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Editors' Notes

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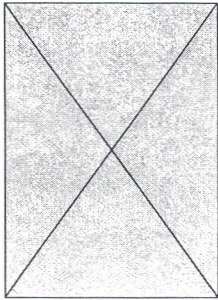


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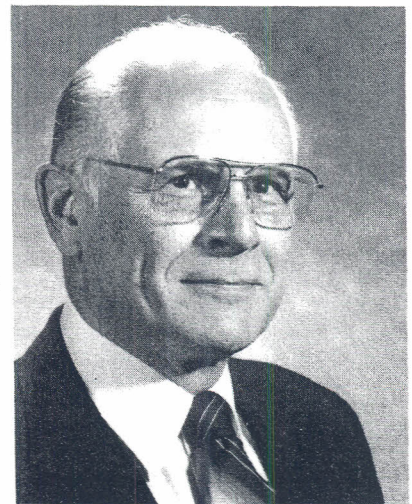


Editors' Notes

Stuart and D'Esta Love

We commend this issue on Restoration Themes to our readers for several reasons. First, the topic—an historical exploration of the Stone-Campbell heritage—fits the purpose of *Leaven*. Second, our writers represent two strands of our religious movement. We were impressed that so many well-trained persons were willing to write on a number of timely themes—and to realize that other competent historians were not tapped simply for circumstantial reasons. Finally, the selection of Henry E. Webb as our guest editor completes what we agreed to do at our first meeting at Emmanuel School of Religion in 1997. Working together, we chose three persons to serve as guest editors for 1999—Charles R. Taber, Eleanor A. Daniel, and Henry E. Webb—on the topics of Missions and the Church, Adult Nurture and the Churches, and Restoration Themes. The benefit to *Leaven* readers by the completion of these three issues marks only the beginning of good things to come.

HENRY E. WEBB was born in Detroit, Michigan, attended Cincinnati Bible Seminary, and obtained his doctorate at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Webb taught at Milligan College for several decades, having been brought there through the efforts of Dean Walker, a name well known among Christian Churches. In addition to his teaching, Dr. Webb has preached for a number of churches, including the Central Christian Church in Jonesborough, Tennessee, and the Christian Church in Erwin, Tennessee. He is the author of *In Search of Christian Unity* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1990). Always dedicated to unity efforts among the churches, Dr. Webb has been involved in dialogues among Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana, from 1988 to 1997. He has also served on the Theological Studies Commission of the World Convention of Churches of Christ. His energy for the Lord's work continues to abound! We commend Dr. Webb and this issue to our readers!



STUART AND D'ESTA LOVE

“Church history is the study of what the gospel has done to the world and what the world has done to the gospel.” With these words from a seminary professor, I was introduced to the fascinating pursuit of the reciprocal and double-edged interaction of two forces in history that are often in opposition. The exploration of this interaction over almost two thousand years is the special privilege of those who make church history their major field of study.

Almost two centuries ago, a new Christian enterprise was launched on the American frontier. To be sure, the Stone-Campbell movement has important roots in the Old World. But the manner in which it developed was distinctly American. In spite of its origin on the somewhat sparsely settled American frontier, the movement has never existed in geographic or cultural isolation. As it made its impact on the religious life of the new nation (a fact detailed in many histories), it was, in turn, impacted by the maelstrom of forces from within the environment of its development, a factor often overlooked by these same histories. This deficiency is currently being corrected by scholars who have developed a growing awareness of the importance of contextual forces on the movement and are now attentive to the implications of extraneous factors in the shaping of the energies and attitudes of this dynamic movement.

The thought patterns and religious convictions of every member of every congregation in every community are interwoven with a host of other concerns that are of a social, political, economic, and psychological nature. These convictions are not neatly compartmentalized or isolated from each other. The ways in which they intertwine and interact in the human psyche are amazingly complex. Human beings do not simply switch off one of these concerns when they move into the sphere of another. Attitudes and judgments of each one of them have a subtle and significant influence on the others. Were this not so, serious schizophrenia would follow. Religious faith must always be related in some way to social, political, moral, and psychological understandings. Happily, most of us are single personalities, and our thinking is more or less integrated. Precisely how and to what degree one of these areas of life impinges on the others is a matter that is not easily measured and about which there can be sharp and honest differences of opinion.

The current issue of *Leaven* explores nine important factors in the wider American culture that have had considerable impact on the Stone-Campbell movement. Precisely where, how, and to what extent these forces have shaped the development of the movement may be matters of opinion, but few of today’s historians would question the impact of each on the totality of one’s understanding and outlook.

Obviously, more could be said on each of the topics, and other significant influences could be added. Since the writers are dealing with interpretation of historical developments, it is to be expected that differing understandings will emerge. We can only note that each writer is a respected Christian and has demonstrated through years of service his/her competence in the field of historiography as well as personal commitment to the aims of the movement. Readers will find the essays readable and stimulating.

The Stone-Campbell movement finds its origin on the American frontier. **DENNIS HELSASBECK JR.** notes the influence of the frontier environment on the earlier years of this development. The initial growth of the movement occurred in the area where what is known as “Jacksonian Democracy” was a powerful force. **JAMES B. NORTH** explores this influence. I, **HENRY E. WEBB**, consider the enormous impact of the Civil War on the movement. Millennial speculation has consistently appeared among the Stone-Campbell people, and **DAN G. DANNER** discusses the scope of this influence. Christians have never been of one mind on the subject of participation in warfare. **MICHAEL W. CASEY** discusses the very significant anti-war efforts within the move-

ment. The timely topic of the role of women in the church has been and remains a vital issue. It is not unrelated to the enhanced role of women in society as a whole. **FRANCES GRACE CARVER** and **CYNTHIA CORNELL NOVAK** detail the larger impact of this force on the movement.

In the current century, developments in the scientific community have impacted every facet of American life. Efforts to apply scientific methodology to the study of religion brought startling and controversial conclusions that became known as modernism. Almost every Protestant body was torn by dissension over these conclusions. How modernism affected the Stone-Campbell community is discussed by **JOHN W. WADE**.

Much of the religious activity in this century has been centered on the Ecumenical movement. The ways in which this involvement impacted the wider Stone-Campbell fellowship is the focus of the contribution by

ROBERT OLDHAM FIFE. **THOMAS H. OLBRICHT** discusses some significant cultural influences on the movement since World War II.

While buffeted by contextual factors through its turbulent history, the Stone-Campbell movement has manifested its own kind of integrity of the plea or the unitive nature of biblical faith and practice. Giving balance to this issues's attention to contextual forces that have influenced the movement, **LEROY GARRETT** focuses on the prevailing integrity of the Stone-Campbell plea. It would be a tragic mistake if, in examining the important contextual factors that have influenced the development of the movement, one lost sight of the central plea that has pervaded its entire history. Finally, on a different and welcome key, **JOHN FREE** provides a communion meditation.

HENRY E. WEBB