

THE BATTLE CRY OF PEACE: THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST
MOVEMENT DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865

by

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Abstract

As the United States descended into war in 1861, the religious leaders of the nation were among the foremost advocates and recruiters for both the Confederate and Union forces. They exercised enormous influence over the laity, and used their sermons and periodicals to justify, promote, and condone the brutal fratricide. Although many historians have focused on the promoters of war, they have almost completely ignored the Disciples of Christ, a loosely organized religious movement based on anti-sectarianism and primitive Christianity, who used their pulpits and periodicals as a platform for peace. This study attempts to merge the remarkable story of the Disciples peace message into a narrative of the Civil War. Their plea for nonviolence was not an isolated event, but a component of a committed, biblically-based response to the outbreak of war from many of the most prominent leaders of the movement. Immersed in the patriotic calls for war, their stance was extremely unpopular and even viewed as traitorous in their communities and congregations. This study adds to the current Disciples historiography, which states that the issue of slavery and the Civil War divided the movement North and South, by arguing that the peace message professed by its major leaders divided the movement also within the sections. In fact, by the outbreak of war, the visceral debates that occurred among the Disciples leadership did not center on the issue of slavery, constitutionality of secession, or even which belligerent was in the right. The chief point of contention was whether a Christian, based on New Testament precepts, could participate in war. The nonviolent leaders thought that their peace message derived from the New Testament would be the one thing that would preserve unity in the brethren. In reality, it became the primary source of division.

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INTRODUCTION

As the storm clouds gathered over the United States on the eve of the Civil War, fear and uncertainty gripped the American public. Many citizens from both the North and the South had come to believe that Americans were a “chosen people,” one destined to institute the Kingdom of God on earth. As the southern states began to secede, visions of that destiny for many Christians appeared to be in jeopardy.¹ Although the majority of Americans did not belong to any particular denomination during the antebellum period, most lived in a profoundly religious environment.² The combination of improved printing technology and an overall increase in the national literacy that developed during the Second Great Awakening aided in the enlistment of thousands into the Christian ranks and brought the Bible into more American homes than ever before. When the call for volunteers came, tens of thousands of men left their homes and donned the uniform of war, most with the belief that God was on their side. Reflecting on the nearly four years of warfare in his Second Inaugural Address, President Abraham Lincoln noted the unfortunate irony of the situation: “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God” but the “prayers of both could not be answered.”³

¹ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 686.

² For an introduction into American religion in the antebellum period, see Daniel Walker Howe, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164-202, 285-327; Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 403-648; Jon Butler, Grant Wacker and Randall Balmer, Religion in American Life: A Short History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 197-246.

³ Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” in The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 8, edited by Roy C. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1923), 333. For a discussion on how the North and South used religion to justify the war effort, see

Amid the uncertainty that secession engendered, many Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line looked to their religious leaders for guidance. As the shells fell on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, and an all-out war became increasingly likely, most of these religious leaders were among the chief proponents of the war. Historian Mark Noll wrote that the pulpits of the day were “transformed into instruments of political theology.”⁴ The leaders inspired young men from around the country to take up arms, justified the killing of their former countrymen, and argued that their cause was necessary in the eyes of God. Historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom concluded that the Civil War “became a kind of double holy war” where the “pulpits resounded with a vehemence and absence of restraint never equaled in American history.”⁵ Encouraged by the patriotic message of their religious leaders and assured in their providential undertaking, many soldiers were heavily motivated by religion and would volunteer, fight, and die in the brutal war that followed.⁶

As the war fervor enveloped the American churches, leaders of a relatively new religious movement professed a profoundly different message than the majority of their Protestant counterparts. Many leaders of the Disciples of Christ, a loosely organized religious group based on anti-sectarianism and primitive Christianity, used their pulpits and periodicals as a platform

Robert J. Miller, Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

⁴ Mark Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.

⁵ Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 8, 672.

⁶ Certainly, religion was not the only factor for soldiers. For an in-depth discussion on why these men fought, see James M. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

for nonviolence and peace.⁷ In September 1861, fourteen of the most prominent Disciples leaders in Missouri published a circular that implored its readers to restrain from the allure of warfare. They stated, “Whatever we may think of the propriety of bearing arms in extreme emergencies, we certainly cannot, by the New Testament, which is our only rule of discipline, justify ourselves in engaging in the fraternal strife now raging in our beloved country.” They feared the loss of unity among their Disciples brethren and warned their followers that “active military service almost invariably destroys the religious character of Christians who are drawn into it.” The signees affirmed that they could not “discharge our duty to Christ, if we see our young brethren rushing into this vortex of almost certain ruin, without an earnest and affectionate remonstrance.”⁸ These statements were reprinted and commended in nearly every Disciples newspaper around the country. Benjamin Franklin, a powerful Disciples editor in Cincinnati, hoped that the brethren would “listen to the advice of these good men, who are making such active and prayerful efforts to save the brethren from ruin, in the midst of the general wreck.”⁹ This plea was not an isolated event, but a component of a committed, biblically-based response to the outbreak of war from many of the most prominent leaders of the movement. Given the vehement patriotism that surrounded many of the leaders professing nonviolence, their stance was extremely unpopular and even considered traitorous by their communities and congregations.

⁷ Primitivism is the attempt to model the contemporary church based on the actions and writings of the early Christians found in the New Testament.

⁸ John W. McGarvey, “Circular from Preachers in Missouri,” The Christian Pioneer (Lindley, MO), September 1861, 181. Also republished in The Millennial Harbinger (Bethany, VA), October 1861, 583-84; The Evangelist (Davenport, IA), September 1861, 472-74.

⁹ Benjamin Franklin, “Remarks,” Christian Pioneer, 182. Franklin, a self-educated evangelist and editor from Indiana, was the fourth-generation descendent of John Franklin, brother of the American patriot.

With a revived interest in religion during the American Civil War, historians in recent years have emphasized the enormous influence Christian leaders had on justifying, promoting, and condoning the brutal fratricide.¹⁰ However, the influence of other religious leaders who attempted to keep their flock from joining the military has been largely ignored. In their recent study of the Mennonites and Amish during the Civil War, historians James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt justified their investigation: “If spiritual convictions could keep people from participating in a national crusade and not just lend justification, then religion legitimately becomes an independent variable in the interpretation of human choices that shaped the 1860s rather than a secondary measure of something else.”¹¹ Few historians have negated the importance of religion in influencing soldiers from entering the war, but even fewer have written about religion’s influence in keeping young men out of it. The Disciples not only provide insights into the development and execution of an unpopular peace message, but also constituted the largest group of prominent leaders in any movement or denomination outside of the traditional peace churches who professed a message of nonviolence during the Civil War.

¹⁰ The traditional texts for the influence of religion on the Civil War are Chester F. Dunham, The Attitude of the Northern Clergy Toward the South, 1860-1865 (Toledo, OH: Gray, 1942); James W. Silver, Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967); James H. Moorhead, American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., A Shield and Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987). More recent historical studies have emphasized the religious worldview of the common soldier. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles R. Wilson, eds., Religion and the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Steven E. Woodworth, While God Is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2001); David Rolfs, No Peace for the Wicked: Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009).

¹¹ James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt, Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 7.

In short, the purpose of this investigation is two-fold. The first goal of the study is to bridge the gap between Disciples and Civil War scholarship. Although the Civil War has been one of the most studied events in history, the peace movement during the war remains relatively unexamined. While James M. McPherson and many other historians have sought to answer why men fought in the Civil War, few have investigated why some did not. Even religious historian Harry S. Stout's moral history of the Civil War failed to address the issues of pacifism and nonviolence.¹² Similarly, nearly every Civil War history has excluded members of the Disciples of Christ, while no Disciples historian has sufficiently dealt with the complexities presented by the event.¹³ The historiography of the Disciples during the war has been relatively stagnant for the past half century and has not benefitted from the tremendous amount of research by Civil War historians. During the war, letters, diaries, and newspapers were filled with tales of courage, bravery, and sacrifice. If courage is defined as a person's ability to persevere in the face of difficulty, the story of the Disciples is worthy of investigation because it was equally courageous, full of brave actions, and awash in sacrifice, even though many refused to pick up a rifle.

Second, because the organization of the movement theoretically prevented an official division, many historians have concluded that the Disciples of Christ were the largest religious group not to divide during the war.¹⁴ In historian David E. Harrell, Jr.'s important social history

¹² Harry S. Stout, Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006).

¹³ The two exceptions to the exclusion were the two Disciples heavily involved in the war and politics: Brigadier General James A. Garfield and James Buchanan's Secretary of State, Jeremiah S. Black.

¹⁴ Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1948), 19; Butler, Wacker, and Balmer, Religion in American Life, 256.

of the nineteenth-century Disciples, he correctly concluded that the sectional problems exacerbated by the Civil War were central to the division between the more liberal, northern-based Disciples of Christ and the conservative, southern Churches of Christ, which was formally recognized by the movement's leaders in 1906.¹⁵ However, the unity of the brethren was not only weakened north and south of the Mason-Dixon line, but also within the regions. In fact, by the outbreak of war, the visceral debates that occurred among the Disciples did not center on the issue of slavery, constitutionality of secession, or even which belligerent was in the right. The chief point of contention was whether, based on New Testament precepts, a Christian could participate in war. Because the mail service was disrupted early in the conflict, the northern and southern brethren could not communicate with each other. In fact, the debate over nonviolence in the North was, without their knowledge, almost identical to the dispute occurring in the South. Although the Disciples' disdain for any ecclesiastical organization disallowed any form of excommunication or recognized division, some nonviolent advocates were intimidated, persecuted, and even "disfellowshipped" from their congregations. The American Christian Missionary Society, which was the only manifestation of an interstate cooperation in the movement, not only lost the support of the southern brethren as war broke out, but also suffered from the defections of the pro-war advocates during the war. After the war, Moses E. Lard, an important Disciples editor, wrote that the brethren stood as an "undivided people" and

¹⁵ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America, 1800-1865 (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1966); Harrell, "The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ," Journal of Southern History 30, no. 3 (August 1964): 261-77. Before Harrell's publication, most historians agreed with Garrison and DeGroot's contention that the postwar debate over instrumental music, and not the Civil War, was the main influence in the 1906 split. Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ; Otis L. Castleberry, They Heard Him Gladly: A Critical Study of Benjamin Franklin's Preaching (Rosemont, CA: Old Paths Publishing Company, 1963). Since Harrell's publication, however, most historians have agreed with his interpretation. Richard T. Hughes and R. L. Roberts, The Churches of Christ (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 8.

triumphantly claimed, “we can never divide.”¹⁶ In contrast to that declaration, this study argues that the leadership in the Disciples of Christ not only divided North and South, as Harrell emphasized, but also within the sections primarily over the issue of war. Although the debate over slavery weakened the unity of the movement before the war, it was the Disciples leaders’ nonviolent message that divided the movement during the conflict. In short, Harrell correctly concluded that slavery and sectionalism served as “an entering wedge” in the movement.¹⁷ But it was the issue of nonviolence that served as the hammer that forced that wedge to become a major division.

Few historians have investigated the Disciples during the mid-nineteenth century, perhaps because they were not as numerous as Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Even more problematic for non-specialists is the fact that Disciples defy all generalities and classifications. They were pacifists and belligerents, Unionists and Confederates, soldiers and noncombatants, officers and doctors, voters and nonvoters, abolitionists and fire-eaters, Republicans and Democrats. Theologically, they were both moderate and conservative, and rarely came to a consensus on any topic of importance. For instance, the initial leaders of the movement, Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, could not even agree on whether to call themselves the “Disciples of Christ” or simply “Christians.”¹⁸ Harrell accurately concluded that

¹⁶ Moses E. Lard, “Can We Divide?” Lard’s Quarterly (Georgetown and Frankfurt, KY), April 1866, 335-36.

¹⁷ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 91.

¹⁸ This essay will primarily use the name Disciples of Christ or simply Disciples to denote members of the movement. The debate over whether to call themselves “Disciples” or “Christians” was moderately contentious among the early leaders, and remains unresolved. In general, the more liberal wing that was mostly influenced by Alexander Campbell favored the term “Disciples,” while the conservative leaders like Barton Stone preferred the term “Christians.” However, many members used the terms interchangeably, and most found them acceptable.

“they were not a ‘body’ in the early years of the nineteenth century but simply a vital religious movement united around sometimes vague poles of emphasis.”¹⁹ They were held together by a disdain for church hierarchies and the liturgy of their Christian counterparts, a cadre of tireless evangelists and editors, and, most importantly, a rationalistic interpretation of the New Testament. Thomas Campbell, an important founder of the movement, gave it its mantra: “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”²⁰ Despite this simple set of ecclesiastical and theological beliefs, they could agree on little else.

However, this variance should not render them disparate or insignificant. As a vital religious movement, they grew from an estimated 22,000 adherents in 1832 to around 200,000 by 1860, becoming the fourth largest religious group behind the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians.²¹ With their numerical strength primarily in the upper South and Ohio River Valley, they resided in locations where their allegiance or participation with either side was not always assured.²² For many, the war was not an abstract concept, but an event that occurred on their doorstep. Given the diversity of opinion within the Disciples of Christ, it is little wonder that historians seeking a comprehensive examination of Christians during the war have omitted them completely. Historians Lester G. McAlister and William E. Tucker perhaps summarized it

¹⁹ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 24.

²⁰ Cited in Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1919), 581.

²¹ Edwin S. Gaustad, Historical Atlas of Religion in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 52. Joseph Belcher estimated, from Campbell’s records, that by 1857 there were 225,000 members, 2,700 congregations, and 2,225 ministers in the movement. Joseph Belcher, Religious Denominations in the United States (Philadelphia: John K. Potter, 1857), 811.

²² By 1860, there were 829 congregations in the South and 1,241 in the North. Lester G. McAlister and William E. Tucker, Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), 190.

best: “Disciples leaders marched to the sound of different drummers during the Civil War; and many refused to march at all.”²³

Several problems exist with the historiography of the Disciples of Christ Movement during the war. In general, the histories have been part of larger works detailing the overall development of the movement throughout its history. As a byproduct, the war has been used to illustrate the future divisions within the movement, instead of being viewed as a seminal event in its own right. Furthermore, these studies have largely been executed by those who belong to two of the three major streams that emerged out of the Stone-Campbell movement: the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ. This study is, as far as I can establish, the first extended investigation of the Disciples of Christ during the nineteenth century not performed by a member of the Stone-Campbell movement. This is not to disparage the quality of work done by these scholars, but I hope my work will offer new insights without the contemporary disputes among factions. To avoid this possibility, I insulated myself from the modern differences of opinion early in the research for this manuscript. In a further attempt to focus only on the wartime Disciples, I have avoided the use of materials published after the war that many scholars have consistently relied upon, such as postwar newspaper articles, memoirs, and re-written diaries that were revised for publication and undoubtedly influenced by hindsight. Historian James McPherson argued that in “all such writings the temptation is powerful to put the best face on one’s motives and behavior, to highlight noble and courageous actions and to gloss over the ignoble and cowardly.”²⁴ Consequently, unless such material can be substantiated by war sources, it has been eliminated. Furthermore, the Disciples editors and laity during the

²³ Ibid., 200.

²⁴ McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 11.

nineteenth century were remarkable writers whose prose is still highly comprehensible for modern readers, and therefore, no effort has been made to correct their grammar or spelling. They consistently emphasized certain parts of their sentences by italicizing or underlining important text. To avoid confusion, all occurrences of emphasis within quotations are the original author's device, and not mine.

The majority of the sources for this investigation are taken from the prolific publishing of the leaders of the movement. From 1820 to 1860, Disciples preachers and laymen edited over one hundred periodicals.²⁵ These publications were central to the rapid rise of the movement, especially on the frontier where few congregations had the leadership of a full-time pastor. Executed by the most influential editors and evangelists, these periodicals provided guidance and leadership for the otherwise independent and unorganized series of congregations. Disciples preacher and historian W. T. Moore concluded that the "Disciples of Christ do not have bishops, they have editors."²⁶ Historian Winfred E. Garrison remarked that the "editor's chair has come nearer to being a throne of power than any other position among the Disciples."²⁷ Their newspapers served as arenas for free discussion among the brethren to settle theological issues, interpret scripture, and promote the restoration of New Testament Christianity. The open, yet contentious debate that occurred over the nonviolent stance of many leaders, combined with the underutilized "letter to the editor" sections, provide rich primary source material. Because these newspapers generally voiced the opinions of the most important leaders, this investigation also

²⁵ Claude E. Spencer, Periodicals of the Disciples of Christ and Related Religious Groups (Canton, MO: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1943).

²⁶ W. T. Moore, Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), 12.

²⁷ Winfred E. Garrison, Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 210.

uses previously unexamined letters and diaries from lesser-known individuals, including pastors, elders, and various members of the local congregations.

In the end, the story of the Disciples of Christ Movement during the Civil War is one of a religious group in turmoil. The issue of slavery weakened this tenuous union of local churches during the 1850s, but it was the peace platform that caused great strife and division among the brethren during the Civil War. The leaders who crafted a message of nonviolence stood against the overwhelming tide of emotion as the nation engaged in a bitter struggle that pitted Christian against Christian. Although most of the major leaders chose not to advocate for either side, their position was nonetheless unpopular and divisive. Despite their fervent desire to restore the primitive church, one free of division or schism, their stance divided many congregations, estranged many friends, and weakened the unity that the leaders valued so much. The leaders who advocated for nonviolence thought that their peace message derived from the New Testament would be the one thing that would preserve unity. Ironically, it became the chief source of division among brethren attempting to remain passive in a war torn world. This spiritual combat eventually evolved into its own sort of civil war, one that took place as the American Civil War raged. This war was rhetorical and nonviolent, but it would prove as internally divisive as the war from which it sought to abstain. The following chapter examines the development and increased unity within the movement during the antebellum period that would be tested by the issue of slavery and later broken by the outbreak of war.

CHAPTER 1 - The Ordeal of Unity: The Formation and Fracturing of the Disciples of Christ Movement, 1800-1860

In many respects, the Disciples of Christ were both beneficiaries and products of the tremendous changes that occurred in American society during the antebellum period. Due to an increased birth rate and the availability of land, the population of the United States exploded from just over five million in 1800 to over thirty million by 1860.¹ Many Americans ventured westward, spurred by the availability of cheap land and the promise of a better life. To accommodate this sprawling population, a veritable transportation revolution occurred, during which improved road, rail, and canal systems were created. Disciples evangelists who journeyed across the country to preach to their widespread congregations greatly benefitted from these transport-related advances. The invention of the steam engine allowed for faster travel down major waterways, including the Ohio River, which flowed through the heart of Disciples country. Transport was not the only area of technological advancement that helped the Disciples. Improved printing technology and an increase in capital to support publishing ventures put Bibles and other religious materials into the hands of an increasingly literate public. By the 1850s, nearly 90 percent of the free population was literate.² When not being visited by traveling evangelists, the Disciples congregations were nurtured by several newspapers that helped ordinary Americans interpret Scripture. The Disciples also formed several organizations such as the American Christian Bible Society, a Sunday School and tract society, and several publication

¹ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 vol. 1 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 8.

² James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 20.

societies to generate religious material that was delivered by an increasingly efficient and extensive federal postal service.³ Such transformational changes in American society heavily contributed to the success of the Disciples during the antebellum period.

The social and political environment in the country was also favorable to the Disciples of Christ. They emerged in an era of religious populism characterized by a belief that individuals of any education level could grasp the central tenets of Christianity. The Disciples rejected educational barriers to the ministry and integrated the democratic spirit of the Jacksonian Era into their congregations. Individuals who lacked a theological background, had received little training, and had never expressed a formal creed, could arm themselves with little more than the Bible and set out to reach the thousands of disparate communities throughout the nation. Furthermore, the Disciples embraced the egalitarian impulse that had been unleashed in the new republic, which manifested itself in a refutation of elitism and ecclesiastical church structure in deference to the wisdom of the people.⁴ They formulated their discourse in language familiar to the common person. Their message was not laced with complex forms of theology or doctrine, but a simplified, populist plea molded to their listeners in understandable terms.

The Early Restoration Movement

³ According to historian Mark R. Wilson, the post office was “easily the largest part of the civil side of the government” with “between 20,000 and 30,000 employees before and during the [civil] war.” Mark R. Wilson, The Business of Civil War: Military Mobilization and the State, 1861-1865 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 78; Thomas H. Olbright, “American Christian Bible Society,” The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement, edited by Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunavant, and D. Newell Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 24.

⁴ For an in-depth treatment of how the democratic spirit affected the religious environment between 1780 and 1830, see Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

Although there were several leaders, such as James O’Kelly, Abner Jones, and Elias Smith, who were part of the larger Restoration Movement, the two most important early leaders of the Disciples of Christ were Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell.⁵ Born in Maryland and educated in North Carolina, Stone struggled with the Calvinistic doctrines of total depravity, predestination, and unconditional election, but was ordained by the Presbyterian Church and moved to Kentucky in 1796.⁶ When asked whether he accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith, he replied in a qualified affirmative: “I do as far as I see it consistent with the Word of God.”⁷ He took charge of two churches in Kentucky and became a central figure in the Cane Ridge Revival, one of the most famous camp meetings in American history. However, Stone soon rejected the idea of predestination and began preaching the Arminian belief of free will. Because of this, he was forced to leave the Synod of Kentucky, along with a few likeminded ministers.

Stone and his fellow dissenters formed an independent Springfield Presbytery in 1803, but quickly dissolved the cooperation a year later because they believed it was not sanctioned by the New Testament. Their final document, The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery, outlined the belief system Stone would follow for the rest of his life. The document stated that the Presbytery would “die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ

⁵ Historian Richard T. Hughes has argued that the shaping of the Disciples tradition mainly came from these two leaders. Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 2-3.

⁶ For extensive studies on Stone, see Charles C. Ware, Barton Warren Stone: Pathfinder of Christian Union (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1932); William Garrett West, Barton Warren Stone and Christian Unity (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954); Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith, 92-116.

⁷ Milton V. Backman, Christian Churches of America: Origins and Beliefs, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1983), 160.

at large; for there is but one body, and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.” Furthermore, it described their democratic vision, under which each congregation would “choose her own preacher, and support him by a free will offering without written call or subscription--admit members--remove offences; and never henceforth delegate her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.” And most important, it argued that Christians would reject all creeds and confessions of faith and “take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven.”⁸ In short, The Last Will and Testament became one of the founding documents of the Disciples Movement, elaborating their ecumenical vision, democratically led congregational polity, and firm reliance on the Bible. Based on these principles, Stone led the movement with great success in Kentucky, Tennessee, and southern Ohio, and by 1830 it had grown to an estimated 15,000 members.⁹

In 1807, Thomas Campbell, an Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian in Ireland, moved to the United States to become a minister in the Chartiers Presbytery in southwestern Pennsylvania.¹⁰ Much like Stone, he began to question the ecclesiastical polity and Calvinism of his church. His positions angered many important leaders, which prompted two years of

⁸ Cited in Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 109-10. Of the six people who signed the document, only David Purviance and Stone remained committed to the principles outlined. John Thompson and Robert Marshall eventually returned to the Presbyterians while Richard McNemar and John Dunlavy later joined the Shakers. Errett Gates, The Disciples of Christ (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1905), 78.

⁹ Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 115.

¹⁰ McAlister and Tucker, Journey of Faith, 24. This religious affiliation was the result of several schisms in the Presbyterian Church. The first group disputed the practice of “lay patronage,” or a patron’s ability to provide for a minister without congregational approval. A group protested, “seceded,” and formed the Associated Synod of the Secession Church. This association was split again when a faction refused to take a loyalty oath to the civil government (Anti-Burghers), and the Old Lights rejected revisions to the Westminster Confession of Faith. See Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 275-76.

hearings before the Presbytery. Faced with almost certain dismissal from his post in 1808, he resigned and then formed the Christian Association of Washington County, Pennsylvania.

Although Campbell was an important evangelist and educator, his most lasting legacy was the mantra he gave the movement: “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”¹¹ Campbell’s son Alexander was formulating similar beliefs despite being an ocean away in Scotland. Unbeknownst to his father, Alexander Campbell had been greatly influenced by the Haldane and Sandemanian movements that professed many of the same ideas as the restorationists in America.¹² A mere twenty-one years old upon his arrival in the United States in 1809, Alexander was one of the foremost figures of the movement until his death in 1866.

Between 1823 and 1830, Alexander Campbell edited the popular newspaper the Christian Baptist. Even with ties to many Baptist congregations, he lambasted the human institutions, creeds, and doctrines of Calvinism he believed had infiltrated the Baptist churches. Although he professed a “natural aversion to controversy,” Campbell participated in five major debates during his career that brought increased popularity to both himself and the movement.¹³ Using the New Testament as his guide, Campbell constructed arguments with the skill of a lawyer in language accessible to the common audience. When addressing matters that were not touched upon by the Scripture, he urged his brethren to regard them as opinion, and not matters of faith. By doing so, he believed the Disciples could escape the divisionary forces that troubled other religious groups, thereby uniting all Christians under the banner of one faith.

¹¹ Cited in Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, 581.

¹² Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 6-7.

¹³ Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 168.

In the ultra-competitive religious atmosphere of the antebellum period, the Disciples attempted to distinguish themselves by professing a plain and comprehensible message for ordinary people. Historian W. Clark Gilpin wrote: “The remarkable growth of the churches was prompted by the clarity of their message and the ambiguity of their identity.”¹⁴ No Disciples leader better exemplified the success of this simple message than one of the founders, Walter Scott. An important evangelist on the Western Reserve, Scott created the “five-finger exercise,” which he used to detail the formula for salvation based on Acts 2:38. Using a finger to illustrate each step, he taught that faith, repentance, and baptism of the individual would result in the forgiveness of sins and entrance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ After witnessing a sermon by Scott in 1828, Samuel Robins, a deacon of a Disciples church in Windham, Ohio, noted the simplistic genius of Scott’s five point illustration: “It was a common practice for him [Scott] to illustrate the five items ... by holding up his left hand and using his thumb for Faith, and so on; then contrast it with the five points of Calvinism; and thus he made the Scripture order of the gospel so plain, that little boys could carry it home.”¹⁶

As discussed before, the Disciples rarely found unanimity on any significant topic. The most basic example of this problem was whether to call themselves “Christians” or “Disciples.”¹⁷

¹⁴ W. Clark Gilpin, “The Disciples and the Churches of Christ: Common Roots, Divergent Paths,” in Where the Spirit Leads: American Denominations Today, edited by Martin E. Marty (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 178-79.

¹⁵ Mark G. Toulouse, “Walter Scott,” in Encyclopedia, 675.

¹⁶ Cited in Amos Sutton Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1876), 143. Scott, an evangelist for the Mahoning Baptist Association, created this method and reportedly doubled the membership of the association in a year. Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 13.

¹⁷ Because this issue has reappeared constantly throughout their history, historians have likely overemphasized its importance in the early movement. Campbell’s objection to the name “Christian” appears to have been less about it not being scriptural, and more that it had been

In general, however, their basic belief system was similar to the one held by the Baptists. They endorsed believers' baptism through immersion, the Lord's Supper as a memorial, independent congregations, religious liberty, and an individual's ability to interpret scripture.¹⁸ Their approach to the Scriptures was simple. Where the commands and ordinances of the New Testament were clear or "expressed," they were to follow them. In areas where the Scriptures were less clear or "silent," Christians were to interpret them rationally, but regard them as matters of opinion and not faith. They held reverence for the Old Testament because it was indispensable for understanding the New Testament, but argued that the latter represented a new covenant that should take precedence and govern the Disciples' actions. Campbell declared that the New Testament was "the law and constitution of the primitive church" and would serve as "the constitution and law of the restored church."¹⁹

In 1832, Campbell and Stone realized that the differences between their two movements were minimal and that both could benefit from cooperation among their followers. This did not mean that they imposed regulation or pressure on churches to merge their congregations, but only encouraged the groups to recognize each other as fellow members of the "Christian Church" and to engage in fellowship. The merger was remarkably successful, with a minimal number of disruptions in a few congregations. For instance, historian Herman A. Norton concluded that the

associated with Arianism and Unitarianism. Indeed, there were debates over the question, but the brethren also described themselves as "reformers," "reformed baptists," "restorers," and "primitivists." The names they found most contentious, ones given to them largely by outsiders, were "Campbellites" and "Stoneites" because these inferred a human institution. For a discussion of this issue, see Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 14-16; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 5.

¹⁸ Backman, Christian Churches of America, 167.

¹⁹ Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 4," The Christian Baptist (Buffalo, VA), June 6, 1825, 221.

process in Tennessee went “smoothly.”²⁰ The Disciples were careful not to set up any ecclesiastical authority, but instead formed a “brotherhood” of believers. Although the term brotherhood would later become a euphemism for denomination, Gilpin argued that it “intended to suggest that at the heart of the organic unity of humanity stood the unity of the church, both as a sign pointing toward the single destiny of the nations and as an instrument for achieving that destiny.”²¹

Perhaps the most important difference between Stone and Campbell was their religious worldviews. Historian Richard Hughes described Stone’s theology as an “apocalyptic worldview,” where humans were too flawed to usher in the millennial age. Although some of Stone’s followers maintained this view to the point of premillennialism, most did not. To illustrate this, Hughes described his beliefs: “If human society was to be renovated and renewed, that kind of transformation could be accomplished only by the power of God. In the meantime, however, the Stoneites eagerly anticipated the time when God would establish His kingdom and rule throughout the earth, and they sought to live their lives as if the kingdom of God were fully present in the here and now.”²² Accordingly, Stone’s pessimistic view of man influenced his beliefs of nonparticipation in government, including voting, and the separation of the earthly kingdom from the celestial. Campbell, on the other hand, was much more optimistic and believed human progress could usher in the millennium. Although Campbell was continually cautious of the influence of politics in the movement, he encouraged his listeners to “vote like

²⁰ Herman A. Norton, Tennessee Christians: A History of the Church of Christ (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee (Nashville: Reed and Company, 1971), 28.

²¹ W. Clark Gilpin, “Communal Theology of Disciples of Christ,” in Classic Themes of Disciples Theology edited by Kenneth Lawrence (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1986), 41.

²² Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith, 6.

Christians.”²³ He believed Americans lived in a “divinely favored and beloved country” that held a “preponderating influence on the destinies of all the world.”²⁴ The movement’s great success in its relatively short existence convinced Campbell that his work in America was integral to the restoration of the primitive church.

Nonviolence

Despite these divergent worldviews, both evangelists came to the conclusion that nonviolence would be central to the unity of the ecumenical church. Nearly every historian of the Disciples of Christ has described these religious leaders as “pacifists.” Historically, it is essential to consider that this term held little to no currency before the twentieth century. Furthermore, it has been misused as a blanket term for those opposed to warfare, even though there were diverse reasons for many of the leaders’ encouragement of nonviolent action. For instance, the “Circular from Preachers in Missouri,” while a stern call for nonparticipation in the war, was not truly a pacifist document because it still allowed for the bearing of arms in “extreme emergencies.”²⁵ Stone and Campbell looked to Matthew 22:21, which stated: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” For most of the Disciples, the verse was quite clear. The brethren were supposed to be a part of the world, but the will of God stood paramount to all earthly concerns. Stone argued that human governments were illegitimate, and, therefore, participation in warfare on their behalf was not compliant with the teachings of Jesus. He told his listeners to be submissive to the government,

²³ Cited in Harrell, *A Quest for a Christian America*, 57.

²⁴ Campbell, “The Destiny of Our Country,” *Millennial Harbinger*, August 1852, 449-52.

²⁵ John W. McGarvey, “Circular from Preachers in Missouri,” *Christian Pioneer*, September 1861, 181.

but to perform few duties for the civil authorities besides paying taxes. His stance resembled that of the traditional peace churches, who also argued for nonparticipation in the civil government.²⁶ In an article on the Sermon on the Mount, Stone described the kingdom of Christ as the “kingdom of peace” and noted that “a nation professing Christianity yet teaching, learning and practicing the arts of war cannot be of the kingdom of Christ.”²⁷ Even though he died in 1844, Stone heavily influenced the second-generation leaders who would advance a peace message during the Civil War.

From the very first issue of the Christian Baptist and through the outbreak of the Civil War, Campbell professed a nonviolent message. Central to the Campbell’s nonviolent stance was his belief that the New Testament alone should govern Christian actions, which he detailed in a sermon entitled the “Sermon on the Law” before the Redstone Baptist Association on September 1, 1816. Based on his reading of Romans 8:3, Campbell argued that the mosaic law of the Old Testament “could not give righteousness and eternal life,” but the new covenant brought by Jesus set forth new forms of worship, discipline, and church organization.²⁸ In this manner, Campbell could deemphasize the divinely sanctioned wars and violence in the Old Testament without completely disregarding it. He focused the majority of his writing about peace on the New Testament. Based on his reading of the Beatitudes, he stated that there were

²⁶ The Mennonites, Quakers, and Brethren form the traditional peace churches that have generally opposed violence and participation in civil government. For how these groups dealt with the Civil War, see Peter Brock, Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 689-942.

²⁷ Stone, “Lecture on Matt. V. VI. And VII. Chapters,” The Christian Messenger (Georgetown, KY), July 1844, 65.

²⁸ Romans 8:3 (King James Bible), “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Campbell, “Sermon on the Law,” Millennial Harbinger, September 1846, 502.

“no beatitudes for heroes, no benedictions for conquerors, no glory for a soldier covered with wounds in defense of his country. Such victors, and heroes, and patriots are no where mentioned with honor in the New Testament.”²⁹ When speaking about his adopted country, his message was almost always patriotic, and sometimes bordered on nationalistic. However, his ultimate goal was the unity of all Christians under the New Testament. Campbell, who was characteristically rational in his conclusions, argued that violence was the antithesis of Christianity. He stated that “the spirit of war and the spirit of Christ are as antipodal as light and darkness, as good and evil.”³⁰

The first time the Disciples’ nonviolent beliefs were challenged as a community was the outbreak of war against Mexico in 1846. Campbell approached the war as he did every issue. He launched a series of articles entitled “War” in 1846. He first surveyed the New Testament for precedent, and then created a rational, biblically based argument and hoped it would be followed. Although the articles were written about war in the abstract, there is little doubt his readers would apply his advice to current events. In his review of the Sermon on the Mount, he explained that it “is an exponent of the Savior’s mind and will on the subject of war. If he would not have any of them to render evil for evil, and if he pronounced the highest honor and blessing on the peace-makers, who can imagine that he could be the patron of war!”³¹ Benjamin Franklin, an important second-generation Disciples leader, emphasized the separation of kingdoms and argued there was a “great distinction between the kingdom of Christ and every other kingdom.

²⁹ Campbell, “War,” Millennial Harbinger, November 1846, 641.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. Harold L. Lunger, a biographer of Campbell, wrote, “The only issue on which Campbell consistently turned to the teachings of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount for directives for the Christian’s duties as a citizen was in the matter of war.” Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 244.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds—we contend not with flesh and blood—not with the arm of the flesh but with the sword of the Spirit—the word of God.”³² However, the Mexican-American War had many Disciples supporters in the South. James Shannon, a staunch proslavery advocate, saw the war as vital to the extension of slavery. Other leaders supported the war effort as a form of civil obedience, while still others professed anti-Catholic sympathies to support the war against the predominantly Catholic nation.³³ However, these voices were disparate and lacked an organ for the transmission of their message.

Even considering the southern Disciples dissidents, the war with Mexico never generated the controversy over the issues of nonparticipation or nonviolence that would occur later during the Civil War. The social pressure and demand for volunteers was certainly not as high in the 1840s. Abraham Lincoln’s initial call for 75,000 militiamen after the attack on Fort Sumter would equal the number of volunteers fielded by the United States government during the entire Mexican-American War.³⁴ Most Americans saw the war as an extension of slavery, and a strong antiwar movement existed, especially in the Whig Party. Campbell and Franklin’s arguments that Christians could never participate in war were essentially blended into the larger antiwar movement.

³² Ben Franklin, “Christianity and War,” The Western Reformer (New Paris, OH; Centerville, Milton, IN), March 1847, 310-13.

³³ See Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 142-44.

³⁴ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 274; Robert E. May, “Mexican War,” The Oxford Companion to United States History edited by Paul S. Boyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 497.

Slavery

Although the divisive nonviolent stance of the Disciples leaders is the topic of this manuscript, the issue of slavery before the war weakened the unity of the movement. Furthermore, because slavery was central to why young men took up arms in 1861, the subject deserves extended examination.³⁵ Historian Sydney Ahlstrom summarized: “Had there been no slavery, there would have been no war.”³⁶ With few exceptions, the early leaders of the Disciples of Christ Movement were against the institution of slavery, but not necessarily proponents of immediate emancipation. As early as 1800, Stone, still a member of the West Lexington Presbytery, submitted a resolution in Kentucky that declared slavery “a moral evil, very heinous, and consequently sufficient to exclude such as will continue in the practice of it from the privileges of the church.”³⁷ Although Stone would retreat from his position on slavery as a test of fellowship, he inherited slaves on two separate occasions and went to great lengths to educate and free them when they became of age. Campbell had also owned slaves via inheritance, but always freed them.³⁸ He attempted to rectify the problem politically and attended the 1829 Virginia state constitutional convention as a delegate and attempted to add an antislavery amendment. Against the premier statesmen of the day, including James Madison,

³⁵ For discussion on the slavery issue, see Robert O. Fife, “Alexander Campbell and the Christian Church in the Slavery Controversy” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1960); Jess Hale, “Ecclesiastical Politics on a Moral Powder Keg: Alexander Campbell and the Christian Church in the Slavery Controversy,” Restoration Quarterly 39 (1997): 65-81; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 91-138.

³⁶ Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 649.

³⁷ Williams, “Barton Warren Stone,” Encyclopedia, 716.

³⁸ Campbell wrote that “I have set free from slavery every human being that came in any way under my influence or was my property.” Campbell, “Our Position to American Slavery-- No. VIII,” Millennial Harbinger, June 1845, 259.

James Monroe, and John Marshall, Campbell was ultimately unsuccessful.³⁹ Like many Americans, Stone and Campbell believed the best way to end slavery was through colonization, but both became disillusioned with that solution as slavery remained entrenched in the American system.

Campbell's policy on slavery was ultimately moderate. He knew that any stance on the issue of slavery would ferment dissent among the brethren and, therefore, only offered his thoughts on slavery cautiously. By 1845, the issue of slavery, among other things, had split the Methodists and Baptists along sectional lines.⁴⁰ Knowing that discussion of the question could cause a serious divide in the Disciples Movement, Campbell initially tried to avoid the issue in his newspaper the Millennial Harbinger. However, the disruptions in other religious bodies and constant queries by the brethren finally elicited a response from Campbell. In 1845, he published a series of articles entitled "Our Position to American Slavery," wherein he carefully outlined the various arguments on the issue and then looked to the New Testament for answers. After voicing his disdain for the slave system, he stated two important conclusions. First, the New Testament did not outlaw slavery as long as the relationship was executed with "Christian discipline" and subject only to God. In searching the New Testament, Campbell found that Jesus lived in a time when slavery existed, yet did not condemn its practice. He found "not one verse in the Bible inhibiting it, but many regulating. It is not, then, we conclude, immoral."⁴¹ Second,

³⁹ McAlister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, 129.

⁴⁰ For the divisive impact of the slavery question on the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, see C. C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nations: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

⁴¹ Campbell, "Our Position to American Slavery--No. V," Millennial Harbinger, May 1845, 193.

he argued that slaveholding status should not be a “term of communion.” In fact, he criticized the abolitionist who invoked “discontent or insubordination on the part of the slave” and concluded it was “highly unchristian.” He closed his article with a plea for unity:

Every man who loves the American Union, as well as every man who desires a constitutional end of American slavery, is bound to prevent, as far as possible, any breach of communion between Christians at the South and at the North. No sensible abolitionist, who either loves the Union or who desires the amelioration of the condition of the slave, can look upon the disruption of the Methodist community, according to the philosophy of Mason’s and Dixon’s line, but with the most profound regret. Any one pleased with such a result, as to its bearings upon slavery, is a fanatic rather than a philanthropist or a Christian.⁴²

Although he believed that slavery was not beneficial to the nation or Christianity, Campbell nevertheless valued the idea of unity over the destruction of the peculiar institution. He optimistically thought the nation would rid itself of slavery and hoped his moderate approach would end the discussion on the issue and prevent division. In a glimpse of what would occur in the future, John Kirk of Ohio disagreed with Campbell’s position and declared that he would “neither patronize priest nor paper, that is not strictly anti-slavery.”⁴³ However, Harrell correctly concluded that the “articles pried open the floodgates which were already bulging under the pressure of disgruntled and impatient brethren on both sides of the momentous question-- even the enormous influence of Alexander Campbell could not hold back the deluge.”⁴⁴

The 1850s

Despite these growing problems, the period from 1832 until the mid-1850s was one of tremendous growth and cooperation among the brethren. Harrell argued that the “key to their

⁴² Ibid., 195-96.

⁴³ John Kirk, Letter to the editor, Millennial Harbinger, January 1851, 49.

⁴⁴ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 107.

success was simple confidence in the literalistic restoration of New Testament Christianity. Their program of restoration was based on simple reforms: the abandonment of all names except such biblical terms as Christian and Disciple; regular participation in the Lord's Supper every first day of the week; and the establishment of independent congregations with biblically authorized officials."⁴⁵ By 1850, nearly every state with a sizeable Disciples population had formed a missionary society. Garrison and DeGroot described the Disciples twenty years prior to the Civil War as "youthfully vigorous," and had already "achieved a unity of purpose, organized state and national conventions of workers and a society for missions, and founded colleges for youth and ministerial training."⁴⁶ Between 1836 and 1866, thirty-four colleges were established, funded, and operated by members of the movement.⁴⁷ The crowning achievement of cooperation was the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849, which sent missionaries as near as Kansas, and as far away as Jamaica and Jerusalem.⁴⁸

However, below the surface, there were some fundamental changes occurring in the movement. The Disciples had always acted as outsiders who identified themselves in terms of what they were not, instead of what they were. Historian Michael W. Casey observed that the "Churches of Christ started on the margins, virtually ignored and when noticed by those in power

⁴⁵ Harrell, The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900: A Social History of the Disciples of Christ (Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973), 4.

⁴⁶ Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 231.

⁴⁷ Cummins, "Higher Education, Views of in the Movement," Encyclopedia, 390-92.

⁴⁸ For the development of the missionary society, see Earl Irvin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 vol. 1 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1949), 149-227.

on the political front, they were reviled and ridiculed.”⁴⁹ Much like Campbell and Stone, many of the converts were siphoned away from the larger religious groups. But as their numbers and wealth increased, they entered a period of acculturation. Once satisfied with their simple message and place as outsiders, the Disciples began to seek increased engagement with the world. Emboldened by their great success, they began searching for respect. Their periodicals became more numerous, they established colleges and institutions for women, and they became involved in the popular social reforms of the day. In short, the line that separated the spiritual and earthly kingdoms had become increasingly blurred.⁵⁰

Furthermore, most of the first-generation leaders who had steered the movement away from denominationalism and sectarianism had passed away. Of the four major founders of the movement, only Alexander Campbell lived to see the first battle of Bull Run in July 1861. However, the forerunners’ positions were filled by a cadre of capable second-generation leaders who would continue the nonviolent stance during the difficulties of the Civil War. Among these were Benjamin Franklin, John W. McGarvey, Moses E. Lard, Tolbert Fanning, and David Lipscomb.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Michael W. Casey, “From Religious Outsiders to Insiders: The Rise and Fall of Pacifism in the Churches of Christ,” Journal of Church and State 44, vol. 3 (Summer 2002): 455. It would be an understatement to state that many religious groups disliked the Disciples of Christ. The Disciples continuously criticized their positions in debates and periodicals, but also “saved” many members in their denomination. To make matters worse, the Disciples tabulated and regularly printed these “new additions” and specified from which denominations they came. For instance, see “Progress of the Gospel,” Christian Pioneer, October 1861, 238.

⁵⁰ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 62-90. McAllister and Tucker, Journey of Faith, 159-88. Casey, “From Religious Outsiders to Insiders,” 455-57.

⁵¹ There have been several biographies about these men with varying levels of success. See Castleberry, They Heard Him Gladly; Earl Irvin West, Elder Benjamin Franklin: Eye of the Storm (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1983); Kenneth L. Van Deusen, Moses Lard, That Prince of Preachers (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1987); W. C. Morro, “Brother McGarvey”: The Life of President J. W. McGarvey of the College of the Bible Lexington, Kentucky (St.

Although the issue of slavery had simmered below the surface, it only emerged when major national events directed attention to it. Unfortunately for the unity of the brethren, slavery became the primary issue of the 1850s and never subsided. In 1851, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society revealed that the “Campbellites,” as their enemies called them, were the largest per capita slaveholding group in America with 101,000 slaves.⁵² Although the accuracy of such figures can be questioned, it nonetheless indicates that, despite the growing abolitionist movement, the Disciples were part of the increasingly lucrative slave system in the South. The establishment of the Fugitive-Slave Law in 1851, which dictated that escaped slaves must be returned under penalty of law by the people in the North, brought the issue to the forefront again. After restating his thoughts on slavery, Campbell advised Christians to abide by the law because it was “most obviously and perfectly constitutional.”⁵³ Isaac Errett, the Corresponding Secretary of the Ohio Missionary Society, objected to Campbell’s conclusions and questioned whether acquiescence to the civil authorities was appropriate when the law was “unrighteous.” He discussed the case of the slave Onesimus in the book of Philemon, whom Campbell cited as the scriptural justification for the Fugitive-Slave Law, because Paul advised the slave to return to his master after his conversion. Errett argued that Paul “harbored” Onesimus until his conversion and allowed the slave to return voluntarily to his master instead of notifying the authorities to apprehend him as the Fugitive-Slave Law dictated. He argued that “the only law in the Bible

Louis: Bethany Press, 1940); James R. Wilburn, The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1969); Earl Irvin West, The Life and Times of David Lipscomb (Henderson, TN: Religious Book Service, 1954); Robert E. Hooper, Crying in the Wilderness: A Biography of David Lipscomb (Nashville: David Lipscomb College, 1979).

⁵² Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 468.

⁵³ Campbell, “The Fugitive Slave Law,” Millennial Harbinger, January 1851, 30.

relating to fugitives” was found in Isaiah 16:3, which he quoted: “Hide the outcasts; discover not the fugitive.” He concluded that “the unrighteousness of the law itself is such that no plea of constitutionality, could it be ever so clearly sustained, can suffice to overcome a Christian’s sense of right, and the strong pleadings of humanity in a heart filled with love to God and man.”⁵⁴

Despite Campbell’s moderate view on slavery, Disciples on both sides of the issue became more radical. The most militant proslavery agitator was James Shannon, who served as president of four colleges in his lifetime and was probably one of the most educated Disciples. Renowned throughout the South for his defense of slavery, he spent the 1850s until his death in 1859 in Missouri tirelessly promoting the institution. In 1855, he addressed a proslavery convention in Missouri and lambasted abolitionism by arguing that the “right of property in slaves is sanctioned by the light of Nature, the Constitution of the United States, and the clear teaching of the Bible, a deliberate and persistent violation of that right, even by government, is as villainous as highway robbery; and, when peaceable modes of redress are exhausted, IS A JUST CAUSE OF WAR BETWEEN SEPARATE STATES, AND OF REVOLUTION IN THE SAME STATE.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Isaac Errett, “The Fugitive Slave Law,” Millennial Harbinger, November 1851, 629-30.

⁵⁵ James Shannon, Domestic Slavery as Examined in the Light of Scripture, of Natural Rights, of Civil Government, and the Constitutional Power of Congress (St. Louis: Republican Book and Job Office, 1855), 24. Shannon opined that “it would be manifestly preposterous to take the precepts, which are designed to regulate the intercourse of Christians with each other, and apply these to their intercourse with the world.” James Shannon, “Social Progress,” unpublished manuscript, University of Missouri Archives, Lewis Hall, cited in Barry C. Poyner, Bound to Slavery: James Shannon and the Restoration Movement (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1999), 105-6.

During the 1850s, a vocal, well-funded abolitionist wing emerged within the movement to counter Campbell and Franklin's moderate stance on slavery. The establishment of North Western Christian University in Indianapolis, Indiana, primarily through the funds of radical abolitionist Ovid Butler, became a source of agitation for immediate emancipation.⁵⁶ The most ardent abolitionist was John Boggs, the editor of the North-Western Christian Magazine in Cincinnati. Before the first issue of this periodical, Boggs and other abolitionists had to use the more moderate newspapers to proliferate their ideas and could not mount a sustained attack on the institution. Established in July 1854, he used his newspaper to counter the radical proslavery arguments of Shannon and other southerners, but saved his most caustic remarks for the more moderate men like Campbell and Franklin. From its inception, the North-Western Christian Magazine campaigned for the "promotion of primitive Christianity, general education, temperance, and universal liberty."⁵⁷ Throughout the years, the former three topics earned less and less space in the paper, as the more controversial topic of abolitionism garnered more. Without mentioning names, Boggs's introductory article criticized the silence of Christians in the brotherhood for allowing the institution of slavery to persist. He wrote: "Let the church clear its skirts from this foul stain... we loathe and abhor the system, as contrary to the genius both of our country and our religion."⁵⁸ Boggs, like most Americans at the time, believed the destinies of Christianity and America were intertwined and feared that the nation was descending into a slave-owning society that could only be rectified through agitation by true Christians. Each monthly issue of the magazine contained relentless attacks on the institution of slavery and

⁵⁶ The school later became Butler University in 1877.

⁵⁷ John Boggs, "Salutatory," North-Western Christian Magazine (Cincinnati, OH), July 1854, 1-5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

criticized the direction of the nation. Boggs frequently used articles written for other newspapers by Fredrick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and other abolitionists, and even advertised Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin without charge. He regularly lambasted actions by the government, including the Fugitive-Slave Law (1851), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), and the Dred Scott decision (1857). Whereas Franklin and Campbell regularly ignored political issues, Boggs not only kept his readers informed of the latest actions related to slavery, but also provided his opinions on the events.⁵⁹ After a few years of confrontation with Boggs, Campbell seemingly began closing his newspaper to discussion on the issue of slavery. Despite being a proponent of free discussion on the important topics of the day, Campbell refrained from using Boggs's name even though the abolitionist had once served as a valuable traveling agent collecting subscriptions for the Millennial Harbinger.

Boggs's greatest rival in the press was not the proslavery agitators of the South, but ironically his fellow Cincinnati editor Franklin, despite their nearly identical Christian beliefs. Both defended a strict adherence to the New Testament, abhorred sectarianism and denominationalism, believed slavery was a moral evil, and attended the same congregation. However, despite these similarities, Boggs and Franklin became embroiled in a bitter debate that fractured the Disciples of Christ Movement over the issue of slavery and exemplified the growing division in the movement. Although slavery provided the catalyst for division, the rupture was caused by more than just a disagreement over the peculiar institution. More importantly, they differed in their perception of the proper relationship of a Christian with the world. Above all, Franklin was committed to the restoration of primitive Christianity free from

⁵⁹ Franklin did experiment with a political section when the Review changed to a weekly in 1858. However, the foray was quickly abandoned in favor of religious articles.

denominationalism or schism. Like Campbell, Franklin believed that unity among Christians was the most important goal of his life, which would be thwarted if worldly political issues, such as slavery, were able to divide the movement and impede it from its divine mission. Conversely, Boggs valued the idea of Christian unity, but not at the expense of allowing the institution of slavery to continue undisturbed. He believed true Christianity could not permit the “greatest moral evil” to exist, and that silence among the brethren over slavery was incongruous with New Testament teachings. These arguments would later be transferred to his support for participation in the war. For Boggs, Christendom could not be pure if the sin of slavery existed, even if it took the sword to ensure its demise.

In the second issue of the American Christian Review in February 1856, Franklin laid out the stance of the paper with regard to slavery in an article entitled, “Where is the Safe Ground?”⁶⁰ Writing in his characteristic first person plural fashion, he restated the middle-ground approach previously taken by Campbell, and he added that “some of our friends seem to think ... that we are not to be allowed the privilege of silence, without suffering a pretty heavy penalty We have been scolded, bemeaned, threatened, and called a ‘coward,’ a ‘time-server,’ a ‘dumb dog,’ and ‘popularity seeker,’ not because of what we have said, but because of what we have not said—because of our silence.”⁶¹ Such accusations did not come, at least not at that moment, from the columns of the North-Western Christian Magazine. However, Boggs later accused Franklin of maintaining his “non-committal” stance so that he did not upset the

⁶⁰ Franklin, “Where is the Safe Ground?” The American Christian Review (Cincinnati, OH), February 1856, 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

proslavery subscribers of his newspaper in the South.⁶² He believed Franklin's position ignored the already apparent division in the brotherhood caused by slaveholders and argued that the design "of the anti-slavery agitators in the Church is to purify it and purge from it, the great sin of oppression, that thereby a real, and complete union may exist between the members of the Church wherever found—whether North or South."⁶³ In short, Christian unity could only occur if the sin of slavery were eliminated from the brotherhood. Throughout this direct rebuttal, Boggs maintained a semi-respectful tone. He concluded, "Towards the author we entertain none other than the kindest feelings."⁶⁴ However, this collegial amiability would not last.

Attempting a new tactic, Franklin responded that the actions by Boggs and the abolitionists misappropriated the use of their energy. He published an article from a contributor that reflected his beliefs: "Whatever labor and time, whatever interests have been expended by Christians upon these [issues], have been done at the expense of our Master's cause, thus robbing the arsenals of Christianity to fight in behalf of secular causes."⁶⁵ Franklin defended his stance of not rebuking the "sin of slavery" and stated, "We have long since determined to pay due respect to the wisdom of God and not to be governed by the wisdom of man."⁶⁶ Franklin's belief in the

⁶² Boggs, "How Can Slavery Be Abolished by the Gospel," North-Western Christian Magazine, May 1856, 349. Because Franklin did have readership in the South that would have undoubtedly ended their subscriptions if the American Christian Review became an abolitionist newspaper, there is an element of truth to the accusation. However, Franklin's stance on slavery was longstanding and existed before becoming an editor and securing southern readers.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁶⁴ Boggs, "Politics and Religion," North-Western Christian Magazine, September 1856, 80.

⁶⁵ S., "To the Brethren in Kentucky: Number II," American Christian Review, January 1857, 17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

separation of kingdoms kept his focus on heavenly matters and the promotion of Christianity, and not on political grievances. However, Boggs viewed this “non-committed” stance as inconsistent with the proactive example of Jesus in the New Testament. To Boggs, Franklin and his followers were like “Judas of old,” traitors to the cause of Christianity.⁶⁷

If the issue of slavery were the starting point for exposing the differing worldviews between the two editors, the disagreement over the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) further fractured their already tenuous relationship and exposed the growing division in the churches. From its inception in 1849, the ACMS encountered resistance from a minority of Disciples leaders who feared that such societies represented ecclesiastical organization. Although Campbell initially opposed its formation, he and other leaders eventually came to support the missionary society because individual congregations voluntarily participated and could remove themselves at any point. The ACMS is important for three reasons. First, it represented the only semblance of interstate cooperation among the Disciples. Second, in the ensuing years, the issue of slavery could no longer be avoided when it was discovered that one of the missionaries owned a slave, and another used his post in Kansas to advocate for abolition. Slavery could no longer be a matter of opinion, as Campbell had argued, when it was directly tied with the functioning of the movement. Finally, when southerners removed their support for the Society due to abolitionist sentiment, and later pro-war Unionists did the same, it became a concrete sign of division within the movement that could not be ignored.

Commissioned by the ACMS as its first international missionary, Dr. James Turner Barclay traveled to Jerusalem to evangelize the Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land. Born into

⁶⁷ “The General Missionary Society,” North-Western Christian Magazine, April 1858, 312-14.

an aristocratic Virginia family, Barclay owned a few slaves, which he sold before accepting the position in the ACMS. Since the North-Western Christian Magazine's inception, Boggs was critical of Barclay's slaveholding past and repeatedly questioned his stance on slavery.⁶⁸ While serving on his mission, Barclay inherited more slaves, which he quickly sold to John Tyler, a fellow Disciple. Franklin, ever cognizant of the implications on the society's mission, inquired of Tyler whether the rumors surrounding Barclay's slaveholding status were true. Although it is not exactly clear how, Tyler's response to Franklin was intercepted by Boggs, who then accused Franklin of being complicit in a cover-up. Boggs alleged that the Missionary Board, on which Franklin served as the Corresponding Secretary, hid Barclay's slaveholding status from the society and the churches that financially supported his missions. He stated that Campbell's Millennial Harbinger and Franklin's Review "virtually endorse the traffic in the flesh and blood, and bones, and souls of those church members, who, for seventeen hundred and fifty 'pieces of silver,' were transferred from the pious (!) Barclay to his Christian (!) brother John Tyler, Elder of the Scottsville congregation."⁶⁹ For the abolitionist Boggs, it was not enough that Barclay had sold his slaves. He believed that, instead, Barclay should have freed them and stopped the perpetuation of servitude. Franklin quickly defended Barclay's actions, but Boggs remained unsatisfied and became more vocal against the ACMS.

In 1857, Boggs approved when Franklin stepped down as the Corresponding Secretary of the ACMS. He stated that Franklin's replacement, Isaac Errett, was "an anti-slavery man—one

⁶⁸ For instance, see Boggs, "Dr. Barclay, and Slavery," North-Western Christian Magazine, October 1854, 108-10.

⁶⁹ Boggs, "Dr. Barclay and the Missionary Society," North-Western Christian Magazine, August 1857, 86-88. The exclamation marks were used by Boggs to denote that he used the terms "pious" and "Christian" to describe Barclay and Tyler were ironic given their actions.

who we know where to find.”⁷⁰ However, this approbation quickly turned to disillusionment when Errett appeared to choose the “non-committal” path of Franklin. Errett, who at one time criticized Campbell’s stance on the Fugitive-Slave law, wrote in the Review, “I am an anti-slavery man. This is known to the brethren, east, west, north and south. But I am not an extremist. All my intimate anti-slavery friends know that I never was the friend of church secession doctrines, that I have always insisted that slave holding was not a sufficient reason for disturbing church fellowship.”⁷¹ Dismayed, Boggs became more radical and threatened division, “We look upon slave-holding as being the ‘maximum of all evils,’ and consequently not to be tolerated in Christianity. Slave-holders should be labored with kindly and affectionately, and with ‘all long suffering,’ but if they will not reform their lives ... the fellowship of the congregation should be withdrawn from them.” He continued, “We can stand anything from avowed enemies, but we confess it grieves us to be stabbed in the house of a friend. It aggravated the injustice inflicted upon our Savior that he was betrayed by a Judas—by one of his professed friends.”⁷² Such biting rhetoric would soon turn even more severe.

It was not just Barclay’s actions in the ACMS that troubled the Disciples. Pardee Butler, a fiery abolitionist and missionary commissioned to Kansas, angered Franklin and Errett when they learned that he was using his missionary position to further the cause of abolition. Errett responded that, although Butler had the right of free speech, it would be unwise for him to preach the anti-slavery doctrine. He was even more critical of those who attempted to use the

⁷⁰ Boggs, “American Christian Missionary Society,” North-Western Christian Magazine, November 1857, 157.

⁷¹ Cited in “The General Missionary Society,” North-Western Christian Magazine, April 1858, 312.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 312-14.

issue of slavery to divide the Society. He pronounced that slavery had become a “pet notion” of the abolitionists, and a device of “Satan intended to sow discord and create strife and divisions.”⁷³ Pardee Butler sent a response to the Review defending his actions, but Franklin refused to publish it because of the increased sectionalism it could cause.⁷⁴

Dissatisfied with the ACMS, Boggs, who changed the name of his newspaper to the Christian Luminary in 1858, began recruiting likeminded Disciples for the creation of another missionary society. With the help of his regular contributor Jonas Hartzel and the money of Ovid Butler, Boggs sent out circulars to northern Disciples leaders inviting them to a convention to discuss a new society that would address the issue of slavery. Additionally, Butler and Boggs began a tour of the northern churches to raise money for the enterprise. Although Boggs did not technically carry out the project in “secret” as Errett and Franklin would later contend, it is notable that the call to action was not placed in his or any other newspaper as was commonly practiced. Furthermore, the circular did not contain the names of its promoters, and, although it traveled as far as New York, it did not find its way to Franklin who was only a few blocks away from where it was published. In response to rumors of the beginning of a “Northwestern Christian Missionary Society,” Errett countered with a biting critique of such “secret and mischievous movements,” which he claimed were sectional in origin.⁷⁵

In August 1859, Boggs revealed what Franklin and Errett already knew. He announced a November 1 meeting to form the new society and suggested that those who were silent on the

⁷³ Errett, “Pardee Butler—Mission to Kansas,” American Christian Review, November 23, 1858, 186.

⁷⁴ Franklin, “Elder Pardee Butler, Elder Jonas Hartzel, Etc.,” American Christian Review, January 25, 1859, 14.

⁷⁵ Errett, “Sectional and Factious Movement,” American Christian Review, August 23, 1859, 135.

issue of slavery should stay in the ACMS.⁷⁶ Butler accused Errett of not only using the ACMS to impose an ecclesiastical structure on his fellow brethren, but also of establishing a monopoly over missionary work. Boggs, in characteristic fashion, was more caustic. He accused Errett and the Review of “vindictiveness and malice” and perpetuation of an “unmitigated falsehood.” He continued: “Those who can fraternize with a society composed in part at least, of slaveholders, will be left free to do so without ‘let or hindrance’ on the part of the new society.”⁷⁷ In short, the new missionary society would be a separate entity and have dual purposes: to propagate primitive Christianity and end the institution of slavery. By late 1859, it was clear that a constructive discussion between the American Christian Review and the North-Western Christian Magazine was improbable. In September, Errett disregarded any form of civility, and wrote an article-length diatribe against Boggs. His a personal attack called Boggs “stupid,” “reckless,” and “beneath our notice.” His response to the formation of the abolitionist missionary society in the Review was notably bitter:

His course towards the General Missionary Society and her officers has been marked by so much unfairness, recklessness, and even downright falsehood, that we do not consider him entitled to any respect whatever. He is notorious only as a mischief-maker, so far as we have known any thing of his editorial career.... We are done with John Boggs. We have drawn out what we wished to know; and the brethren at large will yet thank us for unmasking this shameful trick.⁷⁸

With the dialogue deteriorating, it was clear that slavery had caused a major rift in the movement. Harrell concluded, “By 1860 abolitionist Disciples were rapidly uniting around

⁷⁶ Ovid Butler to Elijah Goodwin, August 15, 1859, American Christian Review, September 6, 1859, 143.

⁷⁷ Cited in Errett, “Jack-With-a-Lantern,” American Christian Review, September 20, 1859, 149.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

separate institutional loyalties and many of them were prepared to make the slavery issue a ‘test of fellowship.’”⁷⁹

Descent into War

Despite leaders’ attempts to retain unity in the movement, events outside of the Disciples’ hands were bringing the nation closer to war. On October 16, 1859, John Brown launched his unsuccessful raid on the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, which divided the country even further. After the raid, John G. Fee, a Disciples preacher and abolitionist from Kentucky, took the pulpit at radical abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher’s Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, and said: “We want more John Browns; not in manner of action, but in spirit of consecration; not to go with carnal weapons, but with spiritual; men who, with Bibles in their hands, and tears in their eyes, will beseech men to be reconciled to God. Give us such men ... and we may yet save the South.”⁸⁰ Fee’s sermon was then edited and distorted as an outright approval of Brown’s actions and distributed throughout the South where he and his fellow missionaries were deemed “traitors” and “apologists for insurrections.”⁸¹ James Garfield, a former advocate of nonviolence and future Civil War brigadier general and President of the United States, penned an emotional entry into his diary after Brown was hanged, stating that “it seems as though God’s warning angel would sound through that infatuated assembly the words of a patriot of other and better days the words ‘I tremble for my country when I reflect that God

⁷⁹ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 134.

⁸⁰ John G. Fee, Autobiography of John G. Fee (Chicago: National Christian Association, 1891), 146-47; this speech is authenticated by the New York Tribune. See Victor B. Howard, The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 126.

⁸¹ Howard, The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste, 126-27.

is just, and his Justice will not always slumber.’ Brave man, Old Hero, Farewell. Your death shall be the dawn of a better day.’⁸²

Although the majority of Disciples were moderates when it came to the slavery issue, there were increased tensions exacerbated by extremists on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. Many Disciples editors cautioned their readers to not get caught up in the political strife. A writer in the Union Christian Intelligencer, a Disciples newspaper in Charlottesville, Virginia, encouraged his readers to “Lay aside your secular papers for a time, read the Bible—think less about about [sic] the wants of State, and more about the wants of the church. We would not undervalue the State, but we would exalt the Church—we would not honor Caesar less, but we would honor God more—we would not love Washington less, but we would love Messiah more.”⁸³ On the eve of the 1860 election, Franklin called for the brethren to distance themselves from earthly conflict:

Our kingdom is not of this world. It lifts its own above the world—above all sectional and party strife—above all carnal, fleshly, sensual and devilish feuds—to the expanded, exalted work and glorious work of our God, in gathering together in one all things in Christ; all the pure, the holy, the friends of Jesus—those who call upon his name out of a pure heart. We are not in a struggle for earthly glory, nor earthly honors, nor earthly gain. We look to a glory imperishable—to an inheritance incorruptible and a crown unfading.⁸⁴

Amid the storm clouds that surrounded Lincoln’s election and the disunity growing in the movement, Franklin still held an optimistic belief for the Disciples of Christ: “Never were our

⁸² Garfield, December 2, 1859, in James A. Garfield, The Diary of James A. Garfield: Volume I 1848-1871 edited by Harry James Brown and Frederick D. Williams (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 344-45.

⁸³ “Politics Versus Religion,” The Union Christian Intelligencer (Charlottesville, VA), January 31, 1859, 2.

⁸⁴ Franklin, “Great Missionary Meeting,” American Christian Review, October 30, 1860, 176.

prospects brighter—never were we fuller of hope—never were we more impressed with the immutable position we occupy.... Thanks to heaven for the unity of Spirit and the bond of peace.”⁸⁵ Little did Franklin know that the “bond of peace” would soon be tested over the next four years and shattered because of the war. This experience is the subject of the next chapter.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2 - Battle Cry of Peace: The Divisive Nonviolent Message, 1861

The country President Abraham Lincoln inherited in November 1860 was deeply sectionalized and already on the path to civil war. In many respects, the four candidates vying for the White House participated in two separate elections: Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in the North, and John Bell and John Breckinridge in the slave states.¹ Lincoln ascended to the highest office in the land although he received less than 40 percent of the popular vote. In the North, meanwhile, he carried every free state except New Jersey, but failed to gain a single vote in ten southern states.² Historian David Potter argued that Lincoln's election "was nothing less than a revolution that the country had committed itself electorally to a party which opposed slavery, at least to the extent of agreeing with Lincoln that the institution must 'be placed in the course of ultimate extinction.'"³ John G. Parrish, editor of the Disciples newspaper Christian Intelligencer in Bowling Green, Virginia, summarized the feelings of many in the

South:

The result which was feared, is now an historical fact. Mr. Lincoln, the Republican candidate, has been elected President of the United States for four years from the 4th day of March 1861, by a purely sectional vote—not one single southern state of the confederacy casting, for him, a single vote. We verily believe that war between our country—UNITED—and two of the most powerful European nations, combined, would not be as great a calamity as the election of Mr. Lincoln."⁴

¹ David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 438-39.

² David H. Donald, Lincoln (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 256.

³ Potter, Impending Crisis, 445.

⁴ John G. Parrish, "Troublous Times," Christian Intelligencer (Bowling Green, Richmond, VA), November 14, 1860, 2.

Formerly published as the Union Christian Intelligencer, the newspaper only a year before had implored its readers to “Lay aside your secular papers.”⁵ Since Parrish became the editor in 1860, however, he had focused the Disciples newspaper increasingly on political and social issues.⁶ Despite his displeasure with the result of the election, Parrish rejoiced that the Disciples “have kept the bond” during the political campaign and reminded his readers that the “disciple of Christ is a citizen of Heaven and a subject of the King in Zion.—He therefore owes his paramount allegiance to his King.”⁷ In a response to the article, a Pennsylvanian reader reciprocated the amiable feelings of the North, noting that “there is scarcely a man to be found that wishes evil to our brethren of the South.”⁸ In short, Parrish was firmly proslavery and despised Lincoln, but the results of the election did not overtake Parrish’s belief that political differences should not divide the brethren. However, the outbreak of violence in April 1861, would change his message from one of peace to a call for war.

The Secession Winter, 1860-1861

Throughout the secession winter, the editors of the Disciples of Christ newspapers displayed increased cooperation and sociable feelings. John Boggs’s Christian Luminary had suspended publication, and the unity of the Disciples had benefitted from the lack of monthly agitation generated by the abolitionist newspaper. In the North, the majority of the Disciples

⁵ A. B. Walthall, “Politics Versus Religion,” Christian Intelligencer, January 31, 1859, 2.

⁶ For instance, Parrish heavily criticized the radical abolitionist George Cheever in May 1860, calling him and other leading abolitionists “mutineers,” “infidels and cheats.” Parrish, “Clerical Politicians,” Christian Intelligencer, May 1, 1860, 2.

⁷ Parrish, “Troublous Times,” Christian Intelligencer, November 14, 1860, 2.

⁸ Union, “May God Preserve Our Union,” Christian Intelligencer, November 27, 1860, 2.

editors attempted to stay removed from discussion of secession. Elijah Goodwin, an evangelist and editor of the Christian Record in Indianapolis, Indiana, was a major influence on the organization of Northwestern Christian University. Nowhere in the Disciples Movement was antislavery sentiment more vocal and pervasive than in Indianapolis, with the epicenter at the college. However, Goodwin did not offer his thoughts on the growing political crisis in the Record: “As a religious Editor, we do not consider it our duty to enter the arena of political strife, and, therefore, shall not take it upon ourself to define the cause of, or prescribe remedies for, our present troubles.” He hoped that the Union would be saved, but believed political discussions threatened Christian unity. He wrote: “But let what come that may, in the political affairs of our country, we hope, and pray that these matters may be kept out of the church of God; and that even if the States should sever the ties that have so long bound them together, the christian brotherhood will still remain a unit.”⁹ James A. Butler of Alabama agreed with this sentiment and proclaimed, “The political storm-god has been howling through this section, to the detriment of our finance and the quiet of the country! But, while Caesar’s friends are at war about the spoils and honors of earth, Christ’s friends must labor on and labor ever for the triumph of the cross.”¹⁰

In private, however, many of the Disciples were beginning to admit that war was becoming increasingly likely. Burke Hinsdale, a Disciple and close friend of James Garfield, wrote the future President on January 13, 1860: “I have concluded to do nothing for the Union—to scan Horace and learn the Homeric dialect—and build no theories. Still I think the ultimate settlement of this slavery question will be a bloody one—whether it is to be settled now I do not

⁹ Elijah Goodwin, “To the Baptists of the South and West,” The Christian Record (Indianapolis, IN), January 1861, 25.

¹⁰ James A. Butler, “The Past Year,” Evangelist, January 1861, 44.

know, but I hardly think it will.”¹¹ By the time of Hinsdale’s letter, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama had already joined South Carolina in secession. Garfield not only saw the war as imminent, but also desirable. He replied: “I do not now see any way this side a miracle of God which can avoid civil—Civil War—with all its attendant horrors. Peaceable dissolution is utterly impossible. Indeed, I cannot say as I would wish it possible.” By January, it was clear that Garfield had broken with the nonviolent stance of many of the other major Disciples leaders. He believed that any demands made to the seceded states would not be followed and that the institution of slavery would continue to be perpetuated “without the shedding of blood.” He suggested that the North should “aim and prepare to defend ourselves and the Federal Government.” He concluded: “I believe the doom of slavery is drawing near—let war come—and the slaves will get a vague notion that it is waged for them and a magazine will be lighted whose explosion must shake [the] whole fabric of slavery.”¹²

In the border states, an intense division was growing between the Unionists and Secessionists. At Bethany, located in what would become West Virginia in 1863, the Unionists were in the majority. Similar to Lincoln, Campbell was silent on the current events throughout the secession winter. In fact, the only time the Millennial Harbinger addressed the events was a short article from an unknown author who wrote, “No matter how many stars may illuminate the flag of our country, (and may they never wane or grow less) the One Star--the Star of Bethlehem-- will be our safe, as it is our only cynosure; and under it we will live and die; under

¹¹ Burke A. Hinsdale to James Garfield, January 13, 1861, in Garfield-Hinsdale Letters: Correspondence Between James Abram Garfield and Burke Aaron Hinsdale edited by Mary L. Hinsdale (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969), 52.

¹² Garfield to Hinsdale, January 15, 1861, in Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, 54-55.

it we will fight and conquer!”¹³ In Tennessee, the state was sharply divided on the issue of secession. On February 9, the issue was voted down when introduced at a state convention.¹⁴ The vote revealed strong secessionist sympathies in the center of the state, while the East strongly supported the Union. Tolbert Fanning, the most influential Tennessee Disciple and editor of the Gospel Advocate, was a strong proponent of nonparticipation in civil government and an outspoken opponent of the American Christian Missionary Society. Like Stone, Fanning preferred to distance himself from earthly governments and argued for nonviolence. His beliefs were heavily influenced by John 18:36, which he used to defend his positions before, during, and after the war.¹⁵ Amid the debate on secession in February, Fanning expressed his displeasure with the actions of the Christian ministers in his state: “How dare the brethren—the preachers—bring themselves to the fearful conclusion, to plunge their swords into the hearts of their brethren?”¹⁶ Whereas Campbell was silent on the crisis, Fanning penned an extended article in nearly every edition of the Gospel Advocate until the war forced the paper to suspend publication in December 1861. Fanning believed that the politicians had failed the American people and believed that Christian leaders possessed a moral duty to address the controversy instead of remaining silent. He argued that the “teachers of religion must meet the issues. The storm has been raised mainly by preachers, and it must be quieted by the ministers of God. Mere

¹³ Unity of the Faith, “Signs of the Times,” Millennial Harbinger, January 1861, 42.

¹⁴ Norton, Religion in Tennessee, 1777-1945 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1981), 62-63.

¹⁵ John 18:36 states, “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

¹⁶ Fanning, “Duty of Christians in Reference to the Political Crisis of 1861,” The Gospel Advocate (Nashville, TN), February 1861, 35. When speaking of the “brethren,” Fanning was most likely referring to Christians in general, and not specifically the Disciples of Christ.

politicians can not accomplish the work. We must meet the scrupulous on the arena of sound logic and truth, and put them to flight, or yield all that is demanded.”¹⁷

By March, the nation was on the brink of war. The Disciples, for the most part, attempted to assuage the passions unleashed during the secession winter by secular and religious leaders. A writer in the Richmond Enquirer of Virginia read Lincoln’s inaugural address and prepared for battle: “Sectional war, declared by Mr. Lincoln, awaits only the signal gun from the insulted Southern Confederacy, to light its horrid fires all along the border of Virginia.”¹⁸

Writing forty miles north of Richmond where secessionist sentiment was strong, Parrish believed that the religious leaders deserved the highest blame for the controversy:

The clerical politicians, especially, as a class, have done more to subvert the best government God ever vouchsafed to man, than any other class in the country. They have immolated, the sacred ministerial functions, on the altar of base, sectional, political passion! In pursuing politics they have discovered, and set forth, a new God, unknown to the Bible, to inflame the fierce passions of one section against another section!¹⁹

David Burnett, a Cincinnati minister, feared the brewing divisions among the Disciples.

Following Lincoln’s inauguration on March 4, Burnett wrote the brethren in the South hoping to keep the unity in the movement: “There may be, and doubtless are, individual differences in our political opinions, but these differences in political opinions, cannot, MUST NOT, SHALL NOT DIVIDE US AS CHRISTIANS! In the name of humanity be it forbidden!”²⁰ With rumors of war growing, Franklin responded to a query from a Tennessee Disciple about whether a

¹⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁸ Richmond Enquirer, March 9, 1861, cited in Stout, Upon the Altar of the Nation, 18.

¹⁹ Parrish, “Stand Fast,” Christian Intelligencer, January 24, 1861, 2.

²⁰ David S. Burnett to Parrish, March 7, 1861, Christian Intelligencer, March 21, 1861, 2.

Christian could fight in war: “We know of no law of Christ authorizing us to fight for our country.”²¹ When the war came, the mail service was disrupted, and in some cases stopped completely, therefore making similar communication between the sections imploring peace nearly nonexistent.

It may be difficult for modern readers to understand the incredibly tense nature of the country during the secession winter. Although Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had seceded from the Union by February 1, the nation was unsure of what the future would hold.²² With both secular and religious exhorters fanning the flames of war in the North and South, the country was politically divided. However, the secession movement had somewhat abated, as no state had left the Union in the last two and a half months. Meanwhile, Lincoln was silent about his vision for the country during the crisis. When asked by a Missouri newspaper for a comment that would lower tensions in the state, he replied, “I could say nothing which I have not already said, and which is in print and accessible to the public.”²³ In February, the seceded states formed the Confederate States of America and demanded, among other things, that all federal forts in the South be abandoned. Lincoln knew that an attack on the South would endanger losing the allegiance of the remaining eight slave-holding states in the Union. In Lincoln’s inaugural address, in which historian Stephen B. Oates described the new President as “restrained and reassuring,” he pledged that the national government would not interfere with the

²¹ Franklin, “Queries and Answers,” American Christian Review, March 19, 1861, 3.

²² Although this break was theoretically damaging to the Disciples’ vision of an ecumenical church, the Disciples never really gained a foothold in the Deep South until the postwar period. The seceded states by February 1, 1860, only contained an estimated 9, 408 Disciples, or about 5 percent of the total movement. Garrison and DeGroot, Disciples of Christ, 328-29.

²³ Cited in Doris Kearns Goodwin, Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 294.

institution of slavery, nor would it invade the southern states. However, the Union would continue to “hold, occupy, and possess” the federal forts still under its control.²⁴ He assured the South that the “government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to ‘preserve, protect and defend’ it.” Although no Disciples newspaper commented on the speech, Lincoln’s conclusion expressed many of the same feelings the advocates of nonviolence had been conveying for the previous months. He expressed in his conclusion, “I am loth [*sic*] to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies, but friends. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”²⁵ In the end, this was the same message being professed by Franklin, Fanning, and the other major proponents of nonviolence.

The Outbreak of War

Many historians of the Disciples of Christ Movement during the Civil War have mistakenly referred to the leaders who held nonviolent beliefs as “neutral” or “moderate” because they did not actively promote the war on either side.²⁶ The leaders may not have been advocating for the war effort, but they were far from neutral in their stances. Franklin in Ohio and Fanning in Tennessee were among the most active promoters of peace in the movement, but

²⁴ Stephen B. Oates, With Malice Toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln (1977; repr., New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 216-17.

²⁵ Abraham Lincoln, “First Inaugural Address,” in The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 4, 271.

²⁶ For instance, see Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 152; McAllister and Tucker, Journey of Faith, 200. Historian B. J. Humble interpreted that Franklin and Fanning believed that that the Disciples should “stand aloof” from the war. B. J. Humble, “The Influence of the Civil War,” Restoration Quarterly 8 (1965): 237-38.

both believed their respective regions were politically correct.²⁷ Furthermore, their nonviolent positions were not moderate, but, in reality, extremely radical and remarkable. Because a strong antiwar movement existed in the North during the Mexican-American War, it was accurate to refer to the Disciples peace message as “moderate.” Their message against all warfare, had intertwined with the larger Whig-driven antiwar movement. In addition, fewer troops were raised, and the pressure on young men to join the army was substantially lower than during the Civil War, which ignited the passions of the entire nation.²⁸ The zeal during the Civil War was so great, it even penetrated the historically pacifist Quaker denomination in Indiana where support for war “was the rule rather than the exception.”²⁹ Amid the immense patriotism that the war had unleashed stood many of the leaders of the Disciples of Christ who espoused a dramatically different message than most of the nation. Their stance was not moderate, but a radical challenge to an almost overwhelming surge of war fervor that engrossed the country. Furthermore, they derided the pro-war factions in the movement for their passionate drive for war, but the leaders who advocated for nonviolence were no less dogmatic, inflexible, and

²⁷ Franklin stated that he had never said anything “against the government, the Administration, or the officers of the government, in all we have published.” Fanning would later concede “the right of revolution,” refer to Lincoln as a “sectionalist President,” and call the war the “American Revolution of 1861.” Franklin, “Our Vindication,” American Christian Review, August 20, 1861, 2; Fanning, “Religious Aspect of the American Revolution of 1861,” Gospel Advocate, July 1861, 205-208.

²⁸ This is not to suggest that there was no societal pressure to join the army or support the war in the prior international conflict. In comparison to the Civil War, however, it was much less pronounced. A Presbyterian newspaper in the North reported during the Civil War, “It is not like our last war [Mexican War], a war of conquest and acquisition. It is a war to defend the life of our nationality, the sacredness of our Constitution, the permanence of our Union and the being of our Government.” Christian Herald and Presbyterian Recorder (Cincinnati, OH; Chicago, IL), April 25, 1861, cited in Stout, Upon the Alter of the Nation, 40.

²⁹ Jacquelyn S. Nelson, Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), xviii.

aggressive in their demands for peace. In short, the movement divided because the holders of these intransigent viewpoints could not compromise due to their staunch belief that their stance was that of a true Christian.

If the events moved slowly between South Carolina's secession in December and Lincoln's March inauguration, they took on a furious pace in April 1861. On April 12, the Confederates under the leadership of P.G.T. Beauregard attacked Fort Sumter and initiated the Civil War. Historian Harry Stout stated that the firing on Fort Sumter unleashed "twenty years of accumulated frustration, occasional violence, and overheated rhetoric."³⁰ In response, Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers. North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky were so revolted by the directive that they declined to send any men. Five days after the initial attack, Virginia joined the Confederacy.³¹

Because the majority of the Disciples newspapers were published monthly, most were unable to respond to the events at Fort Sumter until May. Although this policy worked for most of their history, the accelerated proceedings meant the April edition was written for a country in peacetime, but was read by country mired in war. The exception was an article written by Franklin, who responded a day after Virginia's secession with a clear declaration of nonparticipation:

We cannot always tell what we will or will not do, but we can sometimes tell what we will not do. There is one thing, however things may turn or whatever may come, that we will not do and that is, we will not take up arms against, fight and kill the brethren we have labored 25 years to bring into the kingdom of God. Property may be destroyed, and

³⁰ Stout, Upon the Altar of the Nation, 19.

³¹ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 265-93.

safety may be endangered, or life lost, but we are under Christ and we will not kill or encourage anybody else to kill or fight the brethren.³²

No matter how popular Franklin was among the brethren, his voice was but one in a sea of religious and political newspapers that reported and opined about the tremendous events in the country. Historian Chester Forrester Dunham wrote that, after Fort Sumter, “by and large, the Northern Clergy, in most cases officially, and in almost all other instances unofficially, loyally supported the Federal Government.”³³ In the South, there were around eight hundred newspapers being published in April 1861, with at least 10 percent being dailies.³⁴ The majority of which were calling for war. By the time the other major leaders could respond in May, the country was drastically different than it had been the previous month. Many of the Disciples leaders responded with impassioned denunciations of the war, but some of the most outspoken proponents of nonparticipation during the secession crisis had capitulated and became the proponents of war they had once railed against.

Virginia’s decision to secede had tremendous repercussions on the war. At the very least, it provoked Lincoln’s first choice to command the federal army, Robert E. Lee, to decline his offer and lead the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia instead.³⁵ It also greatly influenced the Disciples in the state. Parrish described the scene in Virginia: “The roll of the drum, the blasts of the bugle, the tramp of the soldiery, the neighing of the war steed, in every village and

³² Franklin, “What Course Shall We Pursue?” American Christian Review, April 18, 1861. Cited in West, Eye of the Storm, 170.

³³ David B. Chesebrough, “God Ordained This War”: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 84.

³⁴ J. Cutler Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 26.

³⁵ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 281.

hamlet of our State, kindle a military enthusiasm.” Parrish, who cautioned his readers in January about the divisionary forces of political preaching, now transformed his newspaper into a deeply sectional periodical that blamed the North for the war:

In this terrible crisis, every Christian will meet all the demands of patriotism, and he will meet them, cheerfully, as a Christian duty. . . . Against our protests and against our most solemn and sincere appeals for peace, our enemies, with a madness which could be superinduced only by Satanic influences, have proclaimed a crusade against us, and in the mouth of their Godless and graceless mercenaries, they have placed the diabolical battle cry, “booty and beauty!” Reckless o religion! reckless of civilization! the North has commenced a crusade, the atrociousness of which finds no parallel on the foulest pages of history. . . . The Satanic press, the religious press, and the pulpit, with a unanimity unrivaled, and a blood-thirstiness which is revolting, appeal to the basest passions of the basest of their people, to invade our State, with fire and sword, and to quench the fire on our hearthstones with our own blood and the blood our children.³⁶

Such biting rhetoric was dramatically different than the same newspaper only a month earlier.

A. B. Walthall, a correspondent for the newspaper in Marion, Alabama, believed the conflict had become “irrepressible” and wrote that in “the voice of the people, we hear the voice of God, telling us to seek in division, that quietude, which we have not been able to find in union.”³⁷

Parrish, without the least bit of irony, praised the Disciples newspapers in the North for their declaration of nonparticipation, and called the American Christian Review a “model religious paper.” He felt that the federal government was launching an “unholy crusade” with the “unbridled spirit of anti-christ” and praised the northern brethren who did not support a federal government that answered the South’s appeals for peace by “invading our state with armies of mercenaries, by destroying our property, by killing our people, and by audaciously threatening to

³⁶ Parrish, “Keep Christ in your Hearts,” Christian Intelligencer, May 16, 1861, 2.

³⁷ A. B. Walthall, “Union and Division,” Christian Intelligencer, May 16, 1861, 3.

subjugate, and to hold and to treat us as a conquered people.”³⁸ In short, he believed the Disciples could not fight for the Union, but could fight to repel it. By the end of May, the newspaper began publishing more political events, and even gave its readers military terminology to help them discuss the war reports.³⁹ And by June, there was little doubt as to which side the paper was supporting. They republished Jefferson Davis’s “Proclamation to the People of the Confederate States” and gave practical hints for volunteers, including how to perform military surgeries, treat the wounded, and stop bleeding. The war enveloped the newspaper to such an extent that Parrish devoted at least one of the four pages in each issue to military intelligence.⁴⁰

In Tennessee, the sentiment was shifting to side with the secessionists following Lincoln’s call for federal troops.⁴¹ A Nashville newspaper, Union and American, called for secession and war: “Are we but the bastard sons of the heroes who here won for our state, the glorious distinctive appellation of ‘THE VOLUNTEER STATE?’”⁴² Fanning noted the tremendous changes in the churches: “Many of the clergy have converted their religious temples into synagogues of satan. They call upon all their gods for help, rouse their frantic hearers to loud plaudits, vehement shouts and most fiendish pledges, never to rest till the last one who

³⁸ Parrish, “American Christian Review,” Christian Intelligencer, May 30, 1861, 2.

³⁹ “Military Terms,” Christian Intelligencer, May 30, 1861, 1.

⁴⁰ Jefferson Davis, “Proclamation to the People of the Confederate States,” Christian Intelligencer, June 13, 1861, 1; “Practical Hints for Volunteers,” Christian Intelligencer, June 13, 1861, 2. Another page in each issue was filled with advertisements, which left only two pages per edition for religious material.

⁴¹ Norton, Religion in Tennessee, 63.

⁴² Union and American (Nashville, TN), April 16, 1861, cited in Donald E. Reynolds, Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), 202.

doubts their right to judge, rule and destroy shall be exterminated.”⁴³ In Davenport, Iowa, Aaron Chatterton, an important Disciple preacher and editor of the Evangelist, emerged as a promoter of the nonparticipation message, and stated, “It is not ours to meddle with the affairs of Government; to criminate, recriminate, or defend any policy or act which may have brought about this state of things. It is upon us, and we are only left to mourn because of it.” Chatterton had distanced himself from political involvement and only voted in a presidential election once. Instead, he chose “to stand in a position disconnected from all party, and, as much as possible, from party feeling, that all our energies might be devoted to the interests of a “kingdom which cannot be moved.”⁴⁴ Fanning commended Chatterton’s “well seasoned sentences” and republished an excerpt in the Gospel Advocate.⁴⁵

Missouri was deeply divided over the issue of secession. Before the war, munitions were already being compiled by both sides and violence broke out in St. Louis in May. Historian James McPherson noted that “Missouri appeared headed for a civil war within its own border.”⁴⁶ By 1860, there were an estimated twenty thousand Disciples in Missouri, yet the brethren of the state lacked a stable periodical until the establishment of the Christian Pioneer in June 1861, in Lindley, Missouri.⁴⁷ Edited by John Howard, a moderate proslavery advocate, the newspaper

⁴³ Fanning, “The Armor of God,” Gospel Advocate, May 1861, 134.

⁴⁴ Aaron Chatterton, “Perilous Times,” Evangelist, May 1861, 274.

⁴⁵ Fanning, “The Views and Exhortations of Christian Editors,” Gospel Advocate, May 1861, 139-42.

⁴⁶ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 292.

⁴⁷ Garrison and DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ, 328-29.

became the voice of nonparticipation and nonviolence for Disciples in the state.⁴⁸ It was one of a few newspapers edited by the brethren to be printed continually throughout the war. Howard, who was later joined by likeminded David T. Wright, operated the press in the volatile Missouri environment and did not take a moderate approach on the issue of war. Instead, he launched a proactive call for nonviolence. In June, Howard articulated that the “the religion we profess is one of peace, and in its spirit opposed to war and bloodshed, we are bound to use all the means we can to promote peace among men—all men everywhere—and to refrain from being instrumental in stirring up, or promoting strife and contention among our fellow men, and particularly among our brethren.”⁴⁹ While Howard joined most of the other major Disciples leaders in advising his readers to abstain from politics, he was also preparing them for the difficulties that the war would bring. At the behest of his readers looking for guidance, Howard wrote an article entitled “Duty of Christians at the Present Crisis,” which cautioned his readers against volunteering:

We shall not attempt to decide whether it is right or wrong for Christians to bear arms, in defense of what they may conceive to be right, whatever that may be. We leave that between themselves and their God, guided by his inspired word. But one thing we can say, and which has always been our sentiment on the subject, and that is, that a Christian can not volunteer, as it is termed, to bear arms. If he does so at all, let it be by compulsion, the compulsion of the country, or of “the powers that be,” and have the right and authority to demand it of him.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Howard was an important early leader in the movement in western Tennessee and established congregations in Carroll County, Roan’s Creek, and Crooked Creek. In Paris, Tennessee, he pastored a tremendously successful congregation and founded the Christian Reformer in 1836, and the Bible Advocate in 1842. Norton, Tennessee Christians, 33-35.

⁴⁹ Howard, “Duty of Christians at the Present Crisis,” Christian Pioneer, June 1861, 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

Howard would incessantly preach this message for the next several months, but would later campaign against conscription when Confederate and Union governments instituted the draft in 1862 and 1863 respectively.

In June 1861, Campbell finally broke his silence on the issue of the war. However, the article displayed little of the genius that had made him such a popular speaker and debater throughout his career. His signature method to address any issue was to look for guidance in the New Testament and create a logical and coherent argument. However, this particular article contained few references to Scripture and lacked his characteristic rationality. Although the body of the argument was poorly constructed, he concluded the piece in classic Campbell fashion: “Of all the monstrosities on which our sun has ever shone, that of professedly Christian nations, glutting their wrath and vengeance on one another, with all the instruments of murder and slaughter, caps the climax of human folly and gratuitous wickedness.”⁵¹ At age seventy-three, Campbell would have a few more fights left in him, but it was clear that the weight of the peace stance needed to be shouldered by other leaders.⁵²

While Campbell’s abilities to guide the brethren began to falter, John W. McGarvey addressed the question that must have been on the minds of many of the young men in the movement.⁵³ In a widely circulated article among the brethren, McGarvey answered the question, “Shall Christians Go to War?” He believed that the people of the United States had grown prideful in their prosperity, like Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and God had invoked

⁵¹ Campbell, “Wars and Rumors of Wars,” Millennial Harbinger, June 1861, 348.

⁵² In his later years, Campbell was accused by others, including Fanning, of senility. See Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith, 44.

⁵³ McGarvey was born in Kentucky and educated at Bethany College. He spent the early part of the war in Missouri, but moved to the Main Street Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1862. M. Eugene Boring, “John W. McGarvey,” Encyclopedia, 506.

retribution for the nation's sins. He believed that he would "never feel proud of my country again." Noting the "whirl of passion" that enveloped society, he described the state of the country: "The pulpits and presses, and prayers of sectarian churches, are strangely mingling with the strains of martial music, and the turbulent eloquence of partisan leaders and recruiting officers, to heat up the blood of the people, and drive them to the battle field." In answering the question in the article's title, McGarvey crafted one of the most remarkable arguments for nonviolence during the war. Using the New Testament as his sole source, he first analyzed how Jesus reacted to violence and repeatedly argued that Jesus and the Apostles had demonstrated the proper response to the questions being raised by the current crisis. He wrote:

No man who knows his [Jesus'] history; who knows that at his birth exulting angels shouted, "Peace on earth, good will among men;" that his name is the Prince of Peace; that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not," can for one moment doubt that, if here now, he would once more say: "Put up thy sword; for they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It were not less than blasphemous to suppose that he who taught us to love our enemies, and to forgive as we would hope to be forgiven, would now tell us to butcher our kindred, or urge us to battle with his prayers.⁵⁴

He asked if the Apostles were alive, with "six in the South, and sixth in the North. Would they ... be urging on their brethren to the war?" In short, he answered in the negative to the question, "Shall Christians Go to War?" He pledged "that I am patiently and unceasingly standing in between my brethren and the battlefield, with the New Testament in my hand, warning them, as they hope for heaven, to keep the peace."⁵⁵ In Missouri, Howard was preparing a similar

⁵⁴ John W. McGarvey, "Shall Christians Go to War?" Evangelist, June 1861, 317-19. In these two sentences he referenced five verses from five different books in the Bible: See Luke 2:14, Isaiah 9:6, Peter 2:23, John 18:11, and Matthew 5:44.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 319-20.

statement, but after reading McGarvey's piece, decided to republish the article in his own newspaper and added that "this is so much better than any thing we can write on the subject."⁵⁶

However, there was a growing division in the movement as many Disciples began supporting the war. Fanning wrote that there were "many excellent brethren who could not withstand the temptation to serve the world."⁵⁷ One such person was Elijah Goodwin of the Christian Record. Goodwin, like most Americans, saw the "providential hand" in the formation of the government, argued that if "we regard our government as a gift of God, our duty to God, to our country, to our families, and to ourselves demands that we should sustain that government, and hand it down to our children, and our children's children, untarnished and unimpaired." So, how was this to be accomplished by the true Christian? Goodwin answered, "sustain the government, peaceably if we can; forcibly if we must; and the sooner the question is settled the better for all concerned."⁵⁸ When Fanning read these words in Tennessee, he asked: "Are these bloodthirsty men followers of Jesus of Nazareth?"⁵⁹ Fanning would never forget Goodwin's words, and would cite them repeatedly during the war.⁶⁰

The month of July was a dramatic turning point for the Disciples and the war at large. On July 4, Congress approved Lincoln's call for half a million men. And on July 21, the nation

⁵⁶ Howard, "Shall Christians Go to War?" Christian Pioneer, August 1861, 129.

⁵⁷ Fanning, "Outward Pressure," Gospel Advocate, June 1861, 175. By June, both Campbell and Fanning reported difficulties with the mail service. Fanning, "Derangement in Sending the Gospel Advocate," Gospel Advocate, June 1861, 178; Campbell, "To Our Subscribers," Millennial Harbinger, June 1861, 357.

⁵⁸ Goodwin, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," Christian Record, June 1861, 175.

⁵⁹ Fanning, "May Not Christians Engage in War Against their Brethren or Others?" Gospel Advocate, July 1861, 218.

⁶⁰ For instance, see Fanning, "Reply to Brethren Lillard, Harding and Ransome," Gospel Advocate, September 1861, 266.

learned that the war would not be quick and decisive when the Confederate army forced Union troops to retreat back to Washington after the first battle of Bull Run. As full-scale war became more likely, many of the brethren began turning away from the peace message when it became increasingly unpopular to hold their positions. In fact, by July, the Disciples leaders were more aware than ever of the growing division in the movement that had been exacerbated by the war. Reacting to the dramatic pro-Confederacy shift in the Intelligencer, Howard stated that they “were not prepared” for the new stance and effectively broke communion with them: “We have for sometime said we would not recognize any paper as a co-worker, that will pollute its pages by an espousal of the government or of the secessionists.”⁶¹ Elijah L. Craig, editor of the Disciples newspaper Bible Advocate in Carrollton, Illinois, related that he was sorry that the “highly esteemed Bro. Parish has let the demon of war get the advantage of him.”⁶²

In the Bible Advocate, Craig noted the “humiliating fact” that some of the Disciples newspapers had “broken over the limits which true prudence and enlightened Christian discretion and propriety have fixed” and urged “their friends and brothers onward in the work of unholy strife and deadly combat.” He vowed that his newspaper would not advocate “secession or coercion” even though his position “may be regarded as sensorious and unpatriotic.”⁶³ In Cincinnati, Franklin was not only attempting to maintain unity in the brotherhood, but also facing scrutiny from the secular media. The Daily Press of Cincinnati accused him of writing pro-Confederacy articles for his subscribers in the South, stating that Franklin’s “articles will, doubtless, give great comfort and peace of mind” to Jefferson Davis and the soldiers of the

⁶¹ Howard, “Down upon Them as They Deserve,” Christian Pioneer, July 1861, 92.

⁶² E. L. Craig, “The Religious Press Secularized. Should Religious Papers Promote Peace or War?” The Bible Advocate (Carrollton, IL), July 1861, 400.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 394-400.

Confederacy who “would be greatly obliged if Christians upon this side could be made to believe that to take up arms in any case, even in a just war, is a sin against God.”⁶⁴ Franklin responded: “This is weak and stupid beyond expression. If Christians may not fight in a just war, they may not fight in any war, and certainly may not fight against the government.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, Franklin was forced to defend himself from verbal attacks by other Disciples. In the Christian Record, Silas E. Shepard, a staunch Union supporter, accused the religious editors of “striving to spread disloyalty among our brethren, by insisting that the Scriptures forbid Christians to engage in war under any circumstances.”⁶⁶ Franklin reminded Shepard that the army was not composed of conscripts, but of volunteers: “Those who do not fight are not disloyal, else Dr. Shepard is disloyal, for he does not fight; but simply urges other Christians to fight. There are many brave men of his sort, [who] urge others to risk soul and body, while they stay in a safe place and read the news.”⁶⁷

In Tennessee, Fanning responded to the secession of his beloved state by writing several pro-Confederacy articles. In fact, the articles in the July issue of the Gospel Advocate reveal a fundamental change in Fanning’s relationship to the war. Before, he had campaigned for peace and strongly advised his readers to abstain from becoming embroiled in political affairs. In

⁶⁴ Cited in Franklin, “Our Vindication,” American Christian Review, August 20, 1861, 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Silas E. Shepard, Letter to the Editor, Christian Record, August 1861, 249.

⁶⁷ Franklin, “Our Vindication,” American Christian Review, August 20, 1861, 2. Howard voiced a similar sentiment: “But there is one thing against which we do protest: and that is, for persons, by their language and writing, to be constantly urging others to enlist as soldiers, while they themselves stay at home, out of the way of harm!” Howard, “Reply to ‘One of the Men,’” Christian Pioneer, January 1862, 376.

response to letters from the brethren inquiring for guidance following secession, he responded, “We claim no right to advise beyond the simple expression of our convictions of truth, but we pray the brethren to measure well every step that is to decide their Christian life.” In effect, he would still maintain that war was detrimental to the cause of Christianity, but he was beginning to remove himself from the discussion. Furthermore, he recognized the southern states’ right to set up their own government and criticized Lincoln’s decision to attack the southern people: “War, in all its aspects, is irreligious, cruel and barbarous, and no people can be reconciled to wage it upon their fellows, as has been done by the North, but under a madness that is unpardonable.” He continued, “Death is preferable to subjugation and rule by the sword. Hence, if people were ever justified in resisting encroachments, we conscientiously believe the citizens of the Confederate States are.... But in all this we have spoken as a citizen of the world, and not as a member of the family of God.” In short, Fanning believed the South was right in the war, but cautioned against involvement in civil institutions, advocated and prayed for peace, and left the decision on whether to engage in war between the individual and his “Maker.”⁶⁸

Mounting Divisions

By the fall, it was clear that a pro-war movement was growing within the Disciples camp. In the North, James Garfield received his commission as a Lieutenant Colonel and formed the 42nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry with many of the students at the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute,

⁶⁸ Fanning, “Religious Aspect of the American Revolution of 1861,” Gospel Advocate, July 1861, 206-13. Fanning later outlined the four positions he believed Christians could have and still be involved in the war: Preaching in the camp, sending Bibles, protecting orphans and widows, and working in hospitals. Fanning, “Suitable Labor for Christians in These Perilous Times,” Gospel Advocate, September 1861, 284-85.

a Disciples college.⁶⁹ He recruited J. Harrison Jones, a Disciples preacher in Ohio, as a chaplain of the regiment and even made recruiting speeches on the steps of Disciples churches.⁷⁰ James M. Mathes of Bedford, Indiana, and former editor of the Christian Record, argued that secession “was a most wicked and villainous thing seeking to overthrow the best government we ever saw and to establish a Tyranny-- a despotism!”⁷¹ In the South, C. L. Loos, a professor at Bethany College, described the disruption at the institution: “The public troubles have caused almost all of the students to go home, so that we were obliged to close College some two weeks ago for this season.”⁷² The drive for war would further influence the nonviolent message of the major Disciples leaders.

In Missouri, the divisions grew deeper. Wright, who co-edited the Pioneer, responded to critics who “said that the course we advised would leave the country defenceless, none to protect it; and therefore we ought to be stopped. And some have even gone so far as to threaten our office if we issue such advice again.”⁷³ McGarvey wrote from Dover, Missouri, that he faced “much abuse from warlike spirits, and the alienation of many friends. Even some of the brethren are turning their backs upon me; and the Lord only knows what the result is to be! I have enlisted, however, under the banner of PEACE, for the war of life; and I hope to prove a faithful

⁶⁹ West, Search for the Ancient Order, 324. The institution later became Hiram College in 1867.

⁷⁰ Henry K. Shaw, Buckeye Disciples: A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1952), 195.

⁷¹ James M. Mathes to John Allen Gano, October 21, 1861. Disciples of Christ Historical Society (DCHS).

⁷² C. L. Loos to David Oliphant, June 4, 1861, published as Chas. Louis Loos, “Letter from Professor C. L. Loos,” Banner of Faith (Rockwood, Canada), August 1861, 200.

⁷³ Wright, “That Counsel to Christians,” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 178.

soldier.”⁷⁴ Howard responded, “It has too, to us been a dangerous work, as far as threats have been concerned—we have also had much abuse heaped on us from the same kind of spirits—had the alienation of friends—and also even had some of the brethren to turn their backs on us—but like him, we have enlisted for life.”⁷⁵ Thomas M. Allen of Boone County, Missouri, was an ardent Union supporter and condemned the “impudence and outrageous wickedness” of the Confederacy. In the pulpit, however, he stayed away from political preaching and cautioned against engaging in warfare. Still, his sympathies alienated him from his some of the Disciples. He complained that “even some few of our brethren won’t hear me preach, nor even speak to me, simply because of my opinion, although I am quiet on these subjects and am giving my undivided attention to the gospel.”⁷⁶

Howard remarked that the Pioneer had been subjected to “much misrepresentation and censure.” To clarify his position, he wrote a “Vindication of the Pioneer,” in which he explained the nonviolent stance of the newspaper. He would not condemn the brethren who engaged in the war, but personally wished “to clear ourselves of the blood of all men, and to follow the precepts and example of the Savior and his apostles, as revealed to us in the word of God.” In this statement, Howard employed a strategy used by the Disciples throughout their history. In order to appear non-authoritative, he determined that the individual had free will to decide their actions, yet strongly hinted that the action was anti-Christian. He stated that every “published and recognized” paper in the brotherhood was against Christians joining the war, as was “nearly

⁷⁴ McGarvey, “Correspondence,” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 190. McGarvey would later write in his autobiography that his position was “denounced in the North as treason to the Union, and in the South as ‘Black Republicanism.’” McGarvey, The Autobiography of J. W. McGarvey (Lexington: College of the Bible, 1960), 22.

⁷⁵ Howard, “Remarks” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 191.

⁷⁶ Thomas M. Allen to Gano, October 24, 1861, September 19, 1861, DCHS.

every prominent preacher and writer we have in this current Reformation.”⁷⁷ In a sense, this statement is partly true. Howard simply did not recognize, at least publically, the newspapers that advocated for war including the Christian Intelligencer, Christian Record, and Christian Luminary. However, as noted above, Howard stated in the same issue that “some of the brethren” turned “their backs on us.”⁷⁸ He went on to list twenty-three Disciples leaders who were against the war. Historian David Harrell commented that the list was “overly optimistic.”⁷⁹ Howard identified Isaac Errett and Silas E. Shepard, both northerners, of promoting nonviolence, but in reality, both supported the Union war effort. Errett, the current Corresponding Secretary of the ACMS, was a strong supporter of Garfield’s recruitment efforts and would later apply for a commission as an officer in the Union army. Shepard had announced his support of the Union war effort a month earlier in the Christian Record. Although the majority of the Disciples leaders defended their stance of nonparticipation based on the precept of separation of kingdoms found in John 18:36, Shepard demonstrated that the verse could also be interpreted to condone violence:

The Ruler is God’s minister, and he does not bear the sword in vain. He is not only God’s minister; but he is a revenger, to execute wrath on him who does evil. For this reason we are to be subject to the Ruler, not only on account of fear; but also for conscience sake. The Ruler bears not the sword—an instrument of death—in vain. Now,

⁷⁷ Howard, “A Vindication of Ourselves and the Christian Pioneer,” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 169.

⁷⁸ Howard, “Remarks” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 191.

⁷⁹ Harrell classified them by location: Alexander Campbell, William K. Pendleton, and Robert Richardson (Bethany, Virginia); Robert Milligan, Aylette Raines, and Winthrop H. Hopson (Kentucky); Benjamin Franklin, David S. Burnet, and Isaac Errett (Cincinnati); Silas E. Shepard (New York); Tolbert Fanning and Philip Fall (Tennessee); Thomas M. Allen, Benjamin H. Smith, Butler K. Smith, Josiah W. Cox, Thomas P. Haley, H. H. Haley, Moses E. Lard, John W. McGarvey, Alexander Procter, Francis R. Palmer, and Jacob Creath, Jr. (Missouri). Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 151.

if this minister of God refuses to use the sword, when it is necessary to use it, he bears it in vain, and he ceases to be a faithful minister.⁸⁰

B. W. Johnson, another northern Disciple, voiced a similar conclusion to the verse: “‘My kingdom is not of this world;’ ‘if it were,’ pure as would be its ruler, just as would be the government, ‘then would my servants fight for me.’ Earthly governments are right; the Christian is a subject thereof, and must by our Savior’s own language, fight for them.”⁸¹ Although Howard’s list did identify a large peace contingent in the movement, it also ignored the growing pro-war movement in the North.

In all, the months of September and October represented the most proactive and well-articulated peace message constructed by the Disciples throughout the entire war. The Missouri preachers published their circular promoting nonparticipation in the war that was well received by many of the Disciples leaders.⁸² However, the editors were growing fatigued with the war issue. After visiting brethren in the West, Franklin returned to Cincinnati to find over a hundred documents from the brethren discussing the war. After commending the quality of the writing, he stated that continued discussion on the war “can neither be conducive to the union of the brethren, their spirituality or the advancement of the cause. We can not keep the church alive by writing on these questions, no matter how well we write. They must not fill our columns. Nothing is likely to be gained by a continuation of the subject.”⁸³ Howard closed the October

⁸⁰ Shepard, Letter to the Editor, Christian Record, August 1861, 249.

⁸¹ B. W. Johnson, “The War Question,” The Evangelist, October 1861, 514.

⁸² McGarvey, “Circular from Preachers in Missouri,” Christian Pioneer, September 1861, 181. Also republished in Millennial Harbinger, October 1861, 583-584; Evangelist, September 1861, 472-74.

⁸³ Franklin, “Correspondents of the Review,” American Christian Review, October 1, 1861, 2.

edition of the Christian Pioneer: “We have, as we conceive, published enough on the subject of Christians engaging in war; though the question is by no means exhausted, yet we think we have said all that would be profitable to say at the present.”⁸⁴ Every argument for nonviolence that the Disciples would advance during the Civil War had been argued. And yet, their efforts to maintain unity with a nonviolent message in the brethren not only created division, but also did not keep the Disciples out of the war.

The deepening division in the Disciples, while apparent to many, became even more evident when the American Christian Missionary Society convened for its yearly meeting in October 1861. When the Disciples assembled in Cincinnati, the movement was physically and ideologically divided North and South. Although the society had received support from the southern brethren for much of the 1850s, no leader from the Confederacy attended the meeting because of the war. Many members of the Union army, most notably James Garfield, attended the conference dressed in their military uniforms. The newly formed abolitionist Christian Missionary Society declared that it would rejoin the ACMS if a declaration of loyalty to the Union was passed during the meeting.⁸⁵ Such an act would have been unprecedented, as the ACMS had never made any political statements during its existence. Such was the excitement, that the convention was the largest ACMS meeting in its history. An Ohio delegate, J. P.

Robison, introduced the loyalty resolution:

Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with the loyal and patriotic in our country, in the present efforts to sustain the Government of the United States. And we feel it our duty as

⁸⁴ Howard, “Note on the War Question,” Christian Pioneer, October 1861, 240.

⁸⁵ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 157.

Christians, to ask our brethren everywhere to do all in their power to sustain the proper and constitutional authorities of the Union.⁸⁶

Lewis L. Pinkerton of Kentucky seconded the motion. Errett, who chaired the session, overruled objections by Burnett and John Smith. Only a month earlier, McGarvey had identified Errett as a fellow preacher working for peace and neutrality. Harrell described what occurred next:

“Apparently according to prearranged strategy, Pinkerton then called for a ten-minute recess.

During the recess David S. Burnett was called to the chair, Robison’s resolution was again introduced, and, after a short speech by Colonel Garfield, was passed by the extralegal assembly with only one dissenting vote.”⁸⁷

Although the resolution was not an official declaration by the AMCS, it demonstrated three important points about the Disciples in the North. First, the supporters of the Union war effort were committed to expressing their loyalty to the federal government, even if it meant angering the brethren in the South and the northern leaders who supported nonparticipation. Second, the process by which the resolution was carried out revealed that its supporters were most likely in the minority at the convention. If they had been able to pass the resolution in the normal proceedings, they likely would have done it. Finally, because the resolution passed with only one dissenting vote, it demonstrated that many of the leaders who were determined to keep

⁸⁶ Cited in Humble, “The Influence of the Civil War,” 239; West, Search for the Ancient Order, 224; Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 158.

⁸⁷ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 159. What occurred during this recess is not entirely clear and would be debated in the ensuing months. Harrell’s interpretation relies heavily on an unsigned article that appeared in the Pioneer in December. While the facts of the resolution are not completely clear, Harrell’s summary is probably the most accurate.

the ACMS neutral were not opposed to declaring their loyalty unofficially, or at least not vote against it.⁸⁸

The response among the Disciples to the meeting was deeply contentious. Franklin called the meeting a “farce.”⁸⁹ A Disciple under the penname “One of the Men,” which was a self identified, pro-Union Disciple who Howard listed as a prominent antiwar preacher in September, wrote that members like himself and Garfield believed that they were “bound by the law of God, of honor and of the land to be subject to the powers that be, that now bear the sword, in the call to rescue our country and all good order from an armed confederacy, and save the principle of free representative government from ruin; and that Paul in Rom. xiii, threatens us with damnation, if we refuse.”⁹⁰ Howard described the resolution as analogous to the “pouring of oil on fire” which would “inflame still more the passions that are already menacing its [the movement’s] peace and unity!”⁹¹ Fanning bitterly responded that the men who supported the resolution approved “most heartily of the wholesale murder of the people South who do not

⁸⁸ Several historians have written about the meeting, but the most detailed was Harrell. See Harrell, A Quest for Christian America, 156-59; McAllister and Tucker, Journey of Faith, 205-206; Leroy Garrett, The Stone Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981), 505; West, Eye of the Storm, 172-75; Shaw, Buckeye Disciples, 196-97.

⁸⁹ Franklin, “Remarks,” American Christian Review, January 14, 1862.

⁹⁰ One of the Men, “A Reply to “Vindication of Ourselves and the Pioneer,” Christian Pioneer, December 1861, 323. The author asked for his name to be withheld from the public, but did identify himself to Howard who did not dispute his identity. A reader of the Christian Pioneer, later concluded that “One of the Men” was either Burnet or Shepard. Missouri, “One of the Men,” Christian Pioneer, April 1861, 511.

⁹¹ Howard, “Reply to ‘One of the Men,’” Christian Pioneer, January 1862, 372.

chose to be governed by a sectional party North.... How can the servants of the Lord of this section ever strike hands with the men who now seek their life's blood?"⁹²

By the end of the year, the Disciples of Christ Movement stood divided. In the South, the Gospel Advocate faced severe financial difficulties and could not communicate with other newspapers, nor obtain hymnals or Bibles.⁹³ Furthermore, Fanning's call for nonparticipation in war could not reach even the southern brethren. The Gospel Advocate reported: "We have but one periodical, a small sized monthly, for presenting the claims of the Christian religion to the public, and for general intercommunication and intercourse among the brethren in the whole Southern Confederacy. It is entirely inadequate to meet the wants of the brotherhood and the public."⁹⁴ By December, the Gospel Advocate, the only southern Disciples newspaper to call for nonparticipation and nonviolence, was compelled to suspend publication.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Fanning was disheartened by the number of people participating in the war. He estimated that "one-third of the brethren in the South are fully harnessed for the conflict."⁹⁶ Franklin College, which he founded, was forced to close in 1861 and stayed that way throughout the war. In Virginia, the number of Disciples who joined the military was certainly higher. A writer in the Christian Intelligencer proudly related that the Disciples "are more numerous in the South than

⁹² Fanning, "Ministers of Peace in the World's Conflicts," Gospel Advocate, November 1861, 347-48.

⁹³ E. G. Sewell, W. A. Rodgers, and David Lipscomb, "To the Disciples of Jesus Christ Scattered Throughout the Confederate States of America, Greeting," Gospel Advocate, November 1861, 346.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "The Gospel Advocate," Gospel Advocate, December 1861, 380.

⁹⁶ Fanning, "Suitable Labor for Christians in These Perilous Times," Gospel Advocate, September 1861, 282.

anywhere else, and have generally, all through the South, given their full, free and cordial support to the cause of the Confederate States. They have not been behind their neighbors in the fervor of their patriotic zeal. That there have been individual exceptions is doubtless true. But not more true of them than others.”⁹⁷

In the North, the peace message also suffered. The Disciples newspapers, which had always operated on the edge of fiscal insolvency, were increasingly constrained by the rising cost of production. In December, the Millennial Harbinger was forced to shorten each month’s page length from sixty to forty-eight. The Christian Pioneer also faced subscription problems because of their stance of nonparticipation, which was perceived as both pro-Union and pro-Confederacy: “We have some few discontinuances of the Pioneer, on account of its supposed politics in the present crisis—we say, supposed, because it really has none, as is proven by the fact that these discontinuances are from persons of both sides of this political question; and each one, in ordering a discontinuance assigns virtually the same objections.”⁹⁸

Entering 1861, the Disciples of Christ were still reeling from the divisions brought on by the issue of slavery. They waited with the rest of the country during the long months of the secession crisis, and held their collective breath as Lincoln was inaugurated. When war came, many of the leaders made a proactive appeal for nonviolence and nonparticipation, but the allure of warfare enticed many Disciples into the armies. In many respects, the Disciples leaders of both the pro-war and antiwar movements attempted to solve the issue in the same process they had attempted to solve every other issue throughout their history: they argued. They had always exalted the ideal of free discussion to resolve differences and maintain unity. However, the issue

⁹⁷ O., “Sectarian Malice in Quest of Capital,” Christian Intelligencer, December 25, 1861, 2.

⁹⁸ Wright, “Dissatisfied Subscribers,” Christian Pioneer, January 1862, 360-61.

of war was perceived to be too important for either side to equivocate. Both looked to their Bibles for justification and found satisfactory answers to support their actions. By the end of the year, the Disciples leaders realized that their message of peace was not being heeded by many of the brethren, but some still pushed on. However, the war was less than a year old, and the ensuing years for the Disciples would be a story of increased division and estrangement. This is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3 - The March of Division and Beyond: The Decline of the Peace Message, 1862-1865

On January 5, 1862, a preacher in Palmyra, Missouri, described the state of the nation in the American Christian Review: “I need not say to you that it is a fine country.... I looked over this once favored land, and could do no more than give utterance to the feeling of every patriot, that peace and prosperity might again visit homes now desolate, and a country crushed beneath the chariots of war.”¹ After less than a year of war, thousands of men volunteered and joined the brutal fratricide that would seep into every part of American life. In many respects, the Disciples of Christ responded to the Civil War in the same fashion as the other religious bodies. Historians McAllister and Tucker concluded that the “Disciples reacted like other mainstream Protestants in America.”² Harrell affirmed, “There is no reason to believe that Disciples laymen in the Northern states reacted much differently to the call to arms than members of other religious groups,” while the southern Disciples “reacted to the war in the same patriotic manner.”³ The allure of warfare was so great, that many of the major nonviolent Disciples leaders had sons who volunteered in the army. Campbell and Stone, two men who professed nonviolent beliefs throughout their lifetime, had sons fighting for the Confederacy.⁴ Philip S. Fall, a promoter of nonviolence and leader of the popular Nashville congregation, lost his son at the battle of Fort

¹ T. W. McArthur, “Correspondence,” American Christian Review, February 11, 1862, 3.

² McAllister and Tucker, Journey of Faith, 200.

³ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 154-55.

⁴ Humble, “The Influence of the Civil War,” 235.

Donelson in Tennessee to a bullet between the eyes.⁵ William Creath, son of Jacob Creath, Jr., of Missouri, served under Lee and Jackson and would return home to write The Life of Stonewall Jackson and The Lost Cause.⁶ Amid the carnage of war and the loss of sons, nephews, cousins, fathers, and friends, many of the Disciples leaders argued against engaging in the war, but most of the brethren did not follow their advice.

In 1861, the Disciples aggressively proclaimed and defended their peace message, and left a wealth of primary sources for historians. The current chapter combines the remaining years of the war for two reasons: First and foremost, the source material during the increasingly violent years of the war is more limited. The Millennial Harbinger was the only Disciples newspaper that operated without interruption throughout the war, and it faced tremendous financial strain. The Christian Intelligencer suspended publication in 1864, and during the fall of Richmond, lost most of their records to fire.⁷ The Christian Pioneer was compelled to send out issues more sporadically in the later stages of the war, and was forced to relocate after their offices burnt down on January 11, 1864.⁸ Many editors faced the double edged sword of loss in readership and escalating printing costs. Newspapers around the country confronted similar situations. In his study of reporting in the South during the war, historian J. Cutler Andrews found that the cost of paper alone went from three to five dollars per ream before the war, to fifty to sixty dollars for the same quantity by July 1864.⁹ Furthermore, the increase in the price of

⁵ West, Eye of the Storm, 180.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 180-81.

⁷ Frederick A. Hodge, The Plea and the Pioneers in Virginia (Richmond: Everett Waddey, 1905), 140-41.

⁸ Wright, “Destructive Fire—Pioneer Office Destroyed—Our Removal to Chillicothe, Mo.,” Christian Pioneer, January 1864, 38-40.

stationary also made the writing of journals and letters more cost prohibitive for the Disciples of modest means.

Additionally, many of the Disciples who advocated for nonviolence removed debate on the war from their newspapers to avoid increased division. Franklin closed discussion on the issue late in 1861, because he found that “cool and calm investigations could not be had, without our motives being questioned, and good men misrepresented, and determined, for the time being, to have nothing to do with the subject, in our columns. This, we have found, has given general satisfaction, and all things are working well.”¹⁰ This did not mean that they had abandoned their nonviolence stance, but that the articles calling for nonparticipation in warfare became more infrequent. At various times throughout the rest of the war, Fanning, Franklin, and the other major promoters of a nonviolent stance would reignite the issue, and in doing so, divide the movement even further.

Fighting in the War

Despite the nonviolent message of the major Disciples leaders, thousands of young men from their colleges and congregations joined the war effort. Historian Steven Woodworth, after pouring through hundreds of Civil War soldiers’ letters, found that the “vast majority of Northern soldiers during the first year of the war devoted little thought ... to questions of which side God favored in the conflict or what His purposes all this might be. For them, the rightness of their cause was an article of faith, not to be questioned. God’s purposes were their purposes, and

⁹ J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 42.

¹⁰ Franklin, “Remarks,” *American Christian Review*, June 3, 1862, 2. Franklin’s response was triggered by a letter from a Disciple in Tennessee who, because of the stoppage of the mail, did not know the newspaper’s policy.

they were sure that He would support them.”¹¹ Many joined the war amid what McPherson called the “rage militaire,” a French word that accurately describes the immense patriotic furor that swept over the nation in 1861.¹² These young men were not only pulled to war by their own patriotism, but also pushed there by the communities in which they lived. Late in the war, a writer in the Christian Monitor, the only Disciples newspaper directed by and for women, exemplified how many felt about their soldiers: “Oh! may we, as a nation, never forget the gratitude we owe our soldiers, not merely the officers, but the poor private, who has to endure the heat of the fight and hardship of the march; and may the names which are not known to fame, be written on the roll of honor and engraven upon the tablet of memory, where they will ever shine in the light of the altar-flame of freedom!”¹³ With such reverence for the soldiery, it is easy to imagine why so many men would sign up for war.

Several ministers in the Disciples of Christ movement served as chaplains during the war, and many of these did more than just preach. Of the identified 3,694 ministers that were commissioned as chaplains, there were at least thirty-three who were Disciples.¹⁴ Although very

¹¹ Woodworth, While God Is Marching On, 97.

¹² McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 16.

¹³ Mary V. Silcott, “In the Rifle Pit,” The Christian Monitor (Cincinnati, OH), August 1864, 51.

¹⁴ John W. Brinsfield, William C. Davis, Benedict Maryniak, and James I. Robertson, Jr., eds., Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003), 129-256. The editors compiled a thorough list of chaplains who served during the war, and could identify thirty-two members of the Disciples Movement. However, they did not identify Thomas M. Brown of the 38th Illinois as a Disciple. The authors also identified John Boggs as a Presbyterian and chaplain of the 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He, of course, was not a Presbyterian and never announced in his newspaper that he formally joined the chaplaincy. Instead, he acted more as a war correspondent for his newspaper and, on many occasions, took it upon himself to lead religious services. For instance, see Boggs, “Army Pastorate—No. 2,” Christian Luminary, January 1863, 22.

little is known about most of these participants, there are a few who were major leaders in their states before and after the war. In all, at least twenty-seven Union and six Confederate chaplains from the movement served during the war.¹⁵ The units they served reveal not only where the war sentiment was most profound, but also where the nonviolent message was the least effective. In the Union, Indiana contributed more Disciples chaplains than the rest of the North combined. In Kentucky, the Disciples contributed two chaplains to each side. Although there are several factors involved, it must be noted that Ohio was the only state where both a nonviolent Disciples leader published a newspaper and a chaplain joined the army. There were, in fact, two, and both were recruited by Garfield.¹⁶

In the Union army, Thomas M. Brown, the former President of Eureka College served the 38th Illinois Volunteers. Amid the great revivals in the armies in 1863, Brown reportedly baptized forty-eight soldiers on June 26, but died three months later from pneumonia.¹⁷ Jefferson H. Jones was recruited by Garfield and served as his chaplain in the 42nd Ohio Infantry. In the South, the chaplains were fewer, but more well-known, and even notorious. The most famous was Thomas W. Caskey of the 16th Mississippi Cavalry who was the pastor of the most successful congregation in Mississippi. Just as Thomas Jackson emerged from Bull Run forever known as “Stonewall,” Caskey served in the same battle and earned the nickname the “Fighting

¹⁵ Although the Disciples joined more heavily on the side of the Union, this contrast is represented by the fact that few Disciples lived in the Deep South where Confederate sentiment was much more pronounced. In all, there were 2,154 Union and 1,540 Confederate chaplains. See Brinsfield, et. al., Faith in the Fight, 129-256.

¹⁶ The breakdown by states is as follows: Union: Indiana 14, Illinois 5, Ohio 2, Kentucky 2, New Hampshire 1, Pennsylvania 1; Confederacy: Georgia 2, Kentucky 2, Mississippi 1, Texas 1.

¹⁷ E. C. Ellis, “Success of the Gospel,” American Christian Review, July 21, 1863; Nathaniel S. Haynes, History of the Disciples of Christ in Illinois, 1819-1914 (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1915), 486.

Parson." Looking back on the Civil War, he surmised: "It became clearer to me every day that one good soldier was worth a whole brigade of canting chaplains so far as insuring the success of our army was concerned. If I must preach to others so as to make them good fighters, why not give them an object lesson on the battlefield myself?"¹⁸ He reportedly only fired his weapon to injure Union soldiers, in hopes that additional soldiers would have to put down their rifles and tend to the incapacitated man.¹⁹ Although there were several cases of religious leaders engaging in violence, other Disciples showed compassion to both sides during the war. D. Pat Henderson of Kentucky, a staunch Unionist, reported helping wounded Confederate soldiers "as kindly & tenderly as I could." In a letter to his nephew who was serving in the Union army, he penned that he had several cousins serving in the Confederate Army with whom he politically disagreed, but hoped were treated kindly if captured: "With their cause I have no sympathy, with them as individuals, I deeply sympathize. They are brave, noble young men, entitled to the love of their relatives.-- Oh! how I pity them, grieve for them, that they are doing wrong, acting so wickedly!!"²⁰

Although it would be nearly impossible to recount the story of every Disciple who participated in the war, the battle of Pea Ridge demonstrates that some Disciples did the extreme opposite of the nonviolent stance being professed by many of movement's leaders. In March 1862, the Union Army of the Southwest met the Confederate Army of the West near the Missouri-Arkansas border, just north of Fayetteville, Arkansas. After a fierce two-day battle with around 2,600 casualties, the Union routed the Confederate forces in what James McPherson

¹⁸ Cited in Brinsfield, et.al, Faith in the Fight, 65.

¹⁹ Ibid., 66.

²⁰ D. P. Henderson to Nephew (Frank), December 16, 1862, DCHS.

described as the “most one-sided victory won by an outnumbered Union army during the war.”²¹ The battle brought together many prominent Disciples brethren on both sides of the fight. James H. Garrison, who would later become the editor of the progressive Christian-Evangelist, served in the 24th Missouri Infantry and was wounded in the leg during the battle.²² Barton Stone, Jr., the son of the Disciples leader, commanded the 6th Texas Cavalry in Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch’s Texas Rangers.

In 1864, William Baxter, a Disciples preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, penned one of the few Disciples first-person accounts of a battle written during the Civil War. A staunch Unionist, Baxter detailed the horrors of Pea Ridge in great detail and was highly critical of the Confederate Army. Although decidedly disparaging of McCulloch, Baxter saved special retribution for his fellow Disciples who were participating in the war. He believed that Stone, Jr. “disgraced the name of his father.” He then turned to Stone’s chaplain, Benjamin F. Hall. As the senior deacon of the Christian Church in Grayson County, Texas, Baxter was repulsed to find that Hall “rode a fine mule, carried a splendid rifle, and stipulated expressly that when there was any chance for killing Yankees he must be allowed the privilege of bagging as many as possible.”²³ Ordained by Barton Stone, a founder of the movement, in 1825, Hall was a powerful evangelist who preached from New York to Texas and counted Fanning as one of his converts. An ardent supporter of the Southern cause, he joined the Confederacy at the first opportunity. He reportedly told his soldiers before the battle of Pea Ridge to “go up against

²¹ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 405. For the battlefield history, see William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

²² McAllister and Tucker, Journey in Faith, 204.

²³ William Baxter, Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove; or, Scenes and Incidents of the War in Arkansas (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864), 114.

those invaders, and not only slay them, but cut off their right hands and bring them home tied to their saddle skirts.” Furthermore, he noted that the Disciples of the North and West were “no brethren of his” and that “true religion” could only be “found in the South.”²⁴ Although Hall is an extreme example of a religious leader breaking with the nonviolent message of many of the other major leaders, he certainly was not the only Disciple in the fight.

Despite the active peace movement in the brotherhood, thousands of young Disciples still joined the war effort. Historian B. J. Humble found that “there were thousands of Christians on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line who enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies.”²⁵ There are several reasons for this occurrence. First and foremost, the societal pressures to join the war were greater than the nation had experienced before. No matter how loudly or aggressively the nonviolent Disciples leaders campaigned for peace, their voices were few in a land of many. In December 1863, Wright bemoaned the fact that the brotherhood had “very few papers,” and complained that the brethren were patronizing the more expensive secular daily newspapers, but “when asked to take a paper published by the brethren, plead poverty and hard times!”²⁶ Historian Harry Stout observed that there were “rare critical voices sounded among the clergy, as evidence that they could have established a prophetic distance from their side. But these voices are precious few, and for one simple reason—nationalism.”²⁷ For many Americans, the cause of Christ became analogous to the success of their armies, and most ministers imbued the conflict with religious significance to justify the war. Although not writing specifically on the Civil War,

²⁴ Ibid., 115-21.

²⁵ Humble, “The Influence of the Civil War,” 235.

²⁶ Wright, “Remarks upon, and in Connection with, the Foregoing,” Christian Pioneer, December 1863, 314.

²⁷ Stout, Upon the Altar of the Nation, xvii.

the theologian and philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr once noted, “All men are naturally inclined to obscure the morally ambiguous element in their political cause by investing it with religious sanctity.”²⁸ Furthermore, many young men set off for war for adventure and glory. The great American author and poet Herman Melville understood this fact, and wrote a poem during the war entitled “On the Slain Collegians:”

Youth is the time when hearts are large,
And stirring wars
Appeal to the spirit which appeals in turn
To the blade it draws.
If woman in sight and duties show,
(Though made the mask of Cane),
Or whether it be truth, sacred cause,
Who can aloof remain
That shares youth's ardor, uncooled by the snow
Of wisdom or sordid gain?²⁹

Robert Milligan, a nonviolent Disciples leader and President of Kentucky University, voiced a similar conclusion, and feared for the youth of the nation who were “naturally ardent; and are easily carried away by surrounding influences. Most even of those who have not entered the army, seem to think of but little else than war and military fame.”³⁰

Additionally, the leaders who advocated nonviolence were unable to keep the Disciples out of the war because their primary method of communication to the brethren was impaired.

Whereas the newspapers contributed heavily to the success of the movement during the

²⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr edited by D. B. Robertson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1957), 59.

²⁹ Herman Melville, “On Slain Collegians,” in Selected Poems of Herman Melville edited by Hennig Cohen (1964; repr., Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 1991), 50.

³⁰ Robert Milligan, “Preparing Young Men for the Ministry,” Millennial Harbinger, November 1862, 507. For discussion on why people fought the Civil War, see McPherson, For Cause and Comrades; Chandra Manning, What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

antebellum period, many were forced to suspend publication or shorten the length of their papers during the war. Almost all of the periodicals that took a nonviolent stance faced a tremendous drop in readership because the unpopularity of their position. Before the war, the American Christian Review had 8,500 subscribers, but by the end of 1862, the newspaper's readership was cut in half, which rendered its profits to "almost nothing."³¹ In response, Franklin was forced to double the subscription costs out of "absolute necessity."³² Even if the newspapers had retained their readership, most would have struggled because of the rising printing costs and the unreliability of mail routes. Of course, other newspapers faced the same challenges, but there were far more promoting war than the few Disciples publications. Even after an incredible amount of attrition, by February 1864, there were still around thirty-five daily newspapers that existed in the Confederacy.³³ By the end of the war, the Disciples had no newspapers in the South, and only one west of the Mississippi.³⁴ The secular Richmond Times-Dispatch reached nearly 30,000 readers across the Confederacy by the end of the war.³⁵ In contrast, when Moses E. Lard began his quarterly magazine in 1863, he fell short of his modest goal of 3,000 subscribers, and could only find around 1,700 patrons.³⁶

³¹ Franklin, "Review for the Coming Year," American Christian Review, December 16, 1862, 1.

³² Franklin, "Let There Be No Misunderstanding," American Christian Review, January 6, 1863, 2.

³³ Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register, April 9, 1865, cited in J. Cutler Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, 504.

³⁴ Wright, "Introduction to Volume Fifth," Christian Pioneer, January 1865, iv.

³⁵ Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, 33.

³⁶ Lard, "Close of the First Volume," Lard's Quarterly, June 1864, 448.

Third, many Disciples congregations did not have resident pastors that may have formed a personal bond with the laity. In fact, most of the notable leaders and editors who professed a nonviolent message were itinerant preachers who rarely spent an extended amount of time on their tours in one location. It is no coincidence that the Disciples congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, the epicenter of nonparticipation in the South, was led by Philip S. Fall, an extremely popular leader who espoused a message of peace.³⁷ Additionally, because of the tremendous growth before the war, thousands of the new additions came from other denominations and retained ties to their former church. Many had only recently joined the movement, and were not ready for the extraordinary and unpopular stand being advised by the major Disciples leaders. Furthermore, as the war raged, many editors began to despair as thousands of men in the movement rode off to war. The editor of the Christian Monitor explained its restraint on publishing war opinions in 1864 because “such a discussion might have done much good, but that time has passed, the subject is now being discussed with fire and sword, and we can only lay our faces in the dust ‘While our God is passing by.’”³⁸ By 1864, most leaders who had campaigned so hard for nonparticipation and nonviolence were now virtually silent on the issue of war. Armed only with the Bible, they had assaulted the tenets of war with the full-force of their rhetorical strength, but watched as their brethren still volunteered and the movement divided. Finally, the brethren who did read the Disciples newspapers could ultimately find two opinions being discussed. The arguments presented by the pro-war advocates were no less well articulated, persuasive, and biblically oriented than the contentions by the advocates of nonviolence. For the men who wanted to join the army or undoubtedly felt the great pressure to

³⁷ Norton, Tennessee Christians, 99.

³⁸ “Personal,” Christian Monitor, August 1864, 61.

fight but still had reservations, they could find a justification even within the pages of the most nonviolent newspapers.

The Peace Message in 1862

Although the peace message would still be maintained by many of the major leaders throughout the war, their attention to it in their periodicals would drop precipitously throughout 1862 and 1863, and become almost nonexistent in the last year and half of the war. In May 1862, the Christian Pioneer announced that the paper intended to “scrupulously exclude politics, religious speculations, and personal controversies among brethren, calculated to engender strife and ill-feeling, and produce schism in the body of Christ.”³⁹ Wright and Howard of the Christian Pioneer recognized the divisions developing in the movement because of their nonviolent stance, and they sought to alleviate tension by staying silent on the question. However, like Franklin and Campbell who either made or would make similar pledges, the editors of the Pioneer would find themselves unable to maintain complete silence on an issue they thought was vital to the Gospel.

The peace message was not completely dead, but during the first months of 1862 it lay dormant. Although many of the brethren did join the war in 1861, it appears that the Disciples leaders were moderately successful at convincing some young men to stay out of the war. Although the Christian Record reported that “hundreds, and perhaps thousands of brethren are now in the United States army,” the Evangelist in Iowa reported that “none of the brethren here

³⁹ Wright, “Christian Pioneer. Prospectus of the Second Volume,” Christian Pioneer, May 1862, 572.

have enlisted, and so far as I hear, very few in other places.”⁴⁰ Across the Atlantic, the British Millennial Harbinger heard the reports of the Record and was “very sorry to hear it,” but reasoned that because “there are always in the church those who fall below the position to which the true followers of Jesus attain, we are not surprised that out of 400,000 disciples, hundreds should, in the hour of trial, abandon their principles, or prove that they have never understood them.”⁴¹ In fact, Chatterton of the Evangelist believed that many brethren were unsure of whether or not to fight, and reported that there were “thousands standing in doubt, halting between two opinions, not knowing what duty requires.”⁴²

While thousands halted between “two opinions” and looked for guidance, the Disciples editors were silent for much of early 1862. Meanwhile, General Ulysses S. Grant captured Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February. Perry Hall, a Disciples minister at Christian Chapel in Indianapolis, was a firm Union supporter, but had not volunteered. On February 17, he wrote in his diary, “This has been a day of intense Excitement in the City. About noon the Gov. received a dispatch stating that Fort Donaldson [sic] had been captured.... Therefore the wildest Enthusiasm fills the whole City.”⁴³ Although Fort Donelson was not the specific cause, such events eventually convinced Hall to volunteer as a chaplain in the 79th Indiana Infantry. Even though the nonviolent newspapers grew silent, the call to support the war only grew louder. One benefit to the Disciples that came from the silence on the war issue in the newspapers, however,

⁴⁰ Chatterton, “A Correction,” Evangelist, January 1862, 45-46.

⁴¹ James Wallis, “A Correction,” The British Millennial Harbinger, December 2, 1861, 607.

⁴² Chatterton, “A Correction,” Evangelist, January 1862, 45-46.

⁴³ Perry Hall, February 17, 1862 in Perry Hall Papers, DCHS.

was that the abatement of the agitation of the peace message was not widening the fissures in the movement.

In April, Grant secured another victory at the bloody battle of Shiloh, and sustained nearly 14,000 casualties while the Confederacy endured 10,700.⁴⁴ In Virginia, General George McClellan launched the Peninsula Campaign. Although not near a battlefield, Campbell once again gave his position on the war: “Civil war is a very uncivil thing. Foreign war is bad enough, but civil war is worse, and Christian war is unspeakably absurd. But I cannot dwell on this theme while so many of our brethren are engaged, as we say patriotically engaged, in killing one another. But patriotism, in its best forms, is not once named in Holy Writ among the Christian virtues.”⁴⁵ J. S. Sweeney of Kentucky affirmed his commitment to the Union cause, but maintained his allegiance to nonviolence:

I am as—patriotic, in any pure sense of the word, as any man; but I exalt my religion above it, high as heaven is above the earth.... A good, pious, unbaptized preacher said to me a few days since: ‘This war is part of our holy religion.’ And though he was strictly and genuinely orthodox, I ventured to think that when the war and a few other things pass away, his ‘holy religion’ will be gone!⁴⁶

The editor of The Adviser in Rockwood, Canada, abhorred the violence occurring in the United States, and counseled that his fellow brethren “should withdraw itself as much as possible from all the strife and collision of this tempest-tossed age. The church asks nothing from human

⁴⁴ Kevin E. McKedy, “Battle of Shiloh (Pittsburg Landing),” Reference Guide to United States Military History, 1815-1865 edited by Charles Reginald Shrader (New York: Sachem Publishing Associates, 1993), 293.

⁴⁵ Campbell, “Matheetees and Matheetuoo,” Millennial Harbinger, May 1862, 197.

⁴⁶ J. S. Sweeney, “J. S. Sweeney and B. Franklin,” American Christian Review, June 3, 1862, 2.

government but to be let alone; and she should be careful not to entrench on the rights of human government.”⁴⁷

In the South, the discussion over the war question was just as contentious as in the North. In Middle Tennessee, where nonviolent sympathies were the strongest, the Disciples held a conference of the regional churches in April. The minutes reveal that there was general agreement that the New Testament disallowed for participation in warfare and “forbid Christians” from seeking “to build up, or pull down, or control the Governments of this world.” However, this position was questioned by a few of the attendees, who objected to the sentiments. They believed that a Christian could “perform many duties for Government without compromising their Christian duties,” and that “nonintervention in Governments of the world, is incompatible with the Scriptural injunction to move upon them, as the leaven and salt acts upon their appropriate negatives and overcome them.”⁴⁸

In late June, Franklin reignited the controversy with the pro-war faction of the movement by verbally attacking its stronghold at North Western Christian University. The brethren had been relatively silent about their discontent with each other for most of the year, but Franklin’s direct assault on the institution broke the dams of silence. To Franklin’s displeasure, Indiana had recently passed a loyalty resolution at the state missionary society meeting. Franklin, quite rightly, surmised that the leaders at the Indianapolis school were behind its passage. He ridiculed the school for its “ultraism” in regard to the issue of slavery and war, and charged that it had departed from “its legitimate work of education.”⁴⁹ The institution was known throughout

⁴⁷ “To the Brethren in Christ,” The Adviser (Toronto, Canada), June 1862, 6.

⁴⁸ O. T. Craig, American Christian Review, June 3, 1862, 2.

⁴⁹ “Indiana Semi-Annual State Meetings,” American Christian Review, June 24, 1862, 2.

the brotherhood for their abolitionist and Unionist sympathies, but they never formally acknowledged their loyalties. However, Franklin's attack convinced the governing board of the establishment to pass a resolution that stated the college was "true and loyal to the Constitution and Government of the United States, and warmly and deeply sympathise with the soldiers of the Union who are engaged in the suppression of the present wicked rebellion."⁵⁰ Franklin responded that he desired "no less loyalty to the civil government, on their part, but much more wisdom, prudence and discretion, as well as more devotion to the interests of the University, and the cause of Christ."⁵¹ Ovid Butler, who was the financial backing of North Western Christian University, tried to refrain from commenting on Franklin's actions. However, by September, Butler could not let Franklin's denunciations go unanswered. He believed that the actions at the college required no "vindication" for the "loyal Christian," and stated that he "would not stoop to the effort to vindicate it to the disloyal." He then continued to do just that:

I have no desire to have for the Institution, the favor and patronage of rebels and traitors, or of those who sympathise with them. In the fearful struggle in which we are engaged, when the very pillars of our civil government are rudely shaken and its safety is seriously endangered,--when treason not only stands forth, openly and defiantly in the light of day, but creeps cautiously and stealthily in all private walks and secluded bypaths of our social life, I, at least, feel the propriety and necessity of honest and avowed loyalty. That person, that paper, that society,-- or that Institution, that in these perilous times, withholds from the government the moral support of outspoken loyalty, deserves neither the protection of the government or the favor and countenance of its loyal citizens.⁵²

Butler's sentiments represent the growing dissatisfaction with the peace message in the movement. While Franklin was losing more and more subscribers, the pro-war faction of the Disciples enlarged as more of the brethren began equating loyalty to the Union with true

⁵⁰ Published in American Christian Review, August 12, 1862, 2.

⁵¹ Franklin, "N. W. C. University," American Christian Review, August 12, 1862, 2.

⁵² Butler, "Ovid Butler, Esq., To Elder B. Franklin," American Christian Review, September 23, 1862, 1.

Christianity. W. T. Horner, editor of the pro-Union Disciples newspaper Herald of Truth in Cleveland, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York, wrote late in 1862 that the country had been “purged of treason by terrible chastisements, and baptism in blood.” His arguments for loyalty to the Union were so convincing that at least one Disciple in Vermont “obeyed the Gospel” and volunteered for the war.⁵³

Franklin also faced renewed criticism from Goodwin, whose newspaper had grown so significantly in popularity that it was able to be published as a weekly. Goodwin criticized Franklin’s stance of “neutrality” because he not only believed it was akin to support for the rebellion, but also was causing division in the movement. He stated that men like Franklin, who were incessantly talking “about keeping politics and the church separate, are the very men who are thrusting political questions into their church arrangements; and it does appear to me that they are determined to make a schism.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, he argued that the “peace brethren” were destroying the unity in the movement, and specifically, the American Christian Missionary Society.⁵⁵

Although Franklin either did not see the division in the movement or simply chose to ignore it, Goodwin’s comments were ultimately correct. For Franklin to admit division in the movement was equivalent to admitting that his vision for a Christian body free of denominations or schism was failing. Despite all of the evidence to the contrary, Franklin still believed that the movement was progressing undivided, and that the people who supported the war were being rejected by the Disciples:

⁵³ W. T. Horner, Herald of Truth, November-December 1862, 236.

⁵⁴ Goodwin, “The Review on the Rushville Meeting,” The Weekly Christian Record (Indianapolis, IN), November 4, 1862, 2.

⁵⁵ Goodwin, “A. C. Missionary Society,” Weekly Christian Record, November 4, 1862.

By the grace of God, we have stood the storm thus far, and persevered in the work of the Lord. A few “false brethren”—designing men—have tried to destroy us. The only reason they did not effect our ruin was, that they did not have the power. True, for a short time, they made some impression on many good brethren; but their malignant spirit, wicked and desperate purposes soon became obvious to all who paid any attention to them, and the public mind, as it almost always does when it has time, is fast settling down in the right. In the snare they set for us are their own feet taken. Their attacks upon us have recoiled upon their own heads, and they are finding themselves cast off by the people.⁵⁶

Although Franklin did not acknowledge the division in the movement, other leaders were recognizing the more disastrous effects of the position taken by the advocates of nonviolence. In Missouri, Howard responded to reports of churches that were now barring fellowship from members because of their political beliefs. Although Howard did not specify where these events occurred, it was clear that persons not declaring loyalty to the majority of the congregation’s political affiliation were not being allowed to attend religious services. Howard believed that the people denying fellowship were “deserting the Church and cause of Christ and arraying themselves on the side of the world and his enemies.” He argued that “whenever they permit differences of such a character to become a bar of fellowship with them, so as to keep them away from the Lord’s house and table[,] ... they do absolutely and in fact, exalt their opinions ABOVE the religion of Christ!” The desire for Christian unity that was a hallmark of the Disciples movement before the war appeared to be abandoned in some of the churches. Even Howard, who once saw division as the greatest of outrages, now concluded that the Civil War, “with all its evils and calamities will result in the good of the Church of Christ, in developing who are really his, and who are not, who can stand the test and who [can] not; and in purging the Church of the unworthy.”⁵⁷ Howard believed the war would demarcate the true Christians. In his opinion,

⁵⁶ Franklin, “The Close of the Year,” American Christian Review, December 30, 1862, 2.

⁵⁷ Howard, “Important Hints,” Christian Pioneer, December 1862, 337-40.

those who valued politics above religion would not be among the few to inhabit heaven. Such sentiments stand in deep contrast to Franklin, who concluded his 1862 volume of the Review by writing that the Disciples were a “united people. The influence of narrow-minded and schismatical men has not been able to divide us. We stand a unit.”⁵⁸

The Declining Peace Movement in 1863

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation became the law of the land and declared that the slaves held in the rebellious states were now free. A writer in the Christian Luminary announced that he heard the “swelling notes of joy” as “chains have fallen from fettered limbs, and FREEDOM enthroned sits in the capital; and lo, we see ... the coming of a day when peace and love shall drive injustice and rebellion to the dark place from whence they came, and make our nation a fit offering to the Most High—a place of holiness.”⁵⁹ Boggs was excited by the emancipation, but felt that the act did not go far enough because it still allowed for slavery in the border states. While traveling with the 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, he found that Christianity was weakened by slavery in Kentucky. He argued that “unless slavery can be abolished, there is very little use in trying to build up churches in Kentucky. The debasing influences of it upon all classes, are such, that it is next to impossible for a person to live out Christianity practically, where slavery gives tone, and character to everything else.”⁶⁰ Howard, who held completely opposite views from Boggs on Christian warfare, actually stated a similar case. He stated that the war would purge the movement of the lukewarm Christians, and reveal

⁵⁸ Franklin, “The Close of the Year,” American Christian Review, December 30, 1862, 2.

⁵⁹ M. M. B., “A Fragment of Thought,” Christian Luminary, January 1863, 17.

⁶⁰ Boggs, “Army Pastorate—No. 2,” Christian Luminary, January 1863, 22.

the true body of Christ. He quoted James 3:17: “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Based on the verse, Howard concluded that “we must have purity first, and then peace afterwards, and those other things the apostle enumerates as connected with it and belonging to the Christian character. We are to have purity first, let it cost what it may.” He continued “Peace, without purity first, is false and delusive; and may quiet the soul to its own destruction, like the lethargy that precedes death. ‘Why cry out peace, peace, when there is no peace?’ Purity first—peace afterwards.”⁶¹

Many of the brethren were all too aware of the stress that the war had placed on the churches in the movement. At Cynthiana, Kentucky, Boggs visited a “large and wealthy” congregation, but found that the members either chose not to support a pastor or could not find one to lead their services.⁶² In other areas, many preachers were forced to find another source of income to support their families. A writer in the Christian Pioneer described the situation: “In many places whole congregations have either been entirely swept away, or their influence so paralyzed by internal broils that no good is being accomplished. Many of those whose voices were once heard, eloquently pleading in defense of heaven’s sublime truths, are now silent, the deep distress of fallen man seems no longer to awaken them.”⁶³ In February, Howard voiced a similar sentiment, “Many who used kindred language to the above eighteen months ago, are now far down the road to apostasy.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Howard, “Purity First—Peace Afterwards,” Christian Pioneer, January 1863, 362-63.

⁶² Boggs, “Army Pastorate.—No. 3,” Christian Luminary, February 1863, 57.

⁶³ W. D. Stewart, “Reflections on the Times,” Christian Pioneer, February 1863, 426.

⁶⁴ Howard, “An Appeal for the Pioneer,” Christian Pioneer, February 1863, 448.

Although many of the southern Disciples sources were lost because of the war, there was undoubtedly a strong nonviolent message being professed by the brethren in Middle Tennessee. Second only to the state of Virginia in number of conflicts, Tennessee would be home to 775 battles and skirmishes during the war.⁶⁵ In 1862, the Confederate States of America had instituted a conscription act designed to raise the troop levels. In November 1862, several ministers in Middle Tennessee convened to draft a letter to Jefferson Davis to ask for exemption. In a highly respectful tone, they wrote that God “demands of his servants that they should submit quietly, heartily and cheerfully to the government under which they may live, in all cases, except when compliance with the civil law would involve a violation of the law of God.” They stated that they were

firm in the conviction of the truth, that no man, who regards the authority of God, the spirits and letter of the Sacred Scriptures in their proper division and application, the life and teachings of the Son of God, or his Holy Apostles, as given for the guidance of his followers, can in any manner engage in aid, foment, or countenance the strifes, animosities, and bloody conflicts in which civil governments are frequently engaged, and in which they often involve their subjects.⁶⁶

For the most part, the Confederate government granted exemption from the draft for the brethren of Tennessee. However, as the Union mounted victories in the state throughout 1862 and 1863, many of the Disciples came under the jurisdiction of Union occupation. The appointed military governor of Tennessee, Andrew Johnson, began requiring loyalty oaths from the people of the state. Once again, the Disciples of Tennessee convened and drafted a similar resolution and sent it to the governor and President Lincoln. In general, the letter restated their desire to stay out of warfare, and in many instances, simply replaced the word “Confederacy” with “federal

⁶⁵ Norton, Tennessee Christians, 87.

⁶⁶ The letter was written on November 13, 1862, and reprinted in Tolbert Fanning, “Church of Christ and World Powers,” Gospel Advocate, July 3, 1866, 417-18.

government.” They stated that the “oaths of allegiance” that were “countenancing bloodshed and violence” violated “the obligations of fealty we have taken to our Heavenly Master.”⁶⁷ Years later, E. G. Sewell related a meeting between himself, David Lipscomb, and R. B. Trimble with Johnson. The military governor first told the men that he could do nothing to protect them from the loyalty oath, but then later told the men, “I think you need not be uneasy. I do not think anybody will be hurt.”⁶⁸

In Tennessee, Philip S. Fall, Tolbert Fanning’s brother-in-law, was the minister of the highly successful Nashville congregation and went to great lengths to avoid supporting either side during the war. When Confederate President Jefferson Davis called for a day of prayer for June 13, 1861, Fall did not allow the brethren to enter the church building, and angered many secessionists in the process.⁶⁹ When the loyalty oath was passed in the state, Fall refused to take it. As a former British citizen, he took an oath of allegiance to the United States in 1853, one he “regarded as sacred; and as binding me so long as I might live under the jurisdiction of that Government.” He had only voted once before in 1860, and voted against secession. He penned the commander of Nashville, “But another oath of allegiance to the same Government will imply either that the first is void, or that it has been violated.”⁷⁰ In the end, he was the only prominent

⁶⁷ David Lipscomb, Civil Government (1866; repr., Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1957), 131-32.

⁶⁸ E. G. Sewell, “Reminiscences of Civil War Times, No. 3,” Gospel Advocate, July 25, 1907, 423.

⁶⁹ W. P. Payne to Fall, June 17, 1861, Fall Family Papers. Cited in David Edwin Harrell, Jr, “Disciples of Christ Pacifism in Nineteenth Century Tennessee,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly (1962): 267.

⁷⁰ Philip S. Fall to R. B. Mitchell, April 30, 1863, Fall Family Papers, DCHS.

Nashville minister who did not sign the loyalty oath, and was virtually ignored by the federal authorities.⁷¹

Throughout the summer, the war raged on. Lee won at Chancellorsville in Virginia, while the Union scored hard-fought victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Moses E. Lard of Kentucky described the Disciples brotherhood: “Exciting political news so engrosses their attention that their views of the Gospel are in uncommon danger of becoming dim and unreliable.”⁷² At Western Eclectic Reserve Institute, because the majority of the students followed then college president James Garfield into the army, the students left behind were more likely to promote a peace message. Their stance, although attempting to achieve the same goal, was different than Franklin’s complete denunciation of war. Many were “Copperheads,” or Peace Democrats in the Union, who wanted a cessation of conflict for political, and in cases moral, purposes. When he heard of this occurring, Garfield was dismayed and wrote to his friend Burke Hinsdale at the college from his headquarters in Murfreesboro, Tennessee:

Tell all those copperhead students for me that were I there in charge of the school I would not only dishonorably dismiss them from the school, but if they remained in the place and persisted in their cowardly treason, I would apply to Gen. Burnside to enforce General Order No. 38 in their cases.... They ask that if they are not permitted to speak neither should Union boys speak their views! Fools! There is a place for all such. This is a time when men who take sides on the great questions at issue do so in a brave way, and go to their party north or south. If these young traitors are in earnest they should go to the Southern Confederacy where they can give and receive full sympathy. Tell them all that I will furnish them passes through our lines where they can join Vallandigham and their other friends till such time as they can destroy us, and come back home as conquerors of their own people, or can learn wisdom and obedience.⁷³

⁷¹ Norton, Tennessee Christians, 99.

⁷² Lard, “Note to the Brotherhood,” Lard’s Quarterly, September 1863, 111.

⁷³ Garfield to Hinsdale, May 26, 1863, Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, 67-68. General Order Number 38 declared that people declaring sympathy to the Confederacy would be arrested or forced into exile in the Confederacy. Clement Vallandigham, the most well-known Peace Democrat, was convicted by a military tribunal and forced to leave the Union on May 25. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 596-97.

Garfield, like many Northerners, especially soldiers, believed that the Copperheads in the North were treasonous. Although their reasons for peace were different, because their goal was the same, many northern brethren who called for nonviolence were labeled as Copperheads during the war.⁷⁴

By the fall of 1863, Franklin had almost completely removed himself from discussion on the war. Instead, he implored preachers to stay away from political preaching, as nothing would excite “dissension in the church more readily than for the preacher to turn politician and commence making political speeches; nor will anything destroy the religious influence of the preacher faster.” He believed that neither “preaching peace, nor submission to the civil government ... will do good now, so much as good conduct, that manifestation of a good spirit, kindness and a disposition to conciliate those in fellowship with us in the same congregations. Quiet men, really peaceable men, who love the church more than the world, will generally get along well.”⁷⁵ Franklin reaffirmed his commitment to keep war news and discussion out of his articles, and hoped that the absence of discussion would heal the fractures that had developed over the issue.⁷⁶ For the most part, he was successful at maintaining his position for the rest of the war. The lack of agitation decreased the strife, at least publicly, between the brethren. However, the American Christian Missionary Society would bring the issues dividing the movement to the forefront.

⁷⁴ Harrell, Quest for a Christian America, 152.

⁷⁵ Franklin, “What is Political Preaching,” The American Christian Quarterly Review (Cincinnati, OH), 2, no. 3, 1863, 277.

⁷⁶ The nearest Franklin ever got to publishing war news was a story of a baby being found on the battlefield and becoming the adopted “child of the Regiment” until his mother found him. Franklin, “A Baby on the Battle Field,” American Christian Review, January 13, 1863, 8.

By October, the organization that once stood as the apex of Disciples cooperation once again became the battleground of division. The 1862 meeting of the ACMS had passed without the introduction a loyalty resolution or the controversy of the previous year. The Millennial Harbinger reported “harmony and general good feeling to all the genuine lovers of the true unity and brotherhood of Christ” at the conference.⁷⁷ However, the newspaper failed to relate that the convention was poorly attended because many of the pro-war members were absent. By 1863, the state missionary societies in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio had adopted loyalty resolutions, and many of their promoters set their sights on the ACMS meeting in 1863 to pass a similar measure in the national organization.⁷⁸ There was also pressure from men outside of the brethren who had come to believe that the whole “religious body,” and in particular the ACMS, were to “a certain degree disloyal.” R. Faurot of Newville, Indiana, introduced a resolution that stated that the participants of the ACMS “unqualifiedly declare our allegiance to said Government, and repudiate as false and slanderous any statements to the contrary.” Furthermore, they resolved:

That we tender our sympathies to our brave and noble soldiers in the field, who are defending us from the attempts of armed traitors to overthrow our Government, and also to those bereaved, and rendered desolate by the ravages of war.⁷⁹

Whereas a similar resolution was passed in an unofficial manner in 1861, the state of the country had influenced many Disciples to believe that a declaration of loyalty was vital for the movement to silence their critics. The “war resolution,” as it became known, angered many of the

⁷⁷ William K. Pendleton, “The American Christian Missionary Meeting,” Millennial Harbinger, December 1862, 560.

⁷⁸ Commodore Wesley Cauble, Disciples of Christ in Indiana (Indianapolis: Meigs Publishing, 1930), 259; “Co-operation Meeting in PA,” American Christian Review, January 13, 1863, 2; West, Eye of the Storm, 188.

⁷⁹ Cited in West, Search for the Ancient Order, 225; Humble, “The Influence of the Civil War,” 241.

proponents of nonviolence. Franklin, who was among the society's most ardent supporters during the 1850s, turned against the organization. McGarvey found that the missionary society had become "dangerous" because of the divisions it caused, and decided that the ACMS should "cease to exist."⁸⁰ William K. Pendleton, who had increasingly taken over the editorship of the Harbinger, later stated that "the fact that the Society violated her constitution, in introducing and forcing to a willful vote a set of political resolutions, cannot be denied or explained away."⁸¹ When news of the 1863 resolution was read in the South, many Disciples in the region immediately joined the Confederacy.⁸² While others were noticeably upset, the leaders of the Christian Missionary Society were satisfied with the result and immediately disbanded their organization and rejoined the ACMS. While the faction separated from the ACMS over the issue of abolition, they had remained estranged until the organization pledged its support for the Union cause. Although it certainly was inferred, the resolution contained no mention of slavery or abolition. Between the infighting among the brethren over the previous two years and the war resolution, it was clear that the nonviolent message caused division in the movement. However, many of these broken bonds would slowly begin to heal as the leaders backed away from their aggressive peace message. Unfortunately, the relationship between the northern and southern brethren, because of acts like the war resolution, would continue to be tenuous and divided.

To the End of War

⁸⁰ McGarvey, "Missionary Societies," American Christian Quarterly Review, Vol. 2, 1863, 342.

⁸¹ Pendleton, "American Christian Missionary Society," Millennial Harbinger, September 1864, 419.

⁸² West, Life and Times of David Lipscomb, 82.

From 1864 to 1865, the nation was devastated by war, especially in the South. Although there were several instances of congregations operating successfully throughout the war, most Disciples leaders were disheartened by the extent the conflict had taken over their daily lives.⁸³

Howard observed that the war had basically consumed the country:

At the present time, when our country is engaged in a great civil war; when you see officers and soldiers almost every where you go; when on all sides you hear the notes of military preparation, and the tramp of soldiers, marching to and fro; when you hear the sound of the feet of the war-horse, prancing beneath his armed rider; when you can often hear or read of nothing but the movements of hostile armies, and the news of victory or defeat.⁸⁴

The Disciples of Christ Movement, which attained so much success during the antebellum period, was now struggling to find preachers to minister to congregations because so many men had joined the war. Thomas Haley, a signer of the Missouri Manifesto from Lexington, Missouri, described the country: “Many neighborhoods, and even whole counties, that were then supplied with regular preaching, are now almost, and, in many cases, entirely destitute.”⁸⁵ In many cases, the Disciples churches, like many other denominations, were used as hospitals.⁸⁶ Following the battle at Fredericksburg in 1862, the Disciples church was commandeered to care for the wounded while the pews disassembled and used as coffins, and the fences surrounding the

⁸³ For instance, B. H. Smith, one of the signers of the Missouri Manifesto, reportedly operated a thriving church in St. Louis, which according to the Missouri Republican was a place where “order, harmony and good feeling prevail.” Cited in Wright, “The Cause in St. Louis,” Christian Pioneer, March 1863, 475.

⁸⁴ Howard, “The Christian Soldier, Part 1,” Christian Pioneer, February and March 1864, 49.

⁸⁵ Thomas P. Haley, “To the Brethren in Missouri,” Christian Pioneer, January 1864, 24.

⁸⁶ The churches in Utica, Mississippi; Grafton and Fredericksburg, Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Fayetteville, Arkansas are just a few of the churches converted into hospitals. William Lee Miller, Jr., “The Role of the Disciples of Christ During the Civil War” (BDiv thesis, College of the Bible, 1961), 107.

church were used for firewood.⁸⁷ In early 1864, Howard reported that the “cause has been greatly damaged by the strife, war and desolation, that have prevailed in our state; and some alienation and estrangement exist among the brethren. It is greatly desirable that these be removed at the earliest possible moment.”⁸⁸ At Bethany College, the institution managed to operate on a limited basis throughout the war. They faced drastically reduced patronage and the loss of several faculty members. In September 1864, Campbell reported that the college had only fifty-seven students, and only graduated six.⁸⁹ Other Disciples colleges faced similar problems. Christian University, now Culver-Stockton College in Missouri, was forced to close for much of the war while Eureka College in Illinois only graduated three men during the war.⁹⁰

Throughout the year of 1864 and into 1865, it appeared that the peace message among the brethren was nearly nonexistent. Most of the newspapers that so actively campaigned against the war at its inception had either suspended their publication or simply became silent. They dropped almost all political or war news from their newspapers and instead focused almost exclusively on religious topics to heal the wounds of division in the movement. They had faced the tide of war head on with a proactive call for peace, but watched as many of their brethren joined the war regardless. While their message of nonviolence caused much division from 1861 to 1863, their shift to non-agitation would have tremendous postwar consequences on reconciliation in the postwar years and will be explored in the next chapter.

⁸⁷ Hodge, The Plea and the Pioneers in Virginia, 139-140.

⁸⁸ Howard, “The Cause of Christ in Missouri,” Christian Pioneer, February and March 1864, 84.

⁸⁹ “Bethany College,” Millennial Harbinger, September 1864, 410.

⁹⁰ Haynes, Disciples in Illinois, 42-43.

CONCLUSION

In the closing years of the war, the Disciples of Christ Movement, like the rest of the country, had been consumed by war. Moses E. Lard of Kentucky reflected, “We, as a nation and as Christians, have just passed the fierce ordeal of a terrible war, a war in which passion ran to its height, and feelings became as ferocious as feelings ever get. We had many brethren on both the opposing sides. Many of our churches stood precisely where the carnival raged most.”¹ The war had enacted a tremendous physical and psychological toll on the nation’s churches, and the Disciples congregations were no exception. An evangelist in the brotherhood noted while traveling throughout western Kentucky in January 1865: “A large majority of the churches I have visited, I have found in a divided and distracted condition, and many have not had a sermon for two, and some for more than three years.”² Many of the Disciples churches across the country were in similar circumstances. The brethren were not only divided North and South, but also within the sections, and engaged in bitter verbal combat.

Despite evidence to the contrary, many Disciples leaders during the postwar period denied that a division in the movement had taken place. Lard, after detailing the effects of war on the movement, stated that the Disciples escaped unscathed:

Yet not a rent in our ranks did the war produce. True, for the time being it cooled many an ardent feeling, and caused old friends to regard one another a little shyly. Still it effected no division. If now we have triumphantly come through this storm, and still gloriously stand an undivided people, have we not reason to count with confidence on the future? May we not boldly say, trusting in God to help us, we can never divide.³

¹ Lard, “Can We Divide?” Lard’s Quarterly, April 1866, 335.

² M. P. Baily, “Good Words from our Correspondents,” Millennial Harbinger, January 1865, 44.

³ Lard, “Can We Divide?” Lard’s Quarterly, April 1866, 336.

Many historians read Lard's denials of division, and concurred with his assessment. Historian Earl Irvin West concluded that the "churches of Christ were among one of the very few that did not, in the war, divide over the question of slavery."⁴ Historian Winfred Garrison argued that the Civil War's "ultimate effect was less divisive than might have been expected; in fact, not divisive at all."⁵ Franklin agreed with Lard's appraisal and reasoned that the movement could never divide: "We grant that we have the elements among us to produce division, but they have not the machinery to do it."⁶ Franklin is correct to a certain degree. It is true that the congregational polity of the movement did not allow for institutional breaches. But in reality, there is little doubt that serious divisions occurred among the leadership of the movement during the war. At the very least, the passage of the "war resolution" during the 1863 American Missionary Society Meeting demonstrated that the majority of men elected as delegates by their congregations across the states in the Union chose loyalty to the federal government over their southern brethren. By announcing allegiance to a country engaged in combat with an army populated by fellow Disciples, these men chose division over unity. No, the Disciples did not create formal church hierarchies in the North and South like the other major religious bodies, but the war resolution certainly constituted a substantial division in the movement.

The relationship between the Disciples churches in the North and South never fully recovered after the war. The sections were not only ideologically separated during the conflict, but also physically prevented from communication and fellowship. B. F. Manire, a Disciple in Carrollton, Mississippi, wrote the Harbinger on May 24, 1864, to relate that he had not received

⁴ West, Search for the Ancient Order, 330-31.

⁵ Garrison, Religion Follows the Frontier, 221.

⁶ Benjamin Franklin, "Can We Divide?" American Christian Review, February 1868, 36.

an issue of the paper in three years. He related the circumstances of the Mississippi brethren: “Our churches are languishing under the baneful effect of the war. Cut off from all our periodicals, schools &c., we have suffered more than any other religious body in the South.”⁷ As communication improved after the war, some Disciples learned of the actions of the northern brethren. Nathan W. Smith, a Georgia Disciple, learned of the war resolution and the formation of the abolitionist Christian Missionary Society and was dismayed: “We hear that the brotherhood formed societies, and organizations, unscriptural in name, and without precedent in the word of the Lord.--And in this zeal for God (which I fear is not according to knowledge,) they have passed sundry resolutions of a political character and import, maintaining, that men may fight and kill each other, that Christian men may go to war.”⁸ Following the war, Smith’s reaction to the actions of the ACMS would become commonplace among the Disciples in the South. They rarely acknowledged the efforts by McGarvey, Franklin, and other northern leaders who attempted to keep the war from infiltrating the movement. Instead, they denounced those who supported the war effort and passed resolutions in favor of the Union, which cemented the estrangement that occurred during the war.

Following the end of the national conflict, 1866 proved an important year for determining the future of the movement. Events throughout the year would have tremendous consequences on the future sectional splintering that would result in recognition of two separate entities in 1906: the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ.⁹ First and foremost, Alexander

⁷ B. F. Manire, Letter to the editor, May 24, 1864, Millennial Harbinger, December 1864, 573.

⁸ Nathan W. Smith, “A Letter from Georgia,” The Christian Standard (Cleveland, Cincinnati, OH), June 9, 1866, 76.

⁹ In his analysis of the Federal Census conducted in 1906, David Edwin Harrell noted the sectional differences of the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. Of the 159,658

Campbell, a founder and foremost figure of the brethren that had led the movement since its infancy, died at age 77. Although the “Sage of Bethany” had handed over most of the editorial duties in the Harbinger, Campbell remained the symbolic leader of the movement. During the antebellum period, he had operated the most popular newspaper among the brethren, which was read throughout the nation. Although there were several other periodicals, the Harbinger represented the flagship of the movement. His death signaled the demise of a single, unifying periodical for the entire brethren, and would be replaced by the rise of sectional newspapers that would contribute to the division between the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ.

In the same year as Campbell’s death, the Gospel Advocate, which had suspended publication in 1861, was revived as a weekly newspaper by Fanning and his protégé David Lipscomb.¹⁰ The paper became the primary voice of the more conservative, sectarian churches in the South into the twentieth century. During the war, Fanning campaigned to keep the Tennessee brethren from participating in the fight, but only heard news of loyalty oaths and war resolutions from the North. Fanning endured tremendous persecution because of his stance of nonparticipation during the war and emerged from the conflict bitter. Most of his possessions were destroyed and his beloved Franklin College was forced to suspend classes and, at one point, was even seized. Historian Herman Norton concluded that “few men suffered more during the

members of the Churches of Christ, 101,734 lived in the former Confederate states whereas only 138,703 members of the total over one million Disciples of Christ lived in same location. Harrell, “Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ,” 263. For the discussion on the formal division in 1906 and its causes, see, Harrell, The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ; Harrell, “The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ,” 261-77; Tucker and McAllister, Journey of Faith, 233-54.

¹⁰ Lipscomb was a powerful promoter of nonviolence in Tennessee during the war. However, because the Gospel Advocate had suspended publication 1861, most of the information about Lipscomb comes from several decades after the war, so it has been excluded. See Harrell, “Disciples of Christ Pacifism in Nineteenth Century Tennessee,” 268-70; West, Life and Times of David Lipscomb.

war.”¹¹ After the loss of his publication and the stoppage of the mail service, Fanning had little influence outside of his immediate vicinity. But in 1866, he was able to strike back at the northern press for their support of war. David Lipscomb wrote that the “fact that we had not a single paper known to us that Southern people 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 In February, Fanning called “a meeting of messengers from the churches South.”¹³ Although the war had concluded, it was clear that Fanning believed that the northern brethren had almost unanimously supported the Union’s war of aggression on the South. Franklin asked, “Why this call for a convention of certain States, at the expense of others?” Fanning replied that “most of the prominent brethren North are politicians” who “have been employing the fist of wickedness for a few years past to put down transgressors and subjugate rebels against governments.”¹⁴ Also in 1866, Isaac Errett launched the Christian Standard, which was supported by the money of two loyalists, James Garfield and James Robison. The paper was more progressive than Franklin’s Review, and quickly became the primary paper of the northern brethren. The Christian Standard and Gospel Advocate, and later, due to its 1882 inception, the Christian-Evangelist, would engage in several heated discussions over the next forty years and become the voices of the three major religious bodies that emerged from the Stone-Campbell movement.¹⁵

¹¹ Norton, Tennessee Christians, 104.

¹² Lipscomb, Gospel Advocate, May 1, 1866, 273.

¹³ Fanning, Gospel Advocate, February 27, 1866.

¹⁴ Fanning, Gospel Advocate, April 17, 1866.

¹⁵ For a detailed examination on the three journals that came to represent the three religious subgroups that emerged from the nineteenth-century Disciples Movement (Gospel

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the postwar period was not that the Disciples continued to sectionalize North and South, but that the brethren within the sections were able to reconcile some of their differences and recapture a portion of the unity lost during the war. This occurred for two reasons. First and foremost, the extremely divisive issue of Christian warfare was removed from discussion. Similar to what occurred during the Mexican-American War, the issue arose almost overnight, and quickly disappeared after the war. Most Disciples leaders wanted to forget the problems during the conflict, and refocus the movement on Christian unity. In 1865, W. C. Rogers, the Corresponding Secretary of the ACMS exemplified the optimism of the northern brethren: “The black clouds of war are now dispelled. Fields wide and bright are opening up before us. Let us strive mightily to meet the demands at home and abroad, that thousands may rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, and that the Lord our God may be glorified.”¹⁶ Second, nearly every northern Disciples leader, no matter if they had called for nonviolence or nonparticipation like Franklin, or if they had taken to the battlefield like Garfield, could agree that the war was caused by the secession of the South. In the states of the former Confederacy, a similar situation developed as the southern brethren united around the Gospel Advocate’s attacks on the North. While this was not conducive to rekindling the positive relationships between the sections, it gave leaders within the sections common ground from which to begin the reunification process.

Advocate: Churches of Christ; the Christian Standard: Christian Churches; and the Christian-Evangelist: the Disciples of Christ), see Richard T. Hughes, Henry E. Webb, and Howard E. Short, The Power of the Press: Studies of the Gospel Advocate, the Christian Standard, and the Christian-Evangelist (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1986).

¹⁶ W. C. Rogers, “Letter from the Cor. Secretary of A. C. M. S.,” Millennial Harbinger, November 1865, 502-3.

However, the wounds opened during the war among the northern brethren were not completely healed. Errett's Christian Standard challenged the American Christian Review for readership, and criticized Franklin's increasingly conservative stance, especially toward the missionary society. Franklin, who had been a major supporter of the ACMS during the 1850s, stopped supporting the society after the 1863 war resolution, and began actively campaigning against it in 1866. The Christian Standard was unashamedly directed at the northern brethren, and constantly reminded its readers that the men behind the paper expressed their loyalty to the federal government during the war, while the Review pushed for nonparticipation.

Following the Civil War and throughout the nineteenth century, the peace message of the movement slowly lost adherents. The nationalism during the Spanish-American War, and even more so during World War I, had almost completely destroyed the nonviolent message. Historian Johnnie Collins found that, by World War II, "the general membership and most of the leadership accepted the idea of 'just war' and participated and supported the war like most Americans."¹⁷ Historian Michael W. Casey persuasively argued that because of the acculturation in the movement, the Disciples moved from religious "outsiders" to "insiders."¹⁸ The list of leaders who undertook the nonviolent message in their periodicals during the Civil War, in many ways, resembles the list of Disciples who enjoyed less influence after the war. Howard operated the Christian Pioneer with little success after the war and was forced to suspend publication in 1870. The Millennial Harbinger faced a similar demise, and, after Campbell's death, only survived four more years. Franklin's American Christian Review never regained the prominence it experienced before the war, and increasingly lost its market share to the heavily patriotic

¹⁷ Johnnie Andrew Collins, "Pacifism in the Churches of Christ: 1866-1945," (PhD diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 1984), 1.

¹⁸ Casey, "From Religious Outsiders to Insiders," 455-75.

Christian Standard and Christian-Evangelist. The Review's demise was partly due to the fact that the men who had broken with the peace message and joined the war, returned home and preferred the newspapers that were operated by men who supported the war effort.

Taken in the context of the Civil War, the nonviolent position of many of the leaders was nothing less than extraordinary. Historian Peter Brock, who spent the majority of his career writing on pacifism, found that the Disciples were the first American religious group to view “the idea of pacifism as a denominational option.”¹⁹ Whereas the traditional peace churches held nonviolence and nonparticipation in civil government as fundamental elements of their institutional and theological beliefs, the Disciples took both the pro-war and antiwar position, and vigorously defended both sides. Furthermore, the promoters of nonviolence distanced themselves from the traditional peace churches with their proactive and vocal contentions. Whereas there were only a few cases of defection from the peace stance in the Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren, no religious group in America was so divided on the issue of war as the Disciples.²⁰

Historians have long recognized the importance of the schisms in the other major denominations that occurred before the war, but the divisions in the Disciples of Christ were no less substantial. Because the movement had no organizational framework to make such division easily perceptible, they have been perceived as indivisible during the nineteenth-century. However, the southern brethren were both physically and ideologically, separated during the war. Fanning's postwar conference invitation to only southern churches signified the growing

¹⁹ Peter Brock, Freedom from War: Nonsectarian Pacifism, 1814-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 136.

²⁰ For the religious groups during the war who also took a stance of nonparticipation or nonviolence, see Brock, Pacifism in the United States, 689-942.

sectionalism and estrangement from the northern brethren. Furthermore, while the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians set up new governing structures in their sectional churches, the Disciples' only semblance of a national organization, the American Christian Missionary Society, lost nearly all support from the South. In fact, the Disciples arguably took even more extreme measures than the other major denominations by formally creating two competing missionary societies in the North. Although the Christian Missionary Society was initially created to counteract the ACMS's inactivity on abolition, the contentious debates over nonviolence and the disbandment of the Christian Missionary Society following the war resolution of 1863 demonstrate that the peace message significantly contributed to divisions in the movement.

The Civil War armies took to the battlefield, and ended the lives of hundreds of thousands of men in the bloodiest war America had ever seen. It raged for four years and claimed more than 620,000 soldiers' lives, inflicted millions of dollars in damages, and challenged the nation's existence in an unprecedented manner.²¹ The Disciples entered the 1850s not only growing in numbers, but also in cooperation and unity. The leaders who espoused a message of peace in the Disciples of Christ participated in a contentious debate over the issue of war. They took up their pens rather than rifles, and operated their presses instead of their battle horns. They forged into battle believing God was on their side, while the opposition mustered their forces and did the same. Instead of fighting over a sunken road, a crater, or a bridge, the Disciples engaged in a battle of interpretation and clashed over the Bible's true message for the Christian being tested by a nation engulfed in war. And, as with most wars, there was a victor and a vanquished in both the Civil War and the war of words between the

²¹ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 854.

Disciples' opposing sides. In the end, Thomas Campbell's mantra was behind the battle cry for both sides: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."²² The rub was not that the New Testament was silent on the issue of Christian warfare, but on how to interpret the message when it spoke. Ironically, although leaders like Fanning, Franklin, and McGarvey argued so vehemently for nonparticipation and nonviolence to keep the movement from dividing, they actually destroyed any chance at long-term unity.

²² Cited in Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, 581.

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