the language with the cooperation of the boys in the school, the women and children who gathered at Eva Dye’s porch, the workmen who were hired to build the station and the early inquirers at Josefa’s campfire meetings. In each of these and similar settings, the missionaries worked to learn Lonkundo. The examples of *bocweji* and *iboko* merely suggest the linguistic dependence of the missionaries on the early Bolenge Christians, with whom they both worked and worshiped.

In Herbert Smith’s history of the DCCM, the principal event of 1903 was certainly the formation of the Church of Christ at Bolenge on 5 March. Insofar as this marked the foundation of the present Disciples of Christ Community in Congo, it is

hard to argue with that emphasis. The baptisms in November 1902 and the formation of the church of Christ at Bolenge in March 1903 are the key events that link the history of the DCCM missionary community and the history of the *Communaute du Disciples du Christ au Congo* (CDCC), a church of approximately one million adult members in Congo today. The CDCC was the church that ultimately emerged from the itinerations of Faris and Biddle, the ministrations of the Dyes, Leas, and Laytons, and most importantly, the nightly prayer meetings in front of the room of Josefa, the crippled evangelist.

Conclusion

Historians of Christianity have long noted the fact that the explosive growth of Christian communities in the southern hemisphere has profound implications for the future of Christianity. As Philip Jenkins noted, “the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward.”⁵⁰ While not the first person to realize this, Jenkins has certainly called it to the attention of a wide range of people. The history of Disciples of Christ in Congo offers an example of a church (the CDCC) which is larger than the founding church in North America, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and while the founding church has been struggling in recent decades to maintain its level of membership, the church in Congo has been growing. Hence, the center of gravity of the Disciples of Christ in particular, and perhaps of the Stone-Campbell movement generally, is shifting south as well, at least in demographic terms. Yet, the history of the single most successful missionary enterprise of the Stone-Campbell movement outside the United States largely remains the province of a few missionary writers.

In an effort to address the gaps in both Stone-Campbell studies and African studies, this foray into the early history of the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission and the establishment of the Disciples church at Bolenge takes advantage of an opportunity to portray the American missionaries and the Congolese Christians as the very real historical agents that they were. Although more work needs to be done on the relationship between the missionaries and colonial state, as well as the biographies of both the missionaries and the Congolese Christians, the basic outlines of the story take on a slightly different configuration than that offered in the semi-official accounts of the missionary authors. In addition to being among the best educated and the most altruistically motivated people of their time, the missionaries of the DCCM were deeply implicated in the colonial system, encumbered with internal tensions (and occasional conflict), and heavily dependent on the goodwill and hard work of their African associates.

NOTES

¹ “Disciples and ‘Red Rubber’: the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM), the Congo Free State, and the Congo Reform Campaign, 1897-1908,” *Discipliana* 66:1 (Spring 2006), p. 3-18. The principal published work on Disciples in Congo during the early twentieth century remains Herbert Smith, *Fifty Years in Congo: Disciples of Christ at the Equator* (Indianapolis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1949). The principal unpublished studies include the following: Bonanga (Eliki Bonanga Lofos’ankoy), “La penetration et l’oeuvre des missionnaires Disciples du Christ a l’Equateur 1897-1964” (M.A. thesis, Faculty of Protestant Theology, Kinshasa, 1979)

and Paul A. Williams, “The Disciples of Christ Congo Mission (DCCM), 1897-1932: A Missionary Community in Colonial Central Africa” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000). The most comprehensive bibliographical review is Paul A. Williams, “Literary Sources for the Early History of the DCCM [Disciples of Christ Congo Mission], 1897-1932” *Annales Aequatoria* 23 (2002) 553-579. See also Mayota Ndanda “Poste Protestante de Bolenge,” in *Mbandaka, Hier et auhourd’hui: Elements d’historiographie locale*, Etudes Aequatoria, 10 (Mbandaka, Zaire: Centre Aequatoria, 1990), 169-174. Finally, the principal literary sources for the early history of the DCCM are the pages of the *Missionary Intelligencer (MI)* and, as indicated in the text, the works of Eva Nichols Dye, Andrew Hensey, and Herbert Smith (see references below). The principal documentary sources may be located in the files of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society (DCHS). References in the notes below include biographical files and personal papers. In the following notes, an attempt has been made to identify the sources as specifically as possible.

² C. B. Banks, “Africa. The Congo Mission — Equator Station, Nov. 24, 1889,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (March 1890): 83.

³ Archibald McLean, *The History of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919), 103; William Robinson Warren, editor. *Survey of Service: Organizations represented in International Convention of Disciples of Christ* (Saint Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1928), 495, reproduces McLean’s account of this part of the story.

⁴ The “Report of Committee on Africa,” delivered on 22 October 1895, indicates that Ellsworth Faris was already under appointment, *MI* (November 1895): 302.

⁵ *MI* (1895): 294.

⁶ Information on Faris’ education and early academic career may be found in *Publications of the Members of the University 1902-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1917), 16.

⁷ Biddle, Letter to “Br.,” 27 February 1897, “Mt. Healthy, O.”: “Faris came last night.” DCHS AC 90-15 “Scrapbook. 1892-1907.”

⁸ Biddle, Letter to his “Brother,” 3 March 1897. DCHS AC 90-15. This information is in the postscript dated 4 March 1897: “Spent most of the morn. in conference with Mr. Duncan, Cor. Sec. of For. Board of the Am. Bapt. Mis. Union.” Mr. Duncan was the Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Board of the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU), later known as the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (ABFMS).

⁹ There is some disagreement in the literature about this date. I am relying on a letter that Biddle wrote on 14 March 1897, aboard the *Catalonia*. Letter to “Brother” DCHS AC 90-15.

¹⁰ According to Smith, they arrived at “the mouth of the Congo on May 27, 1897.” Herbert Smith, *Fifty Years in Congo* (Indianapolis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1949), 5.

¹¹ Biddle, Letter to “Brother,” Leopoldville, 7 January 1898. DCHS AC 90-15. The CBM is the Congo Balolo Mission, a British Baptist society organized by H. Grattan and Fanny Guinness, directors of the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions.

¹² For example, the famous Dr. Sims provided a place for them in Leopoldville while they waited for a response to their repeated letters to the Governor General.

¹³ Jules Marchal, *E. D. Morel contre Leopold II: l'histoire du Congo, 1900-1910*, vol. 1, Zaire - Histoire et Societe. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 132. Revised edition of *E. D. Morel tegen Leopold II en de Kongostaat, 1900 - 1910* which appeared under the author's pseudonym, A. M. Delathuy.

¹⁴ About the same time, they received permission from the Governor of the French territory to locate at Bongo at the mouth of the Sanga River. They made some trips across the river to French Congo, but they were ultimately refused permission to settle.

¹⁵ Reports of his death include the following: "Another Hero Gone," *Christian Standard* (22 October 1898): 1384- 1385; Francis M. Biddle, "Last Illness of Dr. Harry N. Biddle," *CS* (24 December 1898): 1687. Harry Biddle had two brothers, Francis ("Frank") Mallette Biddle and Atherton ("Attie") Biddle, and they continued to keep his memory alive in missionary periodicals for decades afterwards. Regular entries in the *Christian Standard* (*CS*) recalled the anniversary of his death.

¹⁶ According to Ellsworth Faris' own contribution to Eva Dye's *Chronicle* (1943).

¹⁷ A report by Ellsworth Faris indicated that the school began in June 1899. Faris, "the Work in Africa," *MI* (August 1900): 183.

¹⁸ H. Smith (1949), 17.

¹⁹ E. N. Dye, *Bolenge* (1909), 212.

²⁰ Andrew Fitch Hensey, *Master Builder on the Congo: A Memorial to the Service and Devotion of Robert Ray Eldred and Lillian Byers Eldred* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), 31-32.

²¹ Polly C. Dye and Margaret Heppe, *In His Glad Service: The Story of Royal J. and Eva Dye* (Eugene, Oregon: Northwest Christian College, 1975), 58.

²² Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1, vol. 2, 1st. ed. (New York: American Tract Society, London: Religious Tract Society, 1900), 406.

²³ Dye and Heppe, 19.

²⁴ Emphasis added. Dye and Heppe, 65.

²⁵ Dye and Heppe, 65.

²⁶ *MI* (November 1901): 285.

²⁷ Louise Browning, *They Went to Africa: Biographies of Missionaries of the Disciples of Christ* (Indianapolis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1952), 19-20. Browning was apparently incorrect when she said that news of the Leas reached Bolenge in 1901. As we have seen, Ellsworth Faris left Bolenge for Angola to meet with the Leas on 3 October 1900.

²⁸ Faris' report to the Annual Convention under "Africa: Bolengi," *MI* (1901): 285-286.

²⁹ *MI* (July 1901): 153.

³⁰ *MI* (November 1901): 287.

³¹ *MI* (September 1901): 199. Frank Lea's own report to the convention indicated May 19 as the arrival date at Bolenge. *MI* (November 1901): 286.

³² Dye and Heppe, 24, 65.

³³ Dye, *Chronicle* (1943). According to Hensey (1916), 26, the Layton's arrived in August and the Lea's left in September. These dates can be reconciled with Dye's

Chronicle, but Hensey also reports that the Dye family “started for America in February, 1902” (26). This contradicts Eva Dye’s own statement that they had “congenial fellowship” with the Layton’s from October 1901 until March 1902.

³⁴ Dye, *Chronicle* (1943).

³⁵ Dye and Heppe (1975), 71.

³⁶ “Notes and News,” *MI* (May 1903): 142.

³⁷ Edwin A. Layton, “Africa: From the Congo,” *MI* (October 1902): 289.

³⁸ Dye, *Chronicle*.

³⁹ Hensey (1916), 33. Since the Dyes did not leave Bolenge until February or March 1902, this would suggest that the Dyes were still there when Layton first noted the prayer meetings. Unfortunately, Hensey was not an eyewitness, and we cannot be certain of the chronology.

⁴⁰ Hensey (1916), 35.

⁴¹ Hensey (1916), 34. The story of Iso’s life was told in Lonkundo by Mark Njoji and translated by Gertrude Shoemaker. The study of church leaders like Iso and Njoji is essential for developing a more adequate history of the CDCC/DCCM.

⁴² The references to 1903 in material surrounding this passage were apparently a typo. Dye, *Chronicle*.

⁴³ McLean (1919), 107, 313.

⁴⁴ Dye (1909), 129.

⁴⁵ Edwin A. Layton, “The Story of Josefa.” *The Christian-Evangelist* (19 May 1904): 635-636.

⁴⁶ In Lonkundo, *bosikoji* was a class 2 noun meaning “redeemer.” *English-Lonkundo and Lonkundo-English Vocabulary* (Bolenge: Foreign Christian Missionary Society, Mexico Press, 1913), hereafter referred to as *Vocabulary* (1913). *Bosikoli* is defined in Hulstaert’s *Dictionnaire* (1957) to mean “redeemer, ransomer.”

⁴⁷ Dye (1909), 129.

⁴⁸ Hensey (1916). Compared to Hensey’s work on Eldred, other “lives” of DCCM missionaries tend to be autobiographical memoirs and/or relatively short biographical sketches.

⁴⁹ Smith (1949), 23. Smith identified the derivation of *bocweji* to be *ejí*, “to be fitting, accurate, appropriate righteous, or worthy.” The *Vocabulary* (1913) simply translated it as “believer; Christian.” (228) According to Hulstaert’s *Dictionnaire* (1957), the term *botsweji*, meant Protestant, and derived from *-tswela*, meaning to be effective or to work. The *Vocabulary* (1913) translated *iboko* as “church; family; house-hold” (296). According to Hulstaert’s *Dictionnaire*, *ibóko* signified “church” or a community of Christians, and was used exclusively for Protestants. He marked it as a term of foreign origin. Later DCCM Bible translations used the Greek derived term *ekklesia* to mean “church.”

⁵⁰ Philip Jenkins, *The New Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 2. Jenkins book is perhaps the best known, recent work in English to explore the implications of this thesis.

Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Congo 2006

Today the Disciples Community is spread out over the northwest quadrant of the Congo in Equator Province. The nearly million-member Disciples Community has organized its work around twenty-two administrative posts -- almost all of which can only be reached by boat. Some are as far as 1,000 miles from the headquarters in Mbandaka.

Emergency messages, routine church communication, instructions on how to deal with difficult situations, announcements of upcoming workshops or training sessions, requests for prayer and support, all take days or weeks to be delivered, often arriving too late to be of use. The churches of Equator Province feel that communication is one of their greatest needs, if not the greatest need.

The Disciples Amateur Network (DARF/U-CAN) recently sponsored a trip in cooperation with Disciples Global Ministries at the request of the Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Congo.

The team will make recommendations to DARF/U-CAN on how to best meet the needs of the Disciples Community.

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From the Editor's Desk

The Kirkpatrick Seminar for Historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement was held in Louisville, Kentucky, June, 28-29, 2006, in conjunction with the North American Christian Convention. The topic of the seminar was the 1906 separation of Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches. The articles in this issue by Henry E. Webb and Douglas A. Foster were presented to the seminar. A paper by Edward Robinson, who also participated in the seminar, will appear in the final issue of this volume.

Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches differed in 1906 in their views of missionary societies, the use of instrumental music in worship, the appointment of one person as pastor of the congregation, and costly church buildings. Historians have long recognized social sources of this division. Webb's "Geographical Factors in the 1906 Division" looks at geographic differences that lie at the roots of the sectional divide that is reflected in the 1906 separation. Webb also discusses the impact of the Civil War in creating the context of division. Webb further notes that social and economic changes since 1906 have influenced developments in the contemporary Stone-Campbell Movement that support efforts towards reunion.

Historians have consistently cited the 1906 United States religious census as marking the separation of Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches. Foster's "The 1906 Census of Religious Bodies and Division in the Stone-Campbell Movement: A Closer Look" carefully examines the character of the census and its role in the separation. By focusing on major players and events, Foster shows that the census not only recorded a division, but was an occasion for conflict that highlighted differences among leaders.

The articles by Webb and Foster, though focused on specific events in the past, have implications for the present and future of the Stone-Campbell Movement and for the larger and tragic issue of division among Christians.

D. Newell Williams

From the President's Desk

Archivist. When we hold onto materials, when we catalog and categorize them, we are doing the work of an archivist. Historians interpret materials and place them in context. Teachers disseminate information in a way that is understandable and useful. But the archivist comes first.

Imagine a parallel universe. In our own universe, the work of ancient archivists took place. In this other world, however, people weren't as interested. There, for example, was a young man named Mark. He decided to stay at home on a particular Thursday night and so was not in a garden to see the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. Without this dramatic event as a starting place, this other Mark never collected the stories about Jesus. He did not preserve and keep them. He never shared them.

In that world, with no Gospel of Mark to rely on, there Matthew and Luke put together disjointed narratives which failed to inspire communities. Ultimately, in this parallel universe the early followers of Christ's teachings were unable to form cohesive movements. Today, the Church does not exist there. All because there was no one to do the work of an archivist.

Back here in the only universe we currently know of, we are carefully going about archival work. If we expect people in future generations to have any idea about who we are, then we must be sure to collect, preserve, and keep the materials that tell our story. That is how our successors will be able to share the information. Historians will have the straw with which to make their bricks. And teachers will have the bricks with which to build monuments to heritage and faith.

Sometimes the description of our work can seem rather mundane. Documents and files stored away in climate controlled rooms don't sound very romantic. But what if the document is the Declaration of Independence that announces liberty for all people everywhere? Or what if it is the very first Bible produced on a printing press, so that God's Word could be sent all over the world? Or what if it is a letter handwritten by Alexander Campbell, which gives insight into how and why our faith movement was founded? And what if no one had ever preserved and kept any of those?

Our job is not to keep political statements, or materials of other faith groups. We leave that in the capable hands of the appropriate persons and agencies. When it comes to all things Stone-Campbell, though, that is our job. We are here to insure that the stories of faith that have been entrusted to us will still be here in the future. We gladly wear the mantles of historian. and teacher. And we are just as happy to do the first work, that of the archivist.

Glenn Thomas Carson

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS IN THE 1906 DIVISION

Henry E. Webb*

This year we are observing a centennial; the one-hundredth anniversary of what is arguably among the most unfortunate developments in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. For the 1906 Federal Census David Lipscomb, who was consulted about a separate listing for the Churches of Christ, agreed that it ought to be listed as a religious communion separate from the original body of the Disciples of Christ. It was a formal recognition of a schism the roots of which were already more than forty years in the making. Our topic calls our attention to some significant differences within the young nation – geographic differences that lie at the roots of the sectional divide that this fracture in the Movement reflects.

We look first at these important geographical differences between the North and the South. They are fundamental to the differences that developed later. Aside from climatic contrasts, the topographical differences are notable. The soil in the populous Northeast is generally quite rocky and sandy and, combined with the shorter growing season, does not lend itself to agriculture to the same degree as that of the South. But the Northeast had an abundance of deciduous hardwood trees that provided both quantity and a quality of timber for the ship building enterprises that flourished in Britain during the era when Britainia ruled the seas. Commerce and industry would be important in the North even before the American Revolution. It was otherwise in the South where agriculture was of primary importance. The South had an abundance of gentle-flowing rivers that offered transportation for both people and commodities. Southern agriculture was given an enormous stimulus by an event that occurred in England in 1794, when Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin. This device turned hitherto unprofitable short-fiber cotton (the only kind that can be grown in the United States) into a very profitable commodity, but only if its labor-intensive cultivation could be handled by cheap labor, which meant slaves.

Slaves could be found in the colonies from early colonial days, but by the dawn of the 19th century many thought that slavery would naturally disappear. When the Constitution was drafted, the question rose as to whether slaves should be counted as “persons” in determining seats in the House of Representatives, a position favored by the South, or should they be considered to be “property” because they were a marketable commodity. The penchant for compromise in the Constitutional Assembly is seen in the decision to count a slave as three-fifths of a person for numbering in the House of Representatives. In 1807 there was little opposition to Congressional adoption of legislation outlawing the importation of slaves, which were utilized chiefly in Virginia for tobacco cultivation. The conviction was widespread that slavery would gradually disappear. But with the invention of the cotton gin, a huge market for American cotton was created in England. The result was the proliferation of textile mills in the English Mid-lands and a huge demand for

*Dr. Henry E. Webb is Dean E. Walker Professor Emeritus of Church History, Milligan College, Tennessee.

states of the South. The critical value of slave labor in the growing of cotton is borne out by the rise in the price that slaves brought at auction prior to the Civil War. Outlawing the importation of slaves created a lucrative slave smuggling enterprise.¹

This extensive and profitable slave smuggling enterprise in turn, created a demand for repeal of the anti-slave-import legislation dating from 1807.² A major portion of the wealth of the South consisted of its investment in slaves. Cotton constituted the largest American export prior to the Civil War. The centrality of agriculture and the basically rural nature of our people in the South is reflected as late as 1906 in the Federal Census which indicates that in only one city in the nation with more than 50,000 persons, namely Nashville, Tennessee, did Churches of Christ number more than a thousand members.

By way of contrast, agriculture was not such a vital part of the economy in the North. Here agricultural activity consisted largely in the production of cereal grains and livestock, for which there was not a significant foreign market. Lumber, fishing, salt, and small manufacturing activities constituted the basis of the Northern economy prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, and slaves were not useful in any of these enterprises. With no economic stake in slavery, it was not difficult for these states to outlaw slavery and the slave trade and to condemn slavery as a horrid evil. Society in the North, while still heavily rural, was much more urban/ commercial/ industrial than in the South.

The United States has never known a tragedy that compares with the cataclysm of the Civil War. Today we are far enough removed in time from the Civil War to have difficulty appreciating the real extent and the enormity of this tragedy. When the fighting was over in 1865, the men in gray returned home dispirited to face destruction, desolation, poverty, and hopelessness in what had earlier been their cherished homeland. The cotton-based economy of the South was destroyed. The labor supply was chaotic because the slaves were freed and they were uncertain of their rights. When hostilities ceased, the South was devastated. Roadways were often impassable, bridges had been burned, what railroads existed were ripped up and the rolling stock was destroyed. Harbors were rendered unusable, livestock slaughtered, fields and buildings laid waste. Southern currency was worthless. Confederate bonds, in which the propertied class had invested their resources in order to preserve their way of life, were also worthless. Military governors, whose presence was resented because they represented the oppressors, sought to bring order out of this chaos, but they lacked the resources that such a monumental task demanded.

Unfortunately, there was no such thing as a Marshall Plan. Rebuilding the public domain required resources which normally would be derived from taxes, but there was no tax base in the South to supply these resources. Under such circumstances, governing bodies have no option other than to issue bonds. But, with an inadequate tax base to provide for their redemption, the bonds were unattractive and therefore mandated both a high rate of interest and an initial discount. Thus a \$100.00 Southern state bond would bring only \$75 or \$80, but interest would have to be paid on the full \$100 face value; and at the time of redemption the bonds would have to be redeemed at the full face value of \$100.00. The only way Southern state bonds could be redeemed at their maturity was by floating a new bond issue, likely with another discount, thereby compounding the problem. This kind of impossible

fiscal exigency served to lock southern states and municipalities into long-term poverty, the same plight which is faced today by many third-world countries. It delayed the rebuilding of the infra-structure of the South for decades. It meant that Southern roads were primitive for many years. Schools were generally below standard; social services, including medical facilities, were often wanting. All of these factors delayed the development of Southern economy for decade after decade. It would not be until a new understanding of the role of the national government that came in the 1930s, followed by the stimulus of World War II demands for industrial output, that the South emerged from the handicaps imposed by the Civil War. Until that time, there were seven or more decades of privation and suffering for the people of the South. It should not be difficult to understand why the South was gripped by a bitterness that lasted in varying degrees for almost a century.

The situation was far different in the North. The men in blue returned in high spirits to face a future marked with bold confidence. The North entered a period of post-war prosperity like had never been known before in the life of the infant nation. Railroads, which had been seized by the government for war purposes, were returned to their owners with a handsome indemnity and in better condition than when they were appropriated. The owners would soon be rewarded with very generous subsidies for westward expansion and in a decade the country would be spanned by rail and in less than two decades no less than four lines would span the nation. As wartime needs launched the industrial age in the North, agriculture was eclipsed by industry in the economy of the North. The Northern post-War economic boom would increasingly rest on industrial development. Post-war prosperity ushered in an era of heady expansion and bold confidence. New markets, new inventions, and the utilization of new sources of power opened fabulous opportunities to those who were in a position to exploit them. It was a period of general prosperity. It would be naïve to think that these conditions would not breed sectional resentment and hatred. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what happened. It is equally naïve to assume that this kind of sectional hatred did not affect the religion of the area. The major Protestant denominations had divided over slavery before the War.³ Although the issue over which they divided, namely slavery, was settled by the War, sectional hatred kept Methodists from re-unification until after the lapse of three-quarters of a century. Presbyterians did not reunite until more than a century later, and Baptists have not come together yet. It certainly strains credulity to assume that people who had been killing each other for four years could pick up the ties of fellowship after the bloodiest years of the nation's history as though nothing had happened, Moses E. Lard to the contrary notwithstanding.⁴

The 1906 Census discloses that the division within the Disciples was well advanced. Statistics like those found in the Federal Census could never have been assembled had this not been the case. But, the historiography of that day tended to understand this schism as a doctrinal divide and commonly defined several issues, such as missionary societies, instruments, one-man pastors, and costly structures as causes of the division.⁵ There is no question that these issues became centers of bitter controversy and reflected the sectional ill will. But the historiography of the late twentieth century outgrew this kind of analysis, understanding it to be entirely too restricted. Contemporary historiography sees these developments occurring within a broader context that includes socio-economic, political, as well as

subtle psychological factors. Taking into account the total environment within which these issues arose sheds a great deal of light on the bitterness which the issues generated. The passing of time and the changes of many conditions in the life of the nation tend to obscure the trauma that the Civil War created and that constituted the climate of the post-War period. A brief review of the post-Civil War conditions in the Union is critical to an understanding of the environment that gave birth and shape to the division of our people.

The fact that the Stone-Campbell Movement did not divide prior to the war can be understood in light of several factors, one of which was the position of Alexander Campbell on the issue of slavery. It is not possible within the scope of this paper to review Campbell's position on this very complex issue⁶ except to note that he opposed both slavery and abolition, and insisted that slavery, despite his dislike of it, was not a matter of "faith" and thus should not be a cause of schism among those who insist that unity is based on shared faith.⁷ Another factor is found in the fact that many of the leaders of the Movement were pacifists, at least at the beginning of the conflict. The Movement was strongest in the border states where extreme radical views were much less prevalent or acceptable than they were in the far North or the deep South. And it is also significant that, unlike the major denominations, prior to the War we had no national organization to divide. We did not divide over slavery *per se*. But divide, we did!

Theoretically, at least according to Moses E. Lard, we came through the War without division. But our men in both armies were killed or wounded along with Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, and our people suffered loss and privation just as severely as did others in the South. Casualty lists generated animosity on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. When the War was over, hatred of the victorious North ran just as deep among our folk in the South as it did in the ranks of others, and this hatred was stoked by the loyalty resolution adopted by a rump session of the American Christian Missionary Society in Cincinnati in 1863. It urged the churches to support "the brave and noble soldiers in the field, who are defending us from attempts of armed traitors to overthrow our Government."⁸ However, when the War ended in 1865, anti-northern animus could not center on the slavery issue, which the War had eliminated. A new cause had to be found to sustain it. In fact several issues were discovered, all of which were largely sectional and rose out of the changes that were being made mainly in the northern churches. Objections to these "digressions" were grounded in Biblical terms, thereby elevating them to matters of "faith" and orthodoxy in the minds of those who proffered them. They were endowed with an aura of Biblical fidelity and sanctity. They were fortified with religious commitment, thereby assuring an element of devotion as well as endurance.

The fact that a century ago historians of the Movement viewed the causes of the division in our ranks as doctrinal is understandable inasmuch as the acrimony was centered on this level. Gradually, Fredrick Jackson Turner, Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr impacted our historiography and a new and different perspective began to appear. The first example of the impact of the wider environmental climate on our historiography of which I am aware is Winfred E. Garrison's *Religion Follows the Frontier*,⁹ published in 1931. It met with great resistance in some of our colleges and seminaries. Next, in my awareness was the two-volume work of David Edwin Harrell.¹⁰ Since these pioneering works, many of the historians of the Movement recognize that the religious activities and loyalties of human beings do not develop

in a vacuum or in isolation from the circumstances which surround them and impact their lives. The implications of the sectional differences and the animosities they generated, and the impact that these factors have had on the religious development of the Stone-Campbell Movement has, for too long, been overlooked. The issues have been debated and discussed as doctrinal matters for too long, thereby obscuring the sectional dimension of this fracture.¹¹ The Census of 1906 clearly shows that the division was largely sectional, reinforced by sociological, economic, and psychological factors. Sectionalism was honestly acknowledged by David Lipscomb in an early issue of the revived *Gospel Advocate* when he wrote,

The fact that we had not a single paper known to us that Southern peoples could read without having their feelings wounded by political insinuations and slurs had more to do with calling the *Advocate* into existence, than all other circumstances combined.¹²

As we consider the data provided by the 1906 Federal Census¹³ it is well to begin with the caveat that statistics in any religious census are only relatively accurate. But they represent the best information that is available to us and certainly they cannot be ignored. We should also take account of the fact that the rupture portrayed in the 1906 Census was four decades in the making and hence certain developments took place within that period of time. Positions had become crystallized and alliances were formed that do not show up in a census. Also, it must be borne in mind that fractures in a religious body are never surgically clean.

In 1906 the Federal Census reported the total, aggregate membership of Disciples of Christ at 982,701 and Churches of Christ membership as 159,858,¹⁴ or roughly one-sixth of Disciples membership; and the value of their property holding was about nine percent of that of Disciples. More than half of the Disciples membership was located in the North Central states, principally in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. And if Kentucky (a border state) is added, more than three-fourths of Disciples membership is found in this Northern concentration.¹⁵ It would be totally unnatural to assume that these Disciples, who had shared in the victory and the prosperity which followed the war, would not also share in the general outlook of the population of that section of the nation. Many subscribed to the *Christian Standard*, the new journal which began publication in 1866 and reflected the progressive attitude of the conservative Editor, Isaac Errett. There followed years of growth in the number of congregations, colleges, and missionary activity. A different ethos inevitably developed in the North, fueled by the relative prosperity which characterized that part of the nation. Developing sectional differences were registering in the individual congregations. Northern congregations could afford new buildings with innovations in lighting, heating, factory built pews, stained glass windows, musical instruments, choirs, and settled pastors. All of these changes were in keeping with the growing economy and the ethos of prosperity found in the North.

It was quite different in the South. The 1906 Census discloses that of the almost 160,000 members of the Churches of Christ, 80% were located in the states of the former Confederacy.¹⁶ 41,411, or slightly more than 25%, were located in Tennessee alone. Texas claimed 34,006 members, or an additional 20%. Thus, almost half of the members of Churches of Christ in 1906 were found in these two states.

Kentucky(12,451), Arkansas(11,006), and Indiana(10,259) filling out the top five. Of these, only Indiana is not a southern state.

The rural nature of Churches of Christ in 1906 is reflected in the fact that of all of the cities in the nation that numbered 50,000 or more residents, Nashville, Tennessee, was the only one where Churches of Christ could claim over 1,000 members. In this bastion of Confederate strength, their numbers outranked Disciples, who could claim only half the number. Among cities with more than 25,000 residents, only Dallas, Texas and Montgomery, Alabama can be found, and in each of these only slightly more than 500 members were claimed.¹⁷ In 1906 Dallas Disciples membership outranked Churches of Christ three to one, or 1688 to 564.

Note must be taken of the fact that in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois there was a distinct pro-South sympathy among many families who had migrated across the Ohio River prior to the Civil War for a variety of reasons. With roots in the South, it was natural that many churches in this region would be influenced by the perspectives adopted by the majority of southern churches. Two influential journals opposing “innovations” were published in the North, the *Octographic Review*, edited by Daniel Sommer in Indiana and *The American Christian Review*, published by Benjamin Franklin in Indiana. They were leaders with effective influence in the formation of a strongly conservative base which is still found in southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The Sand Creek *Address and Declaration* was adopted by a rally in Shelby County, Illinois in 1889.

A century has passed since the Census of 1906 and the numbers remind us that much has changed since they were published. Two very important observations need to be made concerning subsequent developments that have significantly altered the sectionalism reflected in the census of a century ago. The first has to do with the shift in population that has taken place in the nation due to the industrial needs of two world wars. It is commonplace to attribute the decisive advantage of the Allies in World War II to the enormous industrial capacity of the United States, which Churchill called “the arsenal of democracy”. The factories that turned out the armaments were mostly found in the North, but the huge demand for workers to operate these plants caused an enormous population movement from the south to north. Southern families who migrated to the north generally did not blend easily into the northern congregations of their respective denominations. They either located one of their own kind or, in conjunction with a few friends, established a new congregation. This had the effect of making the Churches of Christ less sectional and much more a national Church. The identical phenomenon is found among Southern Baptists, who also are no longer a regional denomination. Churches of Christ have a significant representation in the North today, both in congregations and institutions, but, the passing of a century still finds that Churches of Christ are predominately a southern people.

A second observation involves the economic homogenization that has come about in the nation as a result of the industrial development of the South since the World War II. The sectional differences so prominent in the 19th and early 20th centuries have almost disappeared. Large corporations have built factories in the South to take advantage of the abundance of labor, which was generally non-union and even hostile to unions. The economy of the South is no longer primarily agricultural, and the population is no longer primarily rural. The post-war poverty of the South is largely a memory. Today, it would really be inappropriate to trumpet

the virtues of poverty and simplicity in the South such as was done by David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning following the Civil War. These virtues are no longer conspicuous in Churches of Christ today. Their houses of worship certainly compare favorably with any religious establishment in the cities and countrysides of the nation. Beautiful buildings designed by well-known architects and fully equipped with air conditioning, the latest in electronics, cushioned pews, stained glass windows, etc. are on a par with any of the church buildings in their communities. The only distinguishing feature that remains is the absence of musical instruments, which alone survives as the *raison d'être* and the unique feature of the Church of Christ, and presently quite a few congregations are struggling in interesting and creative ways of coping with this stricture.

Meanwhile, all who see the division of the Movement which was reflected in the Census of 1906 as an example of extraneous factors imposing an unfortunate, and tragic, rupture on the Movement that had Christian Unity as a vital element of its theme are heartened to witness several efforts in our times to rebuild fellowship and good will within the Movement we love. We confess that this unfortunate rupture has impoverished us all. We rejoice that we are coming to the point where we are now able to recognize, in the words of the late Carl Ketcherside, that “wherever God has a child, we have a brother or sister.”

POSTSCRIPT

It is far removed from my purpose to assess or impute blame for the very unfortunate division in ranks that I have discussed. A century ago the members of our Churches had an existential awareness of the suffering which we can hardly approximate today. Had I been born in the South I am sure that I would have been as bitter as anybody you can mention over the casualties, the destruction, and the decades of economic privation that the War imposed and; had I been born in the North fifty years prior to my actual birth, I am sure that I would have shared the hatred over experiences like Shiloh or Gettysburg and the horrors inflicted there which the men in blue brought home with them. I can sympathize with the sectional hatred on both sides, and can fully understand why the churches in the South wanted no fellowship with Churches in the North. This situation gives me a renewed regret over the foibles of Reconstruction and a new appreciation for the wisdom displayed in the Marshall Plan following World War II. The question for today, however, is: In view of a different perspective and a clearer understanding of this tragic development, **are Stone-Campbell Christians justified in perpetuating this schism**, especially in the midst of a culture that is sadly in need of a strong voice on behalf of the Gospel?

NOTES

¹ Morrison, S., Commanger, H., Leuchtenburg, W., *The Growth of the American Republic*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, University Press, 1980) p.599-601. A good field hand, who brought \$200 at the beginning of the century, would bring \$2,000 at the beginning of the Civil War.

² *Ibid.*, p.600.

³ The division among Presbyterians was a process that culminated in 1857. The Methodist division dates from 1848 and Baptists divided in 1845. In each of these cases, division was a process that encompassed many years of conflict and negotiation.

⁴ Lard, Moses E., “*Can We Divide?*” Lard’s Quarterly, Vol. III, p.335-6 Interestingly, W. T. Moore, whose massive history was published in 1909, says almost nothing about the impact of the War upon our people.

⁵ See, for a typical example, Garrison, W. E. and DeGroot, A. T., *op cit*, p. 337-348.

⁶ For a good discussion of Campbell’s views on slavery see Harrell, David E., *Quest For A Christian America*, (Nashville, TN, Disciples Historical Society, 1966), pp 100-113.

⁷ This was Campbell’s conviction. After noting in 1848 that the rising tide of sectional hostility had already fractured the Methodist Church and threatened other bodies, Campbell wrote: “We are the only religious community in the civilized world whose principles (unless we abandon them) can preserve us from such an unfortunate predicament” (“Our position to American Slavery,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 1845, p.41).

⁸ *Report of Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the American Christian Missionary Society*, (Cincinnati, OH, E. Morgan & Sons, 1863). p. 13.

⁹ Garrison, W.E., *Religion Follows the Frontier*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1931).

¹⁰ Harrell, D. E., “The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ,” *Journal of Southern History* XXX, (August, 1964), 261-77. See, also, *Quest for a Christian America* (Nashville, TN, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966) and *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ 1865-1900*, (Atlanta, self-published, 1973).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134. Harrell notes that the problem of division in a loosely structured religious requires time for definition of one or more issues about which factions crystallize for schism. See also Webb, H.E. *In Quest of Christian Unity*, (Abilene, TX., A.C.U. Press., 2003) pp. 214-15.

¹² Lipscomb, David, “The Advocate and Sectionalism”, *Gospel Advocate* (Nashville, TN, Vol VIII, May 18, 1874, p. 273.

¹³ U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Religious Bodies: 1906 . . .* (2 vols., Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1910).

¹⁴ *op cit.*, Vol. II, p. 236. Previously notation was made that Disciples were “chiefly in the Northern states” while Churches of Christ were “mostly in the Southern states.” p. 30.

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 240.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *op cit.*, p. 388.

The 1906 Census of Religious Bodies and Division in the Stone-Campbell Movement: A Closer Look

Douglas A. Foster *

Twentieth-century histories of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement consistently cite the 1906 United States Census of Religious Bodies as playing a role in the separation of Churches of Christ and Christian Churches or Disciples of Christ. In 1948 W. E. Garrison and A. T. Degroot described it as making “a matter of public record the division that had existed in fact for many years.”¹ In 1950 Earl West described 1906 as the year that “The Christian Churches . . . took their instruments and their missionary society and walked a new course,” using 1906 as the closing date for the second volume of his history—a date he assumed his readers all knew.² James DeForest Murch’s 1962 history explained that in 1906 J. W. Shepherd and others had “made representations that churches of this persuasion [anti-instrumental music, anti-missionary society] should no longer be listed with the Disciples of Christ but be designated as Church of Christ.”³ A survey of most histories shows similar treatment, reflecting the theological location of the writer.

However, with the exception of Earl West’s third volume, the census is mentioned only in passing. No one looked carefully into the full story of this event and its significance for the Stone-Campbell Movement. For many, “1906” became a kind of unexamined shorthand for the division between the Churches of Christ and the rest of the Movement. The task of this study is to examine the major players and events of the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies and to discern implications of it for the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Background to the Census of Religious Bodies

Authorized under Article I, Section 2, of the United States Constitution, the decennial population Census was begun for the purpose of apportioning the number of members each state would have in the House of Representatives. The first census was taken in 1790, under the jurisdiction of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, by U.S. marshals and their deputies riding through the countryside on horseback. The marshals continued to be in charge of taking the count every decade through the ninth census in 1870. This was always just one more task laid on an already overburdened group. Everything had to be done by hand, they had to supply their own paper, and few if any had the kind of statistical skills that were increasingly needed for the task.⁴

For the 1880 census, Congress established an office with supervisors, some of whom had training in statistics and who developed a process that greatly improved the collection of data. Yet at the end of every census, the office was closed, and every ten years the entire process had to start again from scratch, recruiting staff, training census takers, and organizing the work.⁵

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Finally, on March 6, 1902, Congress passed the “Permanent Census Act” that authorized a continuing Bureau of the Census. Located first in the Department of the Interior, the Bureau was moved the next year to the Department of Commerce and Labor, remaining in the department of Commerce when the two were split in 1913.⁶

As early as 1850, Congress had instructed census takers to gather certain “social statistics” in addition to the headcount for congressional apportionment, including some questions regarding religion. This data included number of churches, membership, and value of church property for all American religious bodies. In 1890 the list of questions was expanded to include information about Sunday Schools and number of ministers. This data was compiled and published by the Government Printing Office.

When the Census Bureau became a permanent agency, however, specialized surveys distinct from the ten-year population count became possible. By 1909 over one hundred special bulletins with information from these specialized censuses had been printed, including publications on teachers, illiteracy, cotton production, child labor, marriage and divorce, and the insane in institutions.⁷ The first of five stand-alone religious censuses conducted by the Bureau was begun in 1906, led by Census Director S. N. D. North.

The Players

I. Simon Newton Dexter North.

Appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt, S. N. D. North became the first Director of the Bureau of the Census when it became a permanent government agency in 1902. North came to his appointment having worked for a number of years as a journalist, and most recently as a statistician and secretary for the National Association of Wool Manufacturers.⁸ As he began to tackle the task of gathering information on American churches he developed, along with his staff, a four-stage strategy: (1) obtain contact information for every congregation from the denominational officials of each body, (2) mail questionnaires to the minister or clerk of each congregation to complete, (3) have ministers send their forms to the appropriate church official for “certification,” and (4) church officials would send the compiled data back to the Census Bureau.⁹

This plan worked fairly well for about two-thirds of American churches—though there were some problems concerning who was authorized to use the Bureau’s mail permit. For bodies with little or no general organization, however, the Bureau had to employ “special agents” to gather the statistics. This had been authorized by the Act of March 6, 1902, and gave these agents the authority as appointed representatives of the US government, to require those being polled to supply the requested information.¹⁰ The two Christian groups for whom North was forced to rely entirely on “special agents” for statistics were the Roman Catholic Church and Churches of Christ.¹¹ North’s struggle with how to gather accurate data on our churches will be chronicled in more detail shortly.

Interestingly, North ran afoul of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Charles Nagel, accused of making financial decisions without consulting his superior. Though he had strong political support in Washington, in the end he was forced from the Director’s position by President William Howard Taft in 1909, so that when the two volumes analyzing the data from the religious census appeared, the name of the new appointee, E. Dana Durand appeared on the title page instead of North’s.¹²

II. David Lipscomb

For those who know anything about the first division in the Stone-Campbell Movement, David Lipscomb is a familiar character. He is alternately seen as the person who saved Churches of Christ from apostasy, or the single most divisive person in the Movement.¹³ Lipscomb was a Tennessee preacher, educator, and editor of the *Gospel Advocate* for forty-six years. Though Lipscomb's family had been Baptist, his parents became part of Alexander Campbell's "reforming Baptist" movement about the time of Lipscomb's birth. Lipscomb was quite familiar with the writings of Alexander Campbell, keeping a full set of the *Millennial Harbinger* in his editorial office for reference.¹⁴

But just as important to Lipscomb's theological and social formation was his experience of the Civil War in middle Tennessee. Before the war he had embraced American democracy as the "first political fruit of Christianity."¹⁵ But when he saw Christians slaughtering Christians on the battlefield, motivated by political loyalties, he came to believe that Christians cannot participate in the kingdoms of this world. In a series of articles in the *Gospel Advocate*, later reprinted in book form under the title *Civil Government*, Lipscomb provides insight into his deepest set of assumptions—assumptions forged in the war and which permeated every part of his being.

... the spectacle was presented, of disciples of the Prince of Peace, with murderous weapons seeking the lives of their fellowmen. It took but little thought to see that this course is abhorrent to the principles of the religion of the Savior. . . . A man who votes to bring about a war, or that votes for that which brings about war is responsible for that war and for all the necessary and usual attendants and results of that war.¹⁶

Lipscomb developed a strong belief that Christians do not truly live in the kingdoms of this earth—they live in another kingdom—the kingdom of God. That view shaped him profoundly in every part of his life. He believed in living simply, and avoiding worldliness in every form—including the worldliness he believed was working its way into the church in the form of things like extra-congregational societies for missions and benevolence, fashionable instrumental music and choirs in worship, and professional preachers—all of which relieved Christians of their own responsibilities to minister.¹⁷

After the Civil War Lipscomb joined Tolbert Fanning in reviving the *Gospel Advocate*, a paper that primarily served the churches of the South. Through this medium, Lipscomb became one of the most influential thought shapers in the Movement at the end of the nineteenth century.

Lipscomb's understanding of the kingdom of God shaped his view of Scripture. In many ways he took a strict or literalist view, what might be labeled biblical reductionism. He believed that Christians were required to reject from God's service everything not required by scripture. He consistently urged those who favored the "innovations" to avoid such things, which were at best doubtful, at worst a perversion of God's will. These foundational attitudes would shape Lipscomb's role in the events surrounding the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies.

III. James Harvey Garrison

Like David Lipscomb, J. H. Garrison is viewed as either savior or disrupter

in the story of the Movement's first division. Garrison, from Missouri, was raised a Baptist, but was drawn to the Movement's plea while studying at Abingdon College (IL) in 1865 just after the Civil War.¹⁸ In 1868, while serving as associate minister for the Christian Church in Macomb, Illinois, he began working with the pulpit minister, John Reynolds, as co-editor of a paper called the *Gospel Echo*. This began a career in religious journalism that would last the rest of his life. By 1872, Garrison had become sole editor of the paper, moved to Quincy, Illinois, changed it from a monthly to a weekly, and added the readership of a defunct paper named *The Christian*. Eventually he moved the paper to St. Louis and merged with yet another journal, *The Evangelist*, producing in 1882 the *Christian-Evangelist*, which he edited until 1912 and which would become one of the most important thought shaping journals among Christian Churches and Disciples.¹⁹

Garrison's initial attraction to the Stone-Campbell Movement's plea had been focused on the call to Christian unity through a restoration of New Testament Christianity. His understanding of New Testament Christianity, however, was not the same as Lipscomb's. Certainly Garrison's experience of the Civil War was very different from that of his southern counterpart. By all counts he was conservative, strongly rejecting open membership and the theological liberalism of R. C. Cave, his own minister in St. Louis, who had denied the divinity of Christ and the unique inspiration of scripture. His 1891 edited volume, *The Old Faith Restated*, was specifically designed to reaffirm the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Movement.²⁰

Yet his worldview was much more optimistic than Lipscomb's. He strongly criticized a biblical reductionism that made the Bible out to be primarily a book of propositions or prescriptions. For Garrison, one's relationship to Christ was the key. For him, differences in methods of work, worship and organization within the bounds of loyalty to Christ could not be legitimate causes for separation among Christians. The New Testament was not a Christian law book, he insisted; the object of Christianity was not ultimately a series of doctrines or propositions—it was the person of Christ. He believed the Stone-Campbell Movement had seen that truth and embodied it in a way that would facilitate the coming together of Christians. He strongly believed that the churches of the Movement must model their unity to the rest of the world's Christians. By cooperating with other religious bodies in good works consistent with the principles of the Movement, others would see the validity of the Disciples plea, come to understand each other better, and eventually come to unity based on their loyalty to Christ.²¹

Garrison was concerned that some in the Movement had lost sight of this all-important point and had become sidetracked by matters that threatened to destroy their plea for unity. In December 1891 he wrote, "The mightiest force which we can exert in behalf of so holy a cause is in the practical illustration among ourselves of the unity which we advocate for the whole church."²² He would strongly resist admitting to any division in the Movement, and would oppose any who did.

IV. Gustavus Adolphus Hoffmann

Internal attempts to gather statistics for the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement had been made since at least 1848, though not very successfully. Sometime in the late 1800s the Disciples General Convention established a yearbook committee to gather and publish data. At the 1895 Convention the committee appointed G. A. (Gustavus Adolphus) Hoffmann "Statistical Secretary" for the

Yearbook.²³ Hoffmann was an evangelist and church planter in Missouri, serving as a minister for sixty-three years before his death at age ninety in 1937. He was active in the structures of the Movement, serving as Missouri state evangelist and state secretary for twenty years. He had helped the government gather the Movement's religious data for the 1890 census and was the logical contact person to help with the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies when the Bureau ran into difficulties securing Disciples data according to its plan.²⁴

Hoffmann could have warned the Census Bureau that gathering statistics from the churches of the Movement would not be easy. As editor of the Yearbook trying to gather data each year, he was forced to rely on volunteer State Secretaries to send in the numbers from their areas. Sometimes they did, and sometimes they didn't. In describing some of the difficulties in 1907, he lamented that "some of our state secretaries do not keep accurate lists of churches . . ." and that many of the pastors and church clerks were careless and indifferent about such things.²⁵

When the Census Bureau found it virtually impossible to collect data from the churches of the Movement, an official from the Washington office visited Hoffmann in St. Louis, Missouri in Fall 1907, and "importuned him to take the work off their hands." The Bureau employed Hoffmann as a special agent to gather the data for the "disciples or churches of Christ," which he immediately began to do, through notices in the papers, distribution of the official forms to the churches and to his already established, though less than perfect, network of State Secretaries.²⁶

But Census officials had noticed something in their monitoring of journals from the Stone-Campbell Movement. The *Gospel Advocate*, which they assumed was a Disciples paper based on 1890 data, seemed at times to distance itself from that body. In a letter to David Lipscomb dated June 17, 1907, published in the July 18, 1907 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, Census Director North described his confusion. He had started to write Lipscomb earlier, he said, but before he could he had received a letter from William J. Campbell of Marshalltown, Iowa, informing him that three thousand "churches of Christ" formerly connected with Disciples of Christ no longer were. Campbell enclosed a list of preachers in Churches of Christ published by McQuiddy Publishing Company (publisher of the *Gospel Advocate*) that included the names of David Lipscomb, E. A. Elam, and other editors of the magazine. Hoping the problem was solved, North double-checked the list of preachers from the Disciples Yearbook and found that Lipscomb and E. A. Elam were listed there too!²⁷

So North asked the questions:

1. Whether there is a religious body called "Church of Christ," not identified with the Disciples of Christ, or any other Baptist body?
2. If there is such a body, has it any general organization, with headquarters, officers, district or general conventions, associations or conferences?
3. How did it originate, and what are its distinctive principles?
4. How best can there be secured a complete list of the churches? You will, I am sure, realize the importance of this matter. It will, therefore, be esteemed a great favor if you will reply to these questions as promptly as possible, that the collection of detailed statistics may commence at an early date.²⁸

Lipscomb's reply explained to North in some detail why he believed there was now a body separate from the Disciples. He gave a history lesson on the origins of the Movement, then explained,

As they increased in number and wealth, many desired to become popular also, and sought to adopt the very human inventions that in the beginning of the movement had been opposed—a general organization of the churches under a missionary society with a moneyed membership, and the adoption of instrumental music in the worship. This is a subversion of the fundamental principles on which the churches were based.²⁹

In other words, these disciples had become worldly and left the simplicity of the early Movement as Lipscomb saw it.

Then he made his famous statement: “There is a distinct people taking the word of God as their only and sufficient rule of faith, calling their churches ‘churches of Christ’ or ‘churches of God,’ distinct and separate in name, work, and rule of faith from all other bodies of people.” He concluded with an offer to help North gather correct information about these churches for the census.

Sometime in the Fall of 1907, Census Director North himself paid a visit to the Gospel Advocate offices in Nashville, undoubtedly to take Lipscomb up on his offer to help gather the data for Churches of Christ. Lipscomb immediately nominated his office manager, J. W. Shepherd to serve as the Census Bureau’s special agent for “churches of Christ.”³⁰

V. James Walton Shepherd

Born near Lexington, Kentucky in 1861, Shepherd had attended the College of the Bible and studied under J. W. McGarvey. He had begun preaching in 1882, doing evangelistic work in Kentucky and Alabama. In 1888 he and his family sailed for New Zealand where he served as an evangelist for two years, followed by three years in Australia. After returning to the United States he continued to preach and in 1894 published his widely popular *Handbook on Baptism*. Shepherd had come to the Gospel Advocate Company in 1905 to serve as office manager. In 1907 when Census Director North came to Nashville, Lipscomb quickly turned to Shepherd, asking him to take on the task of gathering the information for Churches of Christ.³¹

If Hoffmann thought he had problems getting churches to respond to the requests for data, Shepherd’s task was doubly difficult. As soon as Shepherd was duly authorized as a special agent to collect and send in the information for Churches of Christ, Lipscomb wrote and published in the *Gospel Advocate* a strong appeal to the churches—remarkable given his strong belief in separation of church and state. While he had never put any stress on numbers, he said, “. . . when the government requests such things at our hands, we think they ought to be furnished. Not to do this is to violate the obligation God has placed us under to the government. . . .” He urged all who received forms from Shepherd to complete and return them.³² This was easier said than done.

Part of the problem was that G. A. Hoffmann had already sent the same form to the same churches Shepherd was contacting. Some of the churches had supplied the requested information to Hoffmann before receiving Shepherd’s material. Others had discarded Hoffmann’s request, regarding him as a “digressive.” When these churches received Shepherd’s forms, many assumed this was another mailing from Hoffmann. In repeated pleas, Hoffmann in the *Christian Standard* and *Christian-*

Evangelist, and Shepherd in the *Gospel Advocate*, urged churches to send in their statistics.³³

The Rest of the Story

In the mean time, J. H. Garrison reacted with incredulity when he read Lipscomb's editorial reply to North—that there was a separate body known as “churches of Christ.” This shows, he exclaimed, “that the spirit of sectarianism ... is alive and active in some who are seeking a following at the expense of the unity for which Christ prayed.”³⁴ Lipscomb responded that he had “done nothing to bring about the present condition of affairs.” He had not initiated the inquiry concerning a separate body. Census officials had seen the difference, asked, and Lipscomb gave them the facts. “We have done nothing save try to be true to God and his word,” Lipscomb insisted.³⁵

These salvos, launched in December 1907 and January 1908 led to a barrage of accusations and counter-accusations between Garrison and Lipscomb and their respective papers. As one reads that series of exchanges, the foundational commitments of each leader are clearly reflected—for Lipscomb it is simplicity and rejection of worldliness forged in the experiences of the Civil War; for Garrison it is demonstrating to the religious world how allegiance to Christ produces unity in the midst of diversity—the very ideal Disciples could uniquely model to the Christian world.

Each leader was fully convinced of the obvious rightness of his position and was completely unable to understand how anyone could misunderstand. Frustration and personal attacks mounted. Garrison accused Lipscomb of attempting to promote a formal division, calling him and those who he believed were leading churches and Christians astray “blind guides.”³⁶ Lipscomb insisted over and over that he had done nothing to cause the division; he had merely answered truthfully when Census Director North had asked him a direct question. As much as he hated division, to conceal it if it really existed would be deception. He insisted:

I have not drawn any lines. God has drawn the lines between those faithful to him and those who “teach for doctrines the commandments of men.” His children have only to abide in the teachings of God. Those setting aside those teachings will separate from us and declare nonfellowship with us as Garrison has done.³⁷

Garrison had urged exercising forbearance and kindness toward those churches that opposed him and those who supported organized mission efforts and instruments in worship. But, he concluded, if all our efforts fail, we can at least fall back on the statement of Paul to the Corinthians: “For there must also be factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.” (1 Cor. 11:19)³⁸ Lipscomb retorted that the reality was that the churches Garrison represented had “withdrawn all fellowship from us, seek to divide and destroy the churches seeking to be faithful to God, take possession of their property, turn them out without places of worship, and announce that they have more fellowship for parties they have opposed from the beginning than for those trying to follow God.”³⁹

In March 1908 Garrison published a short article ridiculing Lipscomb and Shepherd for an appeal to the churches the previous month complaining about the

lack of response to the request for data, labeling G. A. Hoffman a “digressive.” He scolded Lipscomb, saying, “Is it not barely possible that some have raised the question we did — ‘By what authority doest thou these things?’” And then again they may prefer to be classed with those whom he calls “digressives,” rather than with the “repressives.”⁴⁰

In April Lipscomb again insisted he had done nothing to cause the division. “We have never doubted,” he stated, “that standing fast by the truth of God would result in separation from those who reject his word and add the innovations of man to the requirements of God.” He had done nothing, he insisted again, except comply with the government’s request for information. He did finally admit, however, that it had been thoughtless of him not to realize that his response to North and arranging for the gathering of separate data for Churches of Christ would extend and emphasize the division.⁴¹

When the census data was published, first in a bulletin in 1909, then in two volumes in 1910, Churches of Christ were second in a chart listing seventeen “New Denominations and Denominational Families,” noted as formerly included with Disciples of Christ. The number of members listed for Churches of Christ was 159,854. Disciples of Christ reported 982,701 members.⁴²

The Bureau of the Census continued to gather and publish religious data in 1916, 1926, and 1936. It gathered the data in 1946 as well, but the publication of those statistics was never funded. In 1976 Public Law 94-521 prohibited the Census Bureau from requiring citizens to answer questions concerning religion, in effect prohibiting the gathering of religious information by the government.⁴³

Here then are conclusions I believe can be drawn from this investigation. First, the Census Bureau itself noticed what seemed to be a division between Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ in surveying the movement’s papers, and in the interest of reliable data collection tried to ascertain if that was true. Lipscomb agreed that it was accurate to list the two separately; Garrison did not. The 1906 Census of Religious Bodies relied on data supplied by the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement themselves gathered in a rather unscientific manner by special agents G. A. Hoffmann and J. W. Shepherd — it did not send census takers to gather the information directly. The Census Bureau organized, analyzed, and published the data in a 1909 bulletin and two extensive volumes published in 1910.⁴⁴ The data reflected, though inaccurately, the division that had been under way for several decades and which would continue for some years. Though it is true that the division did not begin or happen in 1906 and that the government did not declare the division—it is clear that the census **was** a factor in forcing congregations to decide with which group they would be identified—a choice not available in the same way before.

What is certain about the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies is that it exacerbated the antagonism between those already taking sides in the conflict—each blaming the other for division, sectarianism, and unfaithfulness to God. It became a **symbol** of the division that was nearing completion, the event that would give historians a point of reference in referring to this tragic schism, and a point of reference for renewed efforts toward reconciliation and healing among all the heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement in the 21st Century.

NOTES

¹ Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948) 404.

² Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1950) 448-9.

³ James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1962) 215, 218.

⁴ "Factfinder for the Nation: History and Organization," (Washington: Bureau of the Census, May 2000) 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Fifty-Seventh Congress, Session 1, Chapter 139 —An Act to Provide for a Permanent Census Office.

⁷ "Bulletins of the Permanent Census," in Bulletin 103, *Religious Bodies 1906* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909) 2.

⁸ "The Census Directorship," *New York Times* (December 28, 1897) 3; "New Census Director," *New York Times* (April 15, 1903) 1.

⁹ *Religious Bodies 1906*, Part 1: Summary and General Tables (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910) 10-11.

¹⁰ Public Act 27, March 6, 1902, Section 7 For the purpose of securing the statistics required by this section, the Director of the Census may appoint special agents when necessary, and such special agents shall receive compensation as hereinafter provided. Section 17. That the special agents appointed under the provisions of this Act have like authority with the enumerators in respect to the subjects committed to them under this Act and shall receive compensation at rates to be fixed by the Director of the Census.

¹¹ E. Dana Durand, *Religious Bodies 1906* United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, 2 vols (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910) 1:11.

¹² "Taft Ousts North From Census Bureau," *New York Times* (May 27, 1909) 4.

¹³ See Douglas A. Foster, "The Struggle for Unity During the Period of Division of the Restoration Movement: 1875-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1987) 219-20, 274-8.

¹⁴ David Lipscomb, "Baptism and Remission of Sins," *Gospel Advocate* 49 (7 March 1907) 152; David Lipscomb, "Dr. D.M. Lipscomb," *Gospel Advocate* 22 (3 June 1885) 339. The writer worked for the Gospel Advocate Company in the late 1980s and saw Lipscomb's set of bound volumes of the *Millennial Harbinger* that was in then-Editor Guy N. Woods' office.

¹⁵ David Lipscomb, *The Religious Sentiment, Its Social and Political Influence* (Nashville: Cameron and Fall, 1855) 26.

¹⁶ David Lipscomb, *Civil Government* (Nashville, Tennessee: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1913) iii-iv.

¹⁷ Foster, "Struggle for Unity," pp. 345-6, 353-4, 358-60.

¹⁸ William E. Tucker, *J. H. Garrison and Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1964) 27-34.

¹⁹ J. Edward Mosely, "The Story of the Christian-Evangelist," *The Christian-Evangelist* 76 (6 January 1938) 24-27.

²⁰ See J. H. Garrison, "An Open Reply to Bro. Cave," *The Christian-Evangelist* 27 (9 January 1890): 34; and "What are We Contending For?" *The Christian-Evangelist* 27 (16 January 1890): 34.

²¹ J. H. Garrison, "Our Plea—What it Proposes and What it has Accomplished," *The Christian-Evangelist* 20 (5 January 1883): 4-5; "The Common Basis," *The Gospel Echo* 8 (October 1870): 462-3; "The Ever-Recurring Fallacy," *The Christian-Evangelist* 24 (16 June 1887): 370.

²² J. H. Garrison, "An Old Problem," *The Christian Evangelist* 28 (3 December 1891): 770.

²³ G. A. Hoffman (sic), "Our Statistics and Yearbook," *Christian Standard* 31 (29 February 1896): 263.

²⁴ "Death Calls G. A. Hoffmann," *Christian Standard* 73 (1 January 1938): 15.

²⁵ G. A. Hoffmann, "Statistical Report," *The Christian-Evangelist* 44 (21 November 1907): 1499.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ In David Lipscomb, "The 'Church of Christ' and the 'Disciples of Christ,'" *Gospel Advocate* 49 (18 July 1907): 450.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ David Lipscomb, "United States Church Statistics," *Gospel Advocate* 49 (7 November 1907): 713.

³¹ See "James W. Shepherd Passes," *Gospel Advocate* 63 (5 August 1948): 748, 753.

³² Lipscomb, "United States Census Church Statistics, p. 713.

³³ See for example J. W. Shepherd, "Editorial," "Editorial," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (20 February 1908): 117; G. A. Hoffmann, "Statistics of the Churches of Christ," *Christian Standard* 43 (28 March 1908): 565.

³⁴ J. H. Garrison, "Things Which Make for Division," *The Christian-Evangelist* 44 (December 1907): 1645.

³⁵ David Lipscomb, "The Christian-Evangelist and Christian Unity," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (23 January 1908): 57.

³⁶ J. H. Garrison, "Things Which Make for Division," *The Christian-Evangelist* 44 (26 December 1907): 1645.

³⁷ David Lipscomb, "The Christian-Evangelist and Christian Unity," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (23 January 1908) 58.

³⁸ J. H. Garrison, "Things Which Make for Division," *Christian-Evangelist* 44 (26 December 1907) 1645.

³⁹ David Lipscomb, "The Christian-Evangelist and Christian Unity," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (23 January 1908) 58.

⁴⁰ "Editorial," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (20 February 1908): 117; J. H. Garrison, "Current Religious Thought," *Christian-Evangelist* 45 (12 March 1908) 326.

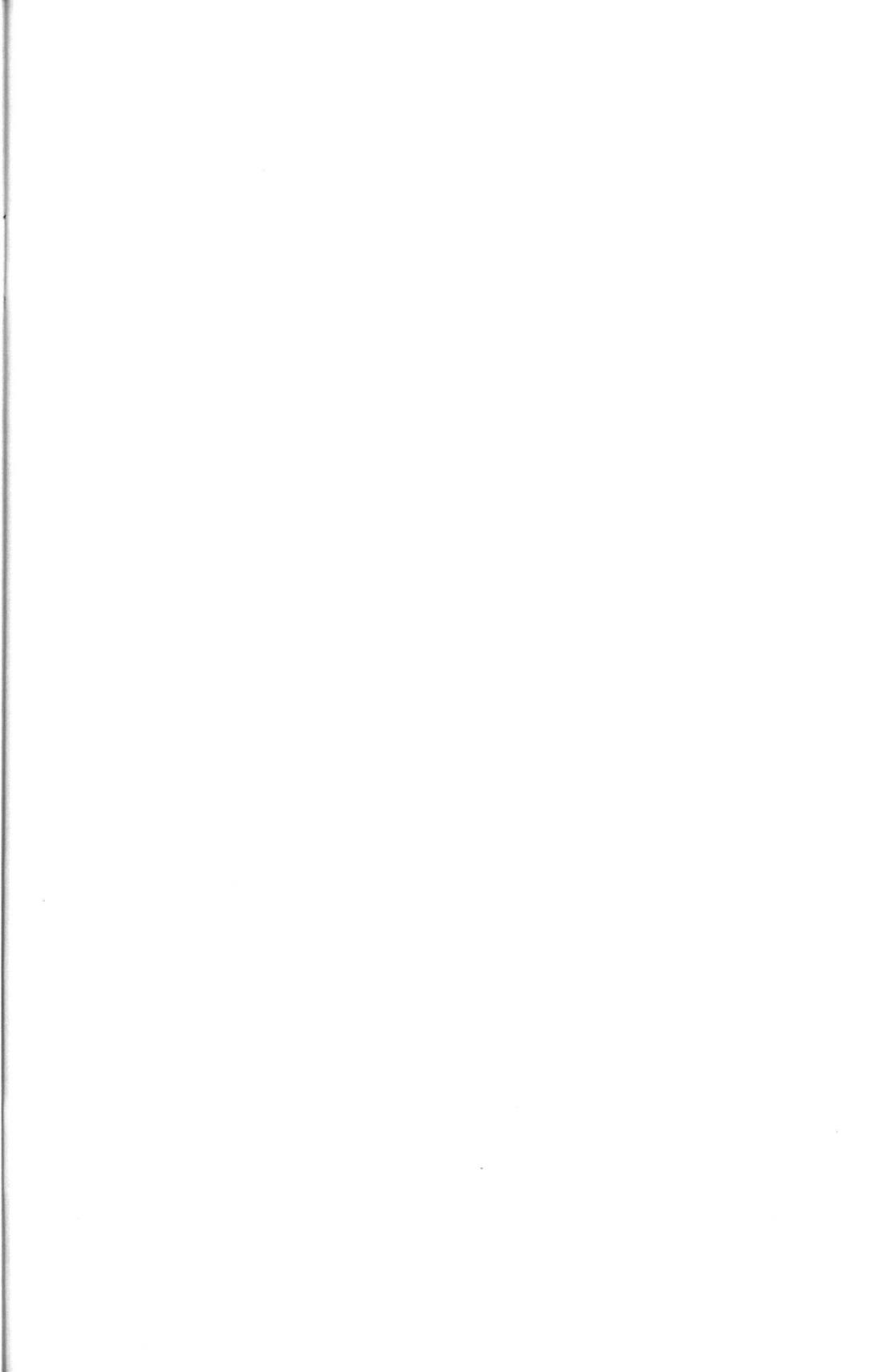
⁴¹ David Lipscomb, "Divisions," *Gospel Advocate* 50 (23 April 1908) 264-5.

⁴² *Religious Bodies 1906*, Vol. II, p. 236.

⁴³ Public Law 94-521—Oct. 17, 1976, Sec. 13 "Section 221 of Title 13, United States Code, relating to refusal or neglect to answer questions and to willful false answers is amended . . . (3) by adding at the end thereof the following subsection: Notwithstanding any other provision of this title, no person shall be compelled to

disclose information relative to his religious beliefs or to membership in a religious body.”

⁴⁴ S. N. D. North, *Religious Bodies 1906*, Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 103 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909);



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The Quarterly Historical Journal of the
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—From the Editor's Desk

The Kirkpatrick Seminar for Historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement and the Lockridge Ward Wilson Essay Award are vehicles that the Disciples of Christ Historical Society uses to encourage original research and fresh approaches to critical issues in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Edward Robinson's "We Got the Building, Elders and All': Relations between African-American Churches of Christ and African-American Disciples of Christ, 1902-1950" grew out of the June 28-29, 2006 Kirkpatrick Seminar for Historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement held in Louisville, Kentucky, in conjunction with the North American Christian Convention. Robinson examines the division of African-American Churches of Christ and African-American Disciples of Christ by a review of Churches of Christ publications, in particular, George Philip Bowser's *Christian Echo*. Robinson identifies what African-American leaders of the Churches of Christ saw as the issues in this division and their ambivalent views of African-American Disciples of Christ. Robinson also sheds light on the attitudes of African-American Disciples of Christ as they interacted with African-American leaders of the Churches of Christ.

Candy Stroup's "Changing Views: How the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has Viewed People Practicing Religions Other than Christianity" is the recipient of the 2006 Lockridge Ward Wilson Essay Award. Beginning with a recent statement on interreligious engagement published by the Disciples' Council on Christian Unity, Stroup mines journals from Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* to the contemporary *Disciples World* and writings of Disciples' theologian Clark Williamson for Disciples' views of non-Christian religions. Her thesis is that "In Disciples' eyes, people of other faiths have evolved from masses to be converted (and perhaps aided in the areas of education and provision for physical needs) to individuals and institutions with whom friendships can be achieved, understanding can be reached, and common goals can be attained." In a final reflection, she asks if Williamson's attitude toward the Jews might also be applied to persons of other faiths.

Through such programs as the Kirkpatrick Seminar and the Lockridge Ward Wilson Essay Award the Disciples of Christ Historical Society increases knowledge and understanding of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

D. Newell Williams

—From the President's Desk

Yesterday and Tomorrow. In historical study we are always connecting the past with the future. We look back and interpret what happened; we look forward with hope for a better world.

Discipliana has always been a journal that presents the very best in the study of Stone-Campbell history. Here we place the past in a perspective that is useful for the present and the future. Our very best has been watched over for many years now by Dr. D. Newell Williams. It is difficult for any of us to remember who served as editor before Dr. Williams, because he has done such a superior job and has been doing it, sacrificially, for so long now. With this issue he concludes his tenure as editor and he finishes with my personal thanks and the gratitude of every faithful reader of these pages. His has truly been a job well done.

Dr. Williams has been helped along the way by a superb editorial committee. You can read their familiar names on the inside of the front cover. He has also been ably aided by my assistant, Marlene Patterson, who has assembled each issue since the beginning of 2005. All of these deserve our thanks as well.

As we move into the future, we will be careful to carry forward the ideals of historical study found in this and every issue.

Glenn Thomas Carson

“We Got the Building, Elders and All”: Relations between African-American Churches of Christ and African-American Disciples of Christ, 1902-1950

Edward Robinson*

In the late nineteenth century, the Stone-Campbell Movement divided into two distinct groups, “loyals” (usually called Churches of Christ who opposed worshiping with instrumental music and evangelizing through missionary societies) and “digressives” or “progressives” (referred to as the Disciples of Christ who endorsed worshiping with instrumental music and evangelizing through missionary societies).¹

A regional aspect also marked this dichotomy since Churches of Christ predominated in the South while the Disciples group held general sway in northern states. Theological and sociological tension between the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ lingered well beyond the rupture’s formalization in 1906.²

This paper contends that the relationship between blacks in the two fellowships was, like that of their white compatriots, both ambivalent and belligerent. Black preachers in Churches of Christ, on the one hand, cordially and consistently welcomed black members from the Disciples of Christ without re-baptism. Those same ministers, on the other hand, often disturbed, disrupted, and urged the disbanding of black Disciples congregations by demanding that they renounce the error of their ways by forsaking instrumental music in worship as well as their endorsement of missionary societies. In some instances, zealous black evangelists of Churches of Christ transformed Disciples congregations from “digressive” to “loyal” churches.

The year 1902 proved to be pivotal for African Americans in the Stone-Campbell Movement. In that year George Philip Bowser (1874-1950) launched the *Christian Echo*, a journal designed to encourage, instruct, and unite blacks in Churches of Christ. Of all the papers started by “loyal” African-American leaders, only Bowser’s journal remains in publication.³ Bowser’s journalistic endeavor helped, in some ways, draw a line of demarcation between black Churches of Christ and black Disciples of Christ. If David Lipscomb and his *Gospel Advocate* led whites in

* Edward Robinson, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Bible and History at Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX. "The Two Old Heroes" Samuel W. Womack and Alexander Campbell... was published in *Discipliana* Vol. 65, Number 1 Spring, 2005

Churches of Christ away from their white “digressive” brethren, Bowser and his *Christian Echo* helped maintain a broadening wedge between African-American Churches of Christ and their black Disciples brothers and sisters, thus causing black “loyals” to feel the “power of the press.”⁴

The rupture between African Americans in the Stone-Campbell Movement occurred in the years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Disturbed and displeased that affluent businessman and influential preacher, Preston Taylor (1849-1931), allowed what they called “innovations”⁵ in the Gay Street and Lea Avenue Christian Churches in Nashville, Tennessee, Alexander Campbell (1862-1930) and Samuel W. Womack (1851-1920), two passionate black evangelists, walked out and organized the Jackson Street Church of Christ, a kind of “mother church”⁶ for African-American Churches of Christ. Not only did Campbell and Womack withdraw from Taylor’s flock in the late 1890s, but they also swayed G. P. Bowser and Marshall Keeble (1878-1968), two emerging black ministers, to depart as well. Bowser, a native of Middle Tennessee and a former African Methodist Episcopal (AME) clergyman, became a member of the Christian Churches after he received instruction and baptism from a black minister, Samuel Davis.⁷ Keeble, who later became the most proficient preacher in the history of African-American Churches of Christ, similarly aligned himself with the Christian Churches when Taylor immersed him.⁸ Yet both Bowser and Keeble later rejected the new practices of the Disciples of Christ and abandoned the movement. The former acknowledged that he and other African-Americans in the Stone-Campbell Movement initially failed “to discern with any alarm the many innovations that were creeping”⁹ into the Christian Churches, but Womack and Campbell soon detected what they perceived to be unscriptural practices which infiltrated black congregations. Keeble later wrote that Womack, “first got me to see that I was wrong while working with the ‘digressive,’ and I came out from them over twenty years ago.”¹⁰ Of course all who “came out” did not do so gracefully.

In 1915 William M. Davis, a member of the Church of Christ in Turner, Arkansas, wrote to the *Christian Echo* that his congregation was in “bad condition,” and he singled out R. C. Harris, who “tore off from us on account of quarterlies.” Harris, a leader of the church in Turner, evidently believed that using published Sunday school material to study the Bible was scripturally wrong; hence, he began holding a “meeting in his home.” Davis also reported that some members in Turner were in “favor of using a digressive preacher” from the Christian Church.¹¹ In response, G. P. Bowser chided Harris for his causing a disturbance in Turner, asserting:

“There is no more harm to use quarterlies than it would be for one to comment on the Scriptures in preaching. This Brother Harris and all other preachers do.”¹² Regarding using ministers from the Christian Churches, Bowser advised: “I do not encourage the use of digressive preachers; better [to] be alone than in error.”¹³ Bowser’s response and counsel reflected a growing estrangement between blacks in Churches of Christ and in the Christian Churches.

In 1921 W. C. Graves and white members of the West End Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, invited Marshall Keeble to their city to preach to African Americans. Keeble’s meeting produced sixty-two responses, fifteen of whom came from the Disciples of Christ. “While in this meeting,” he reported, “I also used God’s word and brought fifteen ‘digressives’ to the conclusion to take a stand with us and worship God according to the Scriptures.”¹⁴ Keeble’s statement indicates that he firmly believed that those who worshiped with musical instruments had deviated from God’s word.

White members of the two groups similarly continued to clash over the use of instrumental music in worship and evangelism through missionary societies. In 1922 T. P. Burt, a white minister of the Church of Christ in Farwell, Texas, informed *Gospel Advocate* readers that his flock was “moving along very nicely,” after taking up the use of a building abandoned by members of the Christian Churches. “Our digressive brethren have a house of worship here, which they are not using, having been put out of business last summer during our protracted meeting, when a number of them abandoned the doctrines of men and are now worshipping with the loyal brethren without addition or subtraction.”¹⁵

Throughout the 1920s black preachers in Churches of Christ continued to interact with members of the Disciples of Christ, even if they opposed their theological stance. In 1925 Marshall Keeble, while preaching in Paducah, Kentucky, reported that the “digressive brethren are permitting us to use their meetinghouse, and they are attending.”¹⁶ Two years later Keeble’s seven-day meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, yielded “three baptisms, all from the sects, and seven came from the ‘digressives.’”¹⁷

In the same year in Tampa, Florida, Keeble “preached in the digressives’ meetinghouse two nights until the tent came.” The black evangelist’s meeting ended with ninety-nine baptisms, and he noted that “seven came from the ‘digressives’ and took their stand with the loyal church of Christ.”¹⁸ In 1928 G. P. Bowser, after preaching for several weeks in California, reported that “Twelve were baptized in this meeting; four took membership from the Christian Church and two from the Church of the

Living God.”¹⁹

Throughout the 1930s blacks in Churches of Christ continued to welcome brothers and sisters from the Christian Churches into their non-instrumental fellowship. In 1930 Marshall Keeble and Luke Miller collaborated in a Valdosta, Georgia, campaign. Their joint effort produced 163 additions, eleven of whom came from the Disciples of Christ. “There was great rejoicing. Eleven came from the ‘digressives.’”²⁰ The following year Luke Miller, a Keeble convert from Georgia, reported engendering 105 converts, ninety-five baptisms and “ten from the Christian Church.”²¹

In 1934 R. L. Colley, a white minister for the Church of Christ in Vernon, Texas, reported a “good day with the church here,” gladly announcing two baptisms and four persons who “came from the Christian Church.”²² Later that year Amos Lincoln Cassius (1889-1982), son of Samuel Robert Cassius (1853-1931), announced that his “mission meeting” in Phoenix, Arizona led to the establishment of a congregation. He also noted that “Twelve members of the Christian Church promised to attend services.”²³

But all African Americans in the Disciples of Christ were not so willing to embrace their sable brethren in Churches of Christ. In 1935 R. N. Hogan, a spiritual son of G. P. Bowser and preacher for a black Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, conducted a meeting in Longview, Texas, in a Christian Church. Hogan’s presence was “objected to by a few of the Christian church members, but we succeeded in getting in there.” Three powerful sermons by Hogan persuaded seventy black members to walk out and take “a stand with the loyal body of Christ.” “This of course caused things to get pretty hot around there,” Hogan reported, “and quite a lot of threats were made. They ordered us not to come back, but about 500 stood up for me to return, and we were back the next night.” A fourth sermon swayed twenty-five more to “stand with the church of Christ. Then they put the law on us, putting us out of their building by securing an injunction. We kindly walked out and took with us ninety-five of their members including two preachers.”²⁴

Hogan’s hostile encounter with black congregants of the Christian Church in East Texas demonstrates that the black evangelist firmly believed that worshiping with instruments of music and that reaching out through missionary societies were fundamental violations of God’s will. Yet even though he viewed members of the Disciples of Christ to be in religious error, he refused to require that they be re-baptized. Hogan maintained this view throughout his early evangelistic career. In all-black Langston, Oklahoma, he planted a church with forty-one conversions—“forty by baptism and one

from the Christian Church.”²⁵ In nearby Guthrie, Hogan’s passionate preaching produced “eighty additions—seventy-five baptisms and five from the Christian Church.”²⁶

Marshall Keeble similarly continued to embrace without re-immersion blacks who came from the Christian Churches in the 1930s. After receiving a call from white believers in Tyler, Texas, to preach among African Americans in 1935, his meeting closed with fifty-five baptisms, and twelve transfers from the Disciples of Christ.²⁷ The next year E. W. Anderson, a graduate of the Disciples’ traditionally black Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas, and minister of the newly-planted church in Tyler, announced that “our labors here in Tyler have been blessed recently with ten additions—nine baptized and one from the Christian Church.”²⁸

In 1937 A. L. Cassius furnished a historical sketch of the Phoenix congregation he had planted three years earlier, pointing out that several meetings had been conducted by Marshall Keeble, R. N. Hogan, and himself. The trio collaborated to strengthen and stabilize the fledgling flock, and Cassius noted that “during the meetings in Phoenix nearly every active member of the Christian Church came to the church of Christ, some demanding baptism.”²⁹

After helping to establish a congregation in Hobbs, New Mexico, Cassius again gave a short history of what has become known as the Roxanna Church of Christ, observing that “one other member was located and began to work, two came from the Christian Church and two were baptized.” Cassius further noted that L. W. Sparks, a member of the Christian Church and a visiting school teacher from Corsicana, Texas, attended the protracted meeting, and she “questioned the difference between the Christian Church and the church of Christ and publicly announced that she would unite and work with the church of Christ in Corsicana when she returned home.”³⁰

In the summer of 1938, white Christians in Greenville, Texas, invited Luke Miller to preach there for two weeks. Miller’s meeting led to “twenty-eight additions, five of whom were from the Christian Church.”³¹ In the fall of that year, James L. Lovell, a white editor and avid supporter of black preachers, reported that R. N. Hogan had baptized 300 people this year, and planted new congregations in Los Angeles, California, Sherman, Texas, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. “Many more were added,” Lovell explained, “from the Christian Church.”³² Later that year A. L. Cassius, while preaching in Clearview, Oklahoma, persuaded “Bro. Mayberry and his entire congregation of the Christian Church” to come “to Christ.”³³ Cassius’s report suggests his ambivalence concerning the status of members

of the Christian Churches: they must reject the usages of the Christian Church, but they were already “in Christ” and need not be re-baptized. By the fall of 1938, E. W. Anderson, a former preacher in East Texas, had relocated to Denver, Colorado, to work with the Ogden Street Church of Christ there. Since his arrival in the Mile High City, Anderson reported having produced “eight additions since I moved here—seven baptized and one from the Christian Church.”³⁴

The next year F. B. Shepherd, a white leader among Texas Churches of Christ, was so encouraged by the successful outreach to African Americans in Bryan that he urged other congregations to “sponsor a meeting for the colored.” The consequent summer meeting, he reported, “closed with nineteen immersed and several others persuaded to leave the Christian Church and come back home.”³⁵

The Bowser-Rouse Exchange

Others did not imagine that the practices of the Christian Church diverged from biblical norms. Thomas K. Rouse, a Tennessee native and former member of black Churches of Christ, relocated to Detroit, Michigan, and there aligned himself with the Christian Churches in 1938. Over a twelve month period Rouse and G. P. Bowser carried on a series of exchanges in the *Christian Echo*. In their first discussion Rouse referred to the conflict over the use of instrumental music in worship as “simply silly” and “far too valueless to be seriously concerned about.” Bowser agreed that instrumental music was indeed “simple,” but he added that it was “a simple addition to God’s expressed way of making music in the worship.”³⁶

Rouse insisted that the Lord never commanded that there be no instrumental music in worship. God’s son “came to earth and had many things to say for the guidance and salvation of man, and yet He made no such statement. Jesus left His apostles to carry on the spiritual work which he began but they also failed to make any such statement.” Bowser retorted that to worship with instruments of music was tantamount to putting “water and lamb chops on the communion table.” He added that “the very chapter and verse where Christ and His apostles commanded mechanical instruments of music of worship I will find lamb chops and water in the Lord’s supper. The Bible is indeed the revealed will of God to man, and that is just the reason we dare not use the music in the worship. God did not reveal it in the New Testament as His will.” In concert with many of his white comrades and contemporaries, Bowser founded his opposition to using musical instruments in worship on the basis of silence.³⁷

In the second exchange, Rouse told the story about a Church of Christ minister who said that “God commanded me to sing, and gave me vocal organs with which to do it, so I don’t need a man made instrument to assist me in doing what God commanded.” A few days later Rouse met the preacher and asked him to explain the statement. The clergyman consented and told Rouse “give me your Bible and I will show you my reasons for so saying.” Then Rouse explained:

He took it, then reached into his coat pocket and got his glasses and started to put them on, when I said, No! No! I object to those spectacles, because God commanded you to read His word and gave you optical organs with which to do so, and you don’t need any manmade instrument to assist you in doing God’s commands. He laughed, gave me back my Bible and changed the topic of conversation, like Haman of old, he was hanged on his own gallows.³⁸

Bowser, in reply, differentiated between general commands and specific commands, explaining: “When a command is given without specifying the how, we are privileged to use our judgment in carrying it out. The command is to ‘Go and preach’ as the ‘how’ is not expressed, one may ride, walk or sail.” Bowser jested that “I know T. K. [Rouse] well and no instrument is necessary to aid his singing as he and I are lacking in tune. I ask T. K. to look in the Bible looking glass and he will behold himself hanging on the gallows of skepticism for lack of Divine authority for the use of instrumental music in the worship.”³⁹

In the third dialogue Rouse cited a story from the life of renowned evangelist, Billy Sunday (1862-1935), to argue that since, according to Revelation, instruments are in heaven there should be no prohibition against using them in worship on earth. A parishioner, after complaining that the orchestra in a Billy Sunday service seemed to resemble a circus, asked: “Could we not get along without that instrumental music?” Sunday replied:

Well brother, if you will read your Bible you’ll find there is instrumental music in heaven, and God put it there, also in his worship on earth, also you know there is music in the air and God placed it there but there is one place where God did not place any instrumental music (and Mr. Sunday promptly named the often-heard four-letter word) so if you are trying to get away from instrumental music there is where you will have to go.⁴⁰

Bowser then referred to Revelation 4:5; 12:3; 14:1-5 to show that

many passages in John's Apocalypse must not be taken literally. The 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7, noted Bowser, excluded both Billy Sunday and Rouse. "Mr. Sunday and T. K. with others hold that God put it in the worship on earth, but not carefully they will not give us one Bible text from the New Testament to prove it. Bill Sunday might have been a well-read man, but he never did read where God, Christ or any apostle ever authorized instrumental music in church worship."⁴¹

In the same exchange Rouse recalled that he discussed the instrumental music topic with a Church of Christ member who said: "Well, I don't see any harm in instrumental music. I don't know why my people fight it." The *Christian Echo* editor replied that "Every loyal disciple of Christ fights it because it came from Rome and not from God."⁴² From Bowser's perspective the Roman Catholic Church, not Christ, introduced instrumental music into Christian worship.

Rouse then cited President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) who described a "4-inch tail that wages the 96 inch dog." Rouse used the quotation to suggest that Bowser and other members of Churches of Christ were advocates of "religious autocracy." In response, the black editor elevated the writings of John W. McGarvey (1829-1911) above the wit of President Franklin, asserting: "You quote Mr. Roosevelt, but he has never seen the gospel truth. Surely you would recognize J. W. McGarvey as a "prudent thinker" who said, "It appears to me to be the unquestionable duty of all writers and speakers to combine all their power and influence against the introduction of another organ. It is a departure from apostolic practice." Bowser also cited the white reformer, Alexander Campbell, who said: "I presume to all spiritually-minded Christians such aids would be as a cow-bell in a concert." The black evangelist vowed to return to the Disciples of Christ if Rouse and his cohorts could "find one text with divine authority for the existence of the Christian Church with its INNOVATIONS."⁴³

In the fourth discussion Rouse delineated a series of contradictions among members of Churches of Christ who argued that "I don't go for this instrumental music stuff because I don't find where the New Testament recommends it." Rouse pointed out that the New Testament did not "recommend" using books, purchasing and erecting church buildings, and setting specific hours for worship, yet Churches of Christ engaged in these practices. He further noted that the New Testament recommended "kissing as a form of greeting," but Churches of Christ extended a handshake instead. "I could go on indefinitely pointing out things that the New Testament recommends," Rouse continued, "yet you ignore; and things you do without New Testament recommendation, but what is the use, you like

every one else use common sense in such cases regardless of what the New Testament 'recommends' except the point in question!"⁴⁴

After acknowledging "jest" in Rouse's argument, Bowser insisted that God gave specific commandments but allowed Christians the freedom of devising the method by which to execute them. "The order is to 'sing' and this embraces pitch, time, harmony, words, song books, etc., but never an organ or piano." Bowser continued that "Instrumental music is adding to God's expressed plan of making music in the worship."⁴⁵

In the sixth exchange Rouse suggested that members of Churches of Christ opposed instrumental music in worship for sociological reasons. "Objection to instrumental music in the worship originated back in 'horse and buggy days' when ignorance was the rule and intelligence the exception, and was destined to die when these conditions are reversed."⁴⁶ Bowser, in contrast, argued that moral corruption and disrespect for divine authority influenced people to resort to using musical instruments in worship. "The introduction of instrumental music was made as the rule and respect for God's order was the exception, and is destined to die when and where people love the Lord." Bowser concluded that using instrumental music in God's service simply mirrored the violation of Nadab and Abihu whom God destroyed for incorporating "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1-2), and "it proves one is miserably disrespectful."⁴⁷

In the seventh dialogue Rouse accused members of Churches of Christ of deceiving people by placing baptism and musical instruments in worship on the same spiritual plane. "If I believed in such rot, I would explain the Great Commission thus, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth in Christ (but not in instrumental music) shall be saved.' I would preach it at the first and not wait to 'hoodwink them into it later.' Deception is fraud!"⁴⁸

Bowser pointed out that the Great Commission should be accepted "as it is written." "I challenge T. K.," Bowser elaborated, "to point to one that has been 'hoodwinked' into the church of Christ under the impression that instrumental music in the worship was right. He worshipped as a member of the church of Christ for years and cannot point to one that used the instrument. He has heard me from his boyhood and knows that I fought it, so he practiced deception by impressing us that he was against it."⁴⁹

In 1941 Rouse and Bowser had another brief and final exchange. Rouse wrote that he was sending Bowser a year's subscription to the *Christian Standard*, an influential paper among the Disciples of Christ established by Isaac Errett in 1866 in Cincinnati, Ohio. "It is now 75 years old and without doubt," Rouse noted, "the very best paper in the

brotherhood. Notice how much ‘broader’ or ‘liberal’ it is now, yet solid as a granite stone. Read it carefully; let it digest well.”⁵⁰ Rouse described the *Christian Standard* as “broader” and “liberal” to criticize Bowser’s paper, the *Christian Echo*, insinuating that the latter was narrow and legalistic because of its stance against instrumental music in worship and missionary societies.

Rouse further contrasted the prosperous Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas, with Bowser’s struggling school, the Bowser Christian Institute in Fort Smith, Arkansas. “Jarvis Christian College has an oil well now and is expecting more soon. It is succeeding fine. Remember Jarvis is about the same age of Silver Point, or do you still remember it?” After poking fun at Bowser’s Silver Point Christian Institute, A. M. Burton’s Southern Practical Institute, and Peter Lowery’s Nashville Labor and Manual University—all of which fizzled out in Middle Tennessee—Rouse then explained the cause of their failure. “We all know the answer, no organization behind them, just scattered aids here and there, acting independently; without system, no one willing to let the other have the leadership and such like. Will the present attempt suffer a like fate?” With these statements Rouse underscored his staunch support of missionary societies and other organizations which pooled their resources and structured their entities to uphold and sustain preachers and schools. “Organization,” maintained Rouse, “is the life source of any movement.”⁵¹

Bowser thanked Rouse for sending the *Christian Standard*, and he read it “with appreciation.” After expressing gratitude, Bowser argued that schools operated by members of Churches of Christ failed “not for lack of organization,” “but lack of support.” Bowser then listed Disciples of Christ schools in Kentucky, Arkansas, and Mississippi that either failed or struggled even “with Christian church organization.”⁵²

The Bowser-Rouse exchange reveals several salient features. First, the division between Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ continued deep into the 20th century, as the doctrinal tension which disrupted white congregations also affected black churches in the Stone-Campbell Movement. Further, G. P. Bowser, strongly influenced by the writings of Alexander Campbell and John W. McGarvey, appropriated the same arguments which white leaders used to oppose instrumental music in worship. As did his white comrades in Churches of Christ, Bowser argued against musical instruments in worship on the basis of “silence” of the New Testament. Bowser also believed that Rouse and his cohorts who worshiped with instrumental music stood in error, yet he refused to insist that they be re-baptized. Despite Bowser’s disagreement with Rouse, he treated him

cordially and allowed him space in the *Christian Echo*. In the end, Rouse represented an unknown number of blacks in the Stone-Campbell Movement who felt uncomfortable with what they judged as the legalistic and narrow posture of the “loyals.” Yet a significant number of black ministers plainly felt that Rouse and his Christian Church fellows had moved too far from their origins.

African-American Ministers Who Transitioned from the Disciples of Christ into Churches of Christ

Francis Frank Carson, born in Midway, Texas, traced his ancestry to Antony Carson, a slave owned by Hugh Hayes, a white man whose family was affiliated with Churches of Christ. After emancipation Hayes established the Antioch Church of Christ in Midway, the oldest black “loyal” congregation in the Lone Star State. Young Francis became a member of this congregation in 1925. The following year he completed elementary school work and enrolled in Jarvis Christian College’s high school program in Hawkins, where he stayed until 1930. While studying at the all-black school in East Texas, Carson concluded that the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ were one group. “I got on the wrong side of the fence, thinking that the Christian Church and church of Christ were the same, but when I went home, yes, when I went home—you know the rest.” Carson, after moving from rural Midway to urban Dallas, learned of the substantial differences between the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ, and thus he returned to the latter group. “Soon I left the farm and went to Dallas to find work. I went to the Christian Church about three times and then I could see exactly what was taught me when I went home.” While living in Dallas, Carson “found the North Dallas Church of Christ and was restored by Brother K. C. Thomas. There I received the inspiration to preach.”⁵³ Carson went on to have a distinguished ministerial career in Texas, Oklahoma, and especially Richmond, California.

James M. Butler, a native of Stillwater, Oklahoma, grew up in Wichita, Kansas, where he received his education as he and his family attended the Christian Church. Young James sang in the congregation’s choir as a teenager. One day during practice, Butler recalled that “two very meek men walked in and sat down on the front seats. Before dismissing they were asked to have something to say.” The two men, Marshall Keeble and Luke Miller, invited members of the black Christian Church to their meeting. During the Keeble-Miller campaign, Butler and his close friend, Russell H. Moore, “walked down the aisle together and

identified ourselves with the church of Christ.”⁵⁴

John S. Winston (1906–2002) was yet another black minister in Churches of Christ who had interacted with the Disciples of Christ before attaching himself to the “loyal” group of the Stone-Campbell Movement. From Conway County, Arkansas, Winston moved with his mother to Muskogee, Oklahoma. In 1917 he returned to Arkansas for schooling, and there was baptized into the Church of Christ. Winston returned to Muskogee two years later and “connected himself to the Christian Church as there was no Church of Christ there.” Distraught over disorder among the Disciples of Christ, Winston withdrew from that fellowship. In 1931 J. W. Brents, preacher for the white congregation in Muskogee, invited Marshall Keeble to evangelize African Americans of that community. Keeble’s preaching not only encouraged Winston to return to Churches of Christ, but it also inspired him to enter the preaching ministry. He also received encouragement from Brents, G. P. Bowser, and R. N. Hogan in this transition.⁵⁵

A decade later J. S. Winston had taken up residence in Sherman, Texas, overseeing a congregation R. N. Hogan had planted in 1938. While ministering in Sherman, Winston found time to reach out to neighboring communities. L. M. Wright reported that “Brother Winston tore up the Christian church and baptized several from the sectarian churches. There was no church of Christ in this town [Van Alstyne] until Brother Winston held this meeting.”⁵⁶ Details remain sketchy, but Wright’s report implies that Winston, just as his mentor and co-laborer Hogan had done in Longview in 1936, attracted several members of the Disciples of Christ in Van Alstyne.

Alonzo Rose, born in 1916 in Valdosta, Georgia, because of his father’s death and the resultant harsh economic conditions, had to leave high school. At age twenty he met and married a Christian girl who influenced him to be “religiously inclined.” Rose soon became a member of the Disciples of Christ and congregants prodded him into the preaching ministry. After delivering five sermons in Christian Churches, Rose, convicted by his wife and his own conscience, “submitted to the doctrine of Christ and was baptized into the Church of Christ by D. M. English in 1940.”⁵⁷ Alonzo Rose went on to have a distinguished ministerial career in Florida, Georgia, and other southern states. He and his wife produced several sons (Floyd, Jimmy, Marshall, and Richard) who became renowned preachers and who similarly have left an indelible mark on the history of black Churches of Christ. Through such songs as, “Restore My Soul,” “Holy Spirit,” and “Mansion, Robe, and Crown,” Sylvia Rose has become the most prolific music composer in the history of Churches of Christ.⁵⁸

The lives of Carson, Butler, Winston, and Rose open windows into the formative years of African-American Churches of Christ, as so many of the black leaders in Churches of Christ had early connections with the “digressives” before permanently aligning themselves with the “loyals.” Others who shared the experiences of Carson, Butler, Winston, and Rose included S. W. Womack, Alexander Campbell, Samuel Robert Cassius, Marshall Keeble, and G. P. Bowser; all of these transitioned from the Disciples of Christ into the Churches of Christ. The history of black Churches of Christ cannot be fully comprehended without simultaneously exploring the development of black Disciples of Christ, since the two groups were in many ways inseparable in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Such a historical inquiry reveals that a persistent issue remained, that of the efficacy of an earlier baptism for those who came into Churches of Christ from the Christian Church. Even though G. P. Bowser and Marshall Keeble left the fellowship of the Disciples of Christ and never returned, they never demanded that those transitioning from Christian Churches into Churches of Christ be re-baptized. That Bowser and Keeble refused to re-immense those who came from the Christian Churches suggests that the duo recognized that the two groups shared a spiritual heritage in the teachings of Barton W. Stone (1772-1844) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). While both Bowser and Keeble were “radical exclusivists” who insisted on re-baptizing Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, and members of other denominations, they consistently refused to re-immense those who came from the Disciples of Christ. Bowser and Keeble transmitted this theological ambivalence to their spiritual progeny who in turn regarded those from the Christian Churches as merely “estranged brethren.”⁵⁹

The Question of the Decade: Should People from the Christian Churches be Re-baptized into the Churches of Christ?

Of course a fuller separation came as the difference between the two grew more pronounced. Throughout the decade of the 1940s, G. P. Bowser consistently fielded questions from concerned readers of the *Christian Echo* who wanted to know whether people coming from the Disciples of Christ to Churches of Christ should be re-baptized. One reader asked: “I do not understand why the church of Christ takes one from the Christian Church and does not baptize him. Are people of the Christian church in Christ?” Bowser answered: “The Christian Church is part of the church of Christ who went off into unscriptural practices. They, however,

teach the plan of salvation just we do, hence baptize ‘for the remission of sins.’ We are trying to correct them from the err of their way [James 5:19].”⁶⁰

The next year Sarah J. Acox asked: “Is the Christian Church and church of Christ the same?” Bowser replied:

There was a time when term ‘Christian Church’ and ‘church of Christ’ referred to the same people. Mechanical instruments were brought into the worship at Midway, Ky. in 1859, in St. Louis shortly afterwards this faction split the church. They are now registered in Washington as two separate bodies: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the ‘Church of Christ.’ The Christian Church has departed so far from the truth that they are rank sects, digressive brethren. We cannot claim fellowship with them.⁶¹

The above passage indirectly refers to L. L. Pinkerton (1812-1875), a multi-talented leader in Kentucky who introduced an instrument (melodeon) into the worship, igniting a storm of controversy among Stone-Campbell Churches. The St. Louis comment probably refers to the 1869 vote of the congregation in which seventy-eight voted for the musical instruments in worship, while ten voted against it. The opposing groups agreed to keep instruments out for the sake of peace. Within a two-year period, however, proponents of musical instruments in worship gained control and forced the “loyals” out.⁶² Bowser tended to view this date as a turning point in the relationship between the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ.

In the fall of 1942 O. Z. Mitchell inquired of Bowser, “If a member of the Christian Church comes to the church of Christ should they be baptized again?” Bowser answered: “If baptized into the Christian Church, it is scriptural as they are a part of the church of Christ -- our digressive brethren.” George Garrett, another reader of the *Christian Echo*, asked: “When one comes from the Christian Church to the church of Christ should he be baptized again?” Bowser again stated: “If they have been baptized under the Christian Church teaching it is not necessary as the Christian Church is a digressive faction of the church of Christ, hence our brethren. They teach faith (Heb. 11:6); repentance (Acts 17:30); confession (Matt. 10:32); baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38) just as we do.”⁶³

In 1944 a writer to the *Christian Echo* reported a good meeting in Leesburg, Texas. “This meeting was held in the Christian Church. We were able by the help of God to get them to see how unloyal they were to

Christ as Lord. Seeing their mistake the whole church repented of their error, confessed their fault. Now we are happy to say that they are our faithful brethren. We got the building, elders and all.”⁶⁴ The next year Martha S. Warner asked: “Should people coming to us from the Christian Church be baptized?” The black editor noted that “The Christian Church is part of the Church of Christ who went off in 1869 after instrumental music, societies and other worldly innovations. They however teach the first principal [sic], and baptism as in Acts 2:38. Those baptized under Christian Church teaching are scripturally baptized.”⁶⁵

In 1947 Abraham Davis raised the same question and received the same answer. After referring again to the 1869 rupture between Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ in St. Louis, Missouri, “over instrumental music in the worship, society organizations, etc., which brought about division,” Bowser reiterated: “Since the Christian church has not departed in the design of baptism, if they have been baptized into the Christian faith, they do not need to be baptized again.”⁶⁶ Two years later “W. J. H.” asked: “If one has been Scripturally taught, and Scripturally baptized, will he be a member of the Christian Church or the Church of Christ?” Bowser answered:

The term Christian Church is not in the Bible, it would not however be wrong to use the term Christian Church, which means a church made up of Christians. For years, the Church of Christ, and Christian Church were identical. Finally, some of the members pulled off after mechanical instruments of music, society organizations and other innovations. They however held to the doctrine that made Christians. They are now beginning to compromise with the sects, and can hardly be recognized a part of the Body or Church of Christ. The plan of salvation as taught by them will make Christians. To be consistent and safe, one should quit the so-called Christian Church.⁶⁷

Throughout the 1940s the questions to Bowser and his answers remained the same. The *Christian Echo* editor consistently argued that African Americans in Churches of Christ and blacks in the Disciples of Christ imbibed the same spiritual heritage, spiritual descendants of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. Therefore, he never required that those moving from the “digressives” to the “loyals” be re-baptized. His ministerial colleagues, Marshall Keeble, Luke Miller, R. N. Hogan, among countless others, also held this position.

Bowser died in 1950, yet his legacy remains relevant and needs to be recovered in the early twenty-first century. As Stone-Campbell Christians pray and contemplate how they can eradicate barriers and move closer together after a century of separation, Bowser and his like-minded colleagues have a pertinent message. Despite any cultural differences and theological idiosyncrasies, Stone-Campbell Christians remain family.

NOTES

¹For examples of individuals who used such terms as “loyal” and “digressive” or “progressive” to distinguish Churches of Christ from Disciples of Christ, see Alexander Campbell, “Work among the Colored People” *Gospel Advocate* 51 (December 2, 1909): 1523; Samuel Robert Cassius, “Going Home” *Christian Leader* 34 (July 27, 1920): 16; and Marshall Keeble, “Report of Marshall Keeble” *Gospel Advocate* 73 (January 8, 1931): 44-45. Throughout this paper the terms “Disciples of Christ” and “Christian Churches” are used interchangeably.

²Earl I. West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of Churches of Christ* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service); David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966).

³For a good biographical sketch of Bowser and his important educational work, see R. Vernon Boyd, *Undying Dedication: The Story of G. P. Bowser* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1985).

⁴James Brooks Major, “The Role of Periodicals in the Development of the Disciples of Christ, 1850-1910” (Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966); Richard T. Hughes, Howard Short, and Henry Webb, *The Power of the Press: Studies of the “Gospel Advocate,” the “Christian Standard,” and the “Christian Evangelist”*. (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1987).

⁵“Innovations” included instrumental music in worship and evangelization through missionary societies.

⁶Marshall Keeble, “Keeble to be Here” *Gospel Advocate* 83 (December 25, 1941): 1242.

⁷G. P. Bowser, “As Ye Find Christ, Walk in Him” *Gospel Advocate* 46 (March 24, 1904): 190.

- ⁸J. E. Choate, *Roll Jordan Roll: A Biography of Marshall Keeble* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974), 16-17.
- ⁹Bowser, "Outlook among the Colored People" *Gospel Advocate* 70 (November 1, 1928): 1053.
- ¹⁰Keeble, "A Great Man Gone" *Gospel Advocate* 62 (July 29, 1920): 744-745.
- ¹¹Bowser, "Field Notes" *Christian Echo* 11 (November 1915): 3.
- ¹²*Ibid.*
- ¹³*Ibid.*
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⁵¹*Ibid.*

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⁵⁴James M. Butler, "Meet Our Ministers" *Christian Echo* 36 (Dec. 5, 1941): 3.

⁵⁵Annie C. Tuggle, *Our Ministers and Song Leaders of the Church of Christ* (Detroit: Annie C. Tuggle, 1945), 158.

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⁵⁸Sylvia Rose, *Songs of Faith* (Detroit: Srose Publishing Company, 1985).

⁵⁹For a thorough and insightful treatment of "radical exclusivists," see C. Myers Phillips, "A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward Other Denominations" (Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1983); and David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *The Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century: Homer Hailey's Personal Journey of Faith* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 225.

⁶⁰G. G. S. and Bowser, "Questions" *Christian Echo* 35 (June 20, 1941): 7.

⁶¹Sarah J. Acox and Bowser, "Questions" *Christian Echo* 37 (May 5, 1942): 3.

⁶²Earl I. West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1950): 2:81.

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⁶⁴"The Outlook" *Christian Echo* 39 (September 5, 1944): 4.

⁶⁵Martha S. Warner and Bowser, "Questions" *Christian Echo* 40 (August 5, 1945): 7.

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Changing Views: How the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has Viewed People Practicing Religions Other than Christianity

Candy Stroup*

Introduction

Recently, the Council on Christian Unity, a ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) produced a working document entitled "Disciples of Christ and Interreligious Engagement." The introduction states, "This document is an attempt to reflect upon who we are as Disciples of Christ, why we might engage in interfaith dialogue and work, the nature of interreligious relationships, and what gifts we have that uniquely prepare us for constructive and consequential interreligious engagement."¹

Interreligious connections, established through understanding, dialogue and long-term associations, are imperative in the twenty-first century. The preparation that Disciples are taking to engage in interreligious interaction is necessary and timely.

In recent years, Clark Williamson has written about Christian and Jewish relationships in a favorable manner that reflects the love and respect that all children of God deserve. This outlook has not always been the case, as the Council acknowledges in the Introduction to this document:

... we have not always embodied this [covenant] love [in Jesus Christ] in our relationships with people of other religious traditions. We have at times allowed a woeful lack of understanding and respect for other faiths to result in fear, distrust and the dehumanization of our brothers and sisters in other religious traditions. We have mistakenly let factors of history, race, socio-economic location and politics shape our conceptions of other religions and have too quickly accepted misguided and harmful stereotypes.²

Do the major Disciples' journals support this judgement? Are these statements a fair assessment? How have Disciples' attitudes toward world religions changed from the *Millennial Harbinger* of 1830 through the recent books of theologian Clark Williamson? Examination of these publications, as well as *World Call*, *The Disciple*, and *Disciples World*, proves the following statement:

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In Disciples' eyes, people of other faiths have evolved from masses to be converted (and perhaps aided in the areas of education and provision for physical needs) to individuals and institutions with whom friendships can be achieved, understanding can be reached, and common goals can be attained.

Views of Major Religious Groups other than Christianity as Expressed in the *Millennial Harbinger*

During the first four years of the *Millennial Harbinger*, the primary mention of faiths other than Christianity was intricately interconnected with theological concepts. Using a dialogic style, someone (usually editor Alexander Campbell) presented a theological interpretation in journal article form. The interpretation was then addressed by those interested enough to send letters to the editor in response to the original article. Some of these responses were published in subsequent issues. In the early years, the main non-Christian faith group to be represented in the *Harbinger* was the Jews. Their future is envisioned in connection with prophecies based on study of the Scriptures concerning the Millennium:

I will undertake to prove the following propositions:—

- I. The Jews will, in their unconverted state, actually and literally return to their own land before Jesus Christ appears to destroy the Man of Sin by the glory or power of his coming.
- II. After the Jews shall have been restored to their own land, and shall have resettled it, the nations of the earth shall combine to despoil them of their treasures, and to subjugate them to their sway.
- III. At the time of this assemblage of the nations, the Lord Jesus will descend to Mount Olivet, whence he ascended. The Jews will be converted in one day; . . .³

This prophecy continues with a severe earthquake, Jesus' return to earth, and the beginning of the Millennium. In the next edition of the *Millennial Harbinger*, these points are elaborated upon in a continuation of the article, "Prophecies—No. II."⁴

A modern reader might optimistically approach the article entitled "Dialogue with a Jew" in hopes of a progressive exchange of ideas.

That reader would be disappointed. While Campbell, the interviewer, is not overtly rude to Mr. Judah of Richmond, Virginia, he nonetheless tries to make the faith leader's answers fit into Campbells' preexisting notions.⁴ Judah is fairly safe during the discussion of the Trinity;⁵ but as they move toward the topic of Jesus as Messiah, Campbell grows more and more insistent upon agreement from Judah. Paul M. Blowers, reporting on this "Dialogue" in an entry in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, summarized the points of deterioration of the discussion from appreciation for one another into Christian force when "Campbell reintroduced the long-standing Christian argument that the Jews had historically suffered so severely precisely because they crucified the Christ, and he further engaged the elderly teacher in an extended debate on messianic prophecy in obvious hopes of undermining his defense of the Jewish interpretation."⁶ When Campbell pointedly notes, "I know of no promise or institution in your religion which warrants a hope for remission [of sin] without sacrifice," Judah has had enough and ends the interview with acknowledgement of the fact that the Jews no longer have the means of offering sacrifices for forgiveness of sin, but that "our trust is in Jehovah whose mercy endureth forever. Farewell."⁷

Mr. Judah apparently died within a few months after this interview, and beginning in the August, 1831 edition and running through the December edition of that same year, a debate in print ensued between A. H. Cohen, a "Priest" at the Richmond synagogue, and Campbell. In the first letter, presented in the article entitled "The Apology of A. H. Cohen,... for Rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah," Cohen employs the definition of *apology* popular in that time period: namely, a defense of his position and that of the Jews in general. After Cohen's initial letter was published, Campbell resorts to summarizing subsequent letters, but answering these summaries with in-depth defenses of the Christian interpretations.⁸

As the years progressed in the publication of the *Millennial Harbinger*, less was said about eschatological occurrences and how the Jews would be involved in and converted all at one time during those events. Debates between Jews and Christians also no longer appeared. The author identified only as "H." wrote the article "Christianity in Its relation to Judaism and Paganism," published in 1856. In this piece, H. argues that Christianity owes little to Judaism, for the whole world, including the Greek and Roman pagans, were prepared for Christ's coming, regardless of their previous religious beliefs. These views are inconsistent with W. K. P.'s in 1847: "Judaism was preparatory to the dawning of a clearer light, and in the fulness [sic.] of time the consummation of that glorious scheme of human redemption devised and executed by God himself, came upon the world, and the Sun

of Righteousness raises, in the midst of almost universal darkness, the life-giving light of Christianity.”⁹

Other world religions were mentioned in the *Millennial Harbinger* also. In 1835, the article entitled “Religious Magazine” consists of a promotional introduction¹⁰ regarding the journal of that title followed by a reprint of the untitled article presenting “a brief view of Mahometanism [sic.], Judaism, and Christianity, as at present existing in the world.”¹¹ The author of this piece is very complimentary and accepting of the Jews. He gives a brief history of this people, emphasizing the persecutions and hardships they have endured. Near the end of the Judaism section, he reports, “The history of this people certainly forms a striking evidence of the truth of divine revelation. They are a living and perpetual miracle, continuing to subsist as a distinct and peculiar race upwards of three thousand years, intermixed among almost all the nations of the world.”¹² The faith referred to as “Mahometanism [sic.] or Isalamism [sic.]” does not fare as well. In the course of the historical accounts in this article, the author is very forthright about his opinion, including a reference to the religion as “Absurd, false and sensual”.¹³

Subsequent *Millennial Harbinger* articles also refer to Islam as worldly, violent, and excessively concerned with the hereafter.¹⁴ The Koran is criticized for dealing with superfluous events in heaven and hell in comparison with the Bible, which reportedly “is indeed for man during his abode upon the earth” and does not cater to “idle curiosity and vain speculation.”¹⁵ In an 1843 piece, Carlyle concedes that “The Mohametans [sic.] regard the Koran with a reverence which few Christians pay even to their Bible” although in his opinion “it [the Koran] is as toilsome reading as ever I undertook. A wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement . . . insupportable stupidity, in short!” Carlyle concludes that the Koran’s author is sincere in what he has written, even if that text is not easy to read: “We said ‘stupid:’ yet natural stupidity is by no means the character of Mahomet’s [sic.] book; it is natural uncultivation rather. The man has not studied speaking; in the haste and pressure of continual fighting, has not time to mature himself into fit speech. The panting breathless haste and vehemence of a man struggling in the thick battle for life and salvation: this is the mood he is in!”¹⁶ The distribution of Bibles in predominantly Muslim Turkey, and missionary activity in that country, are the main topics of two *Millennial Harbinger* articles.¹⁷

The Hindu faith is referred to most often as an example of idolatry and derided for its millions of deities, its disorganization and the supposed immorality in which the majority of its followers live.¹⁸ “Religion in

Hindustan”, published in May 1869, summarizes an article previously published in *Lippincott’s Magazine* and celebrates the Christian missionary inroads into that locale, leading to an overall improvement in the Indian way of life.¹⁹

W. K. P. offers the most intellectual and even-handed discussion of other faiths in his series “The World. Its Religions”,²⁰ but even these articles are too subjective to be acceptable in interfaith discussions of today; yet interaction with those who believe differently was not his aim. His intent to inspire Christian missionary zeal is revealed at the end of the first article of the series: “O! is there not an eloquence in facts like these, to arouse the slumbering energies of the Christian church, to awaken every dormant principle of a feeling heart, and speed, with a herald’s flight, the glad tidings of deliverance! Who does not feel moved to help the missionary on, and bid him plant in the avenue to Juggernaut itself, the standard of the Cross!”²¹

Other Christian denominations, including the Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic, received analysis equal to that of Judaism in the pages of the journal. Mormonism, Unitarianism, Deism, Fullerism and other sects were especially held accountable in their belief systems. By 1863, Campbell flatly stated, “My motto is, ‘He that believes the gospel shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned,’ and consequently exiled forever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.”²²

Views of Major Religious Groups other than Christianity as Expressed in *World Call*, a Disciples Missionary Journal²³

World Call was a Disciples journal published from 1919 through 1973 with the purpose of emphasizing the activity of the church throughout the world. With its global focus, it is more inclusive of other faiths and cultures than the more theologically themed journals such as the *Millennial Harbinger*, *The Disciple*, and *Disciples World*. Tidbits about Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other religious beliefs are found in almost every issue. In-depth articles on parts of India, China, Japan, and other countries typically associated with these world religions are common throughout the publication.

In early editions, the tidbits are usually found in the column called “Facts for the Busy Woman,” and pertain to how the religious and cultural practices in a region affect the everyday lives of women in that area. For instance, in this column in the March 1919 edition of the journal, two separate paragraphs appear regarding employment impediments to

Mohammedan women due to tradition and religious beliefs.²⁴ In August of that year, in that column, the following paragraph appears:

Next to Confucianism, probably Buddhism has been most influential in shaping Chinese ideals. Buddhist scriptures allow no hope of immortality to a woman, except that, for the greatest religious devotion, she be rewarded in some future transmigration by being born a man. Her hopeless inferiority is assumed and her impurity taught.²⁵

In the column “Echoes from Everywhere,” missionaries wrote a paragraph or two about some piece of information they thought would be interesting to the readers. For instance, Mattie W. Burgess sent this short report from Bina, India:

August was a very rainy month.

During this month, forty-four houses were visited, one hundred persons heard the hymn and Bible lesson and twenty-five women had their lesson in reading.

Open rebellion by about 15,000 bigoted Mohammedans, most of them very ignorant, in Southern India seemed very serious for a while. No one can tell what the effect will be. The forcible conversion of about 1,000 Hindus to the Moslem faith has shaken the faith of some Hindus in Mohammedan friendship.²⁶

More statistically based tidbits are featured in the column “Glimpses of the Religious World,” which also contains shorts on general news of civil rights developments as well as religious connections. For instance, the July, 1928 issue of this column reports, “Two Negroes have been asked to contribute to the new *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Dr. W. E. B. Dubois will write on the literature of the Negro; James Weldon Johnson will make a statement on Negro music.” It also reports on education in the Philippines, a Mississippi River bridge designed by a Chinese Christian, and other facts from around the world.²⁷

The type of news byte featured in these regular columns allowed the American congregants who supported the missionaries to empathize with what was happening in the world, both as it pertained directly to the missionaries and to the countries and cultures in which they were active. The home front had an emotional connection as well as a talking point to begin discussion about missions with the church fellowship groups to which they belonged. When offerings were taken, the congregation felt they had some

ownership in the places to which the offerings were going.

The longer articles dealt with everything from missionary-provided health care,²⁸ to places of worship for other faith traditions,²⁹ to observations on weddings and other religious ceremonies as practiced around the world.³⁰ In the early days, the journal resembled a religious travel magazine, with lots of photos and human-interest pieces. World religions were treated factually and as something exotic and culturally different, without emphasis on theology unless it impacted the topic of architecture, religious festivals, or day to day life of the missionaries. If the last of these was discussed, it was usually done from the perspective of community improvement or Christian education rather than preaching and evangelism. Thus, because of the exotic and travel-log kind of format, world religions began to be viewed with curiosity and through cultural lenses, with theological interest secondary. The overall tone of optimism and factual information gave the impression that the thinking people among these foreigners would surely accept Christianity as soon as it was presented to them. Some of the fun and beauty of their culture could be kept, but anything that was unhealthy, destructive or primitive about the region would naturally be given up for western dress and correct living practices day to day.

Curiously, Judaism is not as visible in *World Call* as other religions are. An exception is a three page article entitled "From Judaism to Christianity" by Elimelech Korn, a Polish, Jewish university student in Kansas City who converted to Christianity. He gives an overview of the types of Judaism practiced in the United States and an account of his life. His photograph, in suit and tie and neatly shorn hair, is prominent in the article.³¹ As in the treatment of other world religions, the emphasis is on the convert's intelligence and adoption of American culture. The readers pictured the Christian churches around the world to be like the ones at home, with the congregants dressing the same way and accepting all of the practices of worship and administration, despite cultural and geographic limitations. As this view did not allow for cultural differences among Christians, when news of membership without immersion on the mission field reached the United States, controversy ensued. Missionaries themselves had a different view, as expressed by Mark G. Toulouse: "They [the missionaries] saw for themselves the destruction caused by Christians doubting the Christian standing of other Christians. They learned on the mission field that one could take oneself too seriously and miss out on the fullness of God's people . . . The understanding exhibited by these missionaries proved a bit too progressive for leaders at home."³² This emphasis of the journal, while attractive to the readers and possibly even to

the converts and missionaries, coupled with the tension of cultural differences, left the door open for future assumption that non-converts were ignorant and in some way opposed to the American way of life.

As *World Call* moved into the post-war period and beyond, it took on a more serious, less travel-magazine tone, dealing with domestic civil rights as well as mission concerns. The journal staff and writers embraced the issues of anti-Semitism as well as ecumenism, and theological issues were sometimes featured.³³ Judaism was more visible and less threatening.³⁴

Views of Major Religious Groups other than Christianity as Expressed in *The Disciple*

The focus of the *The Disciple* was neither strictly theological nor strictly missionary, but sought to encompass these and other aspects of being church corporately and being Christian individually. The journal concentrated mostly on the United States, but was not isolationist. Interfaith concerns were addressed primarily to promote awareness of potential trouble³⁵ and opportunities for reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict combined with working to end hate in the community.³⁶ Holocaust remembrance and avoidance of repeating the atrocities loomed large in *The Disciple*,³⁷ and interfaith dialogue around the world was the topic of some articles.³⁸ Delineating differences within Judaism was found in an article demystifying vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman's practice of Judaism, termed "modern Orthodoxy."³⁹ In contrast, some of the articles on Islam differentiate between moderate and extremist groups, beginning in 1980 when Americans were concerned with Khomeini.⁴⁰ "Muslims, Buddhists share Disciples facility, overcoming 'heat'" is a joyful report on a church in Wichita, Kansas, that had been very successful in celebrating religious diversity without attempts at assimilation.⁴¹

Two articles regarding mission work are notable. The first was preceded by two articles on the interfaith Bosnian choir organized by the author/missionary Amy Gopp. The choir toured the United States to share their talents and let people know that "cultural warfare can break out anywhere."⁴²

Amy Gopp's "So you think you want to be a missionary?: 7 lessons of an itinerant Christian servant" is mostly about her calling as a missionary and work as a missionary and how that calling does not look or feel like she envisioned it prior to beginning her work. While she doesn't specifically address interfaith issues, she emphasizes the common humanity of all of God's children: "God is present in places and people we may not like; God is even in war-zones. God is in the midst of all the

pain and violence and suffering. And Christ intimately understands the suffering of our world. This is the hope of the gospel, the good news, to which we are called to be ... missionaries of faith in places of desolation, death and despair.”⁴³ The article has beautiful photos of the region of Gopp's service, but is unlike the *World Call* travel-log. In contrast, the subject of the photos is the people rather than the countryside or interesting sites, and, as exemplified by the quotation above, Gopp focused her ministry on the people of the country and their relationship with God rather than on their exotic differences from the readers. This focus was a guard against paternalism in the mission field.

In “Entering the ‘China century,’” William J. Nottingham provided a clear picture of missionary Xiaoling Zhu and the political climate that had provided opportunities for Christian missions in China. Nottingham did not mention traditionally Chinese religious groups at all. The reader gets the sense that China is a religious vacuum—which may be totally accurate.⁴⁴

Views of Major Religious Groups other than Christianity as Expressed in *DisciplesWorld*

DisciplesWorld is the most recent version of Disciples journals, beginning publication in 2000. A perusal of its volumes, reveals that it has a broader focus than any of the previous journals. It is inclusive of theological discussions as well as other items of interest to the church in the United States and the world. It also addresses interreligious relationships.

The feature story of the September 2002 issue is “India: poverty and possibilities,” wherein the author was straightforward about the part that religious conflicts play in the economic and political situation in India. This information invites reflection. Interfaith dialogue at an early stage could possibly have lessened the problems from which India now suffers, and it could certainly help at the present time.⁴⁵

A few of the interfaith articles in *DisciplesWorld* are reports of events around the world that have come about because of interfaith tensions—reports of violence and reports of legislation adopted in an attempt to prevent violence.⁴⁶ Others deal with the theology of interfaith relations.⁴⁷ Some highlight the efforts of individual Disciples to promote peace in areas affected by war involving interreligious conflicts.⁴⁸ In the June 2004 issue, Michael Kinnamon emphasized that interfaith dialogue and ecumenical dialogue have the same goals. One should not be abandoned in favor of the other; both can be practiced in tandem.⁴⁹ Many articles deal with

American reaction against Muslims after September 11, 2001.⁵⁰

In comparison to the *Millennial Harbinger* and *World Call*, *DisciplesWorld* has personalized other religions. The *Millennial Harbinger* saw the Jews as forebears of Christianity and as participants in God's plan to initiate the Millennium. The writers in the *Millennial Harbinger*, could not get past the idolatry of Buddhism and Hinduism nor the seemingly chaotic violence of Islam; therefore, they were unable to present a human view of the believers beyond their being objects of Christian missionary efforts. The early *World Call* viewed other faiths as an exotic and exciting wasteland in need of Christian water. American Christians paternalistically delivered the water, along with other social services.

Evolving Views: Turning Points

The Holocaust and September 11, 2001 marked turning points in interfaith relationships. These violent events forced recognition of the need for interfaith dialogue by showing the danger of allowing those who look or believe differently from the mainstream to become a faceless mass—de-individualization. *Disciples* journalists are to be commended for recognizing the causes of interethnic and interreligious violence and addressing those causes in print. *Shaken Foundations: Sermons from America's Pulpits after the Terrorist Attacks* is another avenue by which *Disciples* addressed this issue.⁵¹ *Disciples* writers have kept the readers aware of the quality and/or lack of interfaith relationships in the United States and in the world, at the individual congregational level, as well as within and between countries. They have recognized that violence results in part from fear, which in turn results in part from the unknown. Dialogue with the unknown makes it known. Giving voice and face to individuals in other faiths saves them from becoming a thing to be feared and manipulated.

Croatian Catholic Father Ivo Markovic has lived through religious violence. He organized the Bosnia choir that the *Disciples* sponsored on tour in the United States in 2000. *The Disciple* reported on this choir (of which *Disciples* missionary Amy Gopp was a member) and the work that they were doing in advocating interfaith dialogue. Father Markovic recognized that diversity and individuality are valuable and need to be emphasized in the process when he said, "Nothing destroys human beings as (much as) fear. If we are more different, our communication is more rich."⁵²

Clark Williamson and Jewish-Christian Relations

The Holocaust of World War II was a turning point in almost every area of life. Disciples theologian Clark Williamson has spent his life examining Christian theological precepts and how they have contributed to the anti-Semitic thought that advanced the widespread destruction of that people. His books are written with the purpose of discerning God's will for Christians. He theologically debunks supersessionism and instructs Christian leaders in preaching and teaching. He guides Christians to see that "mission is vocation, not the bringing of salvation. Only God has the final word on who is included."⁵³ Yet, turning the responsibility for salvation back to God does not turn Jews into place holders in an eschatological drama, as viewed in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Jews and Christians each play a vital part in God's plan for Creation, and communicating our uniqueness will further that plan. Williamson writes: "The church has a mandate to make known its knowledge of the reconciling work of God in Christ with all, Jews included. However . . . The church's witness to the Jews is not to be a conversionary mission since that mission, were it totally successful, would prevent Jews from bearing their distinctive witness."⁵⁴

Further Reflection

Could God also have a distinctive witness for Buddhists and Muslims and Jains and Hindus and those of other faiths? Christians are called to share their faith and the power that it has in their lives. That sharing, as well as listening to what those who believe differently have to say, can cause all to contemplate their relationships with one another and with the God who created each and every one. As "Disciples of Christ and Interreligious Engagement" says, "we seek through relationships with people of other faiths to learn more about the God we know through Jesus Christ."⁵⁵ Human individuals begin to see the value in each person God has created—every one a child of God. The Parent rejoices when the siblings live in harmony.

NOTES

¹ Council on Christian Unity, "Disciples of Christ and Interreligious Engagement," a working document, 1.

² Council, 1.

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