

## **NEW JOURNALS FOR THE SIXTIES: RESTORATION QUARTERLY AND MISSION**

**Thomas H. Olbricht**

The 1960's witnessed the emergence of two new journals for dissemination among members of the Churches of Christ, representing new concerns and directions, first the Restoration Quarterly, and then Mission. The Gospel Advocate and The Firm Foundation at that time clearly exhibited traditional journalistic approaches of a hundred years or more. These journals printed short articles on controversial matters among the churches, delineating a consensus perspective, and also inspirational pieces and reports from preachers, mostly regarding gospel meetings. The Gospel Advocate was more traditional than the Firm Foundation, the latter under a new editor after 1955, Reuel Lemmons, who was willing for less conventional views to at least surface. He himself encouraged a degree of openness, forbearance and diversity. In addition, The Christian Chronicle, the Twentieth Century Christian, and Power for Today were recognized and circulated widely. The Christian Chronicle was a major source of news among us, especially in regard to expanding missions. The latter two focused upon current inspirational and spiritual matters especially for college age persons. The Restoration Quarterly and Mission were new in kind, at least among members of the Churches of Christ.

New concerns and foci are always a threat to those content with the traditional and conventional, as are most of us. It comes as no surprise then that both of these new journals met with considerable resistance from contemporary church leadership. The control of channels of communication is particularly guarded by leaders who hold their position through aggressiveness and charisma, rather than through institutional, bureaucratic office. Considerable truth resides in the old saw that Churches of Christ do not have bishops, but editors. The more numerous the channels of communication, therefore, the more diffuse the influence and power of a specific

editor. It is difficult, to discover a case in which, at least among us, editors in place welcomed the birth a new journal. Of course, the controversial aspect of a new journal entails more than a matter of power. A new publication is often suspect for deviant theology in content, approach and method. In the case of the Restoration Quarterly, suspicion prevailed that since it emphasized scholarship, the articles might lead to modernism and higher criticism. In the minds of the traditionalists, scholarship invariably moved in these opprobrious directions. In the case of Mission, a perception rapidly developed that its promoters were out to rock the boat. They wanted to change the church through criticism of traditional views and approaches, to depart from the standard foundational perspectives, and lead the way in new and more liberal directions.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the role of these journals among the Churches of Christ in the 1960's. In order to do so I propose to comment briefly on the character of the movement in the 1960's so as to situate the appearance of the journals in context. Then I will take up each journal individually, giving special emphasis to my own involvement, and in the case of RQ reflections from Abe Malherbe. I will end with a brief assessment of the manner in which these journals have influenced directions since.

### **The Context**

The fifties marked a socioeconomic sea change in Churches of Christ. At the close of World War II it appeared that we might be on the verge of moving across the tracks and out of cultural isolation. By the late 1950's that was no longer a prospect but a reality. In the United States we planted congregations and built attractive buildings in the residential areas and spawning suburbs of all the cities in the regions of our strength. We expanded church planting into all the states. Our major colleges were accredited by regional accrediting associations. We had increasing numbers of missionaries at work on all the inhabited continents. Our journals were doing well.

The Christian Chronicle encouraged our rising self image and expansiveness. We announced our move through major auditorium, city wide meetings, and through a national radio program, the Herald of Truth, started in 1953. This new era perhaps culminated in our exhibit at the New York World's Fair in 1964, 1965-- for us a creative and victorious announcement of our arrival.

According to certain outside observers, ours was the best of the religious exhibits at the fair.

The surge of GI education after World War II deeply impacted the membership of Churches of Christ. Many persons, both male and female graduated from college in the late forties. Myriads became public school teachers and helped address the baby boom crisis. Numerous others went on to graduate schools, several with a goal of returning to teach in the rapidly expanding Christian colleges. Among those seeking graduate education were persons in theological, but especially Biblical studies. By 1960 Jack Lewis, LeMoine Lewis and Everett Ferguson had their Ph.D.'s from Harvard, J. D. Thomas from Chicago where Don Sime also had completed course work, Joe Sanders and Pat Harrell had completed doctorates at Boston University, and W. B. West, Frank Pack and J. P. Sanders from the University of Southern California. Others were studying at Princeton, Vanderbilt, Southwestern Baptist, Southern Methodist, the University of Iowa, and Southern Baptist. In the Boston area, Don McGaughey and occasionally Jay Carver, were working at Boston University, and Abe Malherbe, Roy Ward, Harold Forshey, Tom Olbricht, Bill Martin, and Harold Vanderpool at Harvard. The next year Jim Roberts and Derwood Smith arrived. The early trickle to Harvard in the 1940's grew to a steady stream in the 1960's.

I arrived at Harvard in 1959 the year after the Restoration Quarterly commenced publication. All of us there were involved, either writing articles or book reviews, Abe pressing us into service. We didn't hear much about the business end, since Pat Harrell had taken it with him to Northeastern Christian which commenced classes that fall with Everett as dean and Pat Harrell as

chair of the Bible department. I have heard Abe speak various times of the commencement of the Quarterly, but he had never put it in writing. In gathering material for this paper I thought it important to get a statement from Abe. In keeping with modern technology he sent it to me by E-mail. I therefore here include his account.

Here are my ruminations on RQ's first year.

The first issue of RQ was published in 1957. It may be of interest to note the context in which it came into existence.

In the middle of the fifties there were very few persons in the Churches of Christ with advanced degrees of any sort in religion. The pattern had been to obtain doctorates in other fields, such as speech, education and history, and to write dissertations related to religion (e.g. Earl West, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Ira North, James Bales). The handful of persons who had gone beyond the bachelor's degree, almost always from a Christian college, typically received BD's from Southern Baptist seminaries, although the odd one or two went to Chicago, and Harvard had attracted a relatively large number from Abilene, who, upon hitting Cambridge, did not stay in the fellowship very long. Only a handful held doctorates in religion: Frank Pack and W. B. West from Southern California, Paul Southern from Southern Baptist, and Jack Lewis from Harvard (See RQ 2 (1958) 71, 72 for the situation a few years later).

But the situation was beginning to change. Harding and ACC had received accreditation earlier in the decade and started master's degree programs (See RQ 2 (1958) 11-12). It was becoming clear that the churches required and desired better educated ministers, and more men, in addition to ACC and Harding, went to seminaries and universities such as Chicago and Harvard, and, in addition, to Iowa and Hebrew Union. While still fearful that these, mostly young men, would "lose their faith," especially at Harvard, and while many of them remained skeptical, if not

downright suspicious of the students, many people in the churches were proud of the students' achievements, sometimes real, but frequently imagined. The churches were growing in number, their members were becoming more prosperous and better educated, and there was a growing confidence that we could accomplish anything we set our minds to.

It was in this larger context that Everett Ferguson and I arrived at Harvard in 1954. Our first year in the STB program was Jay Carver's and Pat Harrell's last. Upon their graduation, Jay remained in Massachusetts to preach and Pat entered the PhD program in New Testament at Boston University. Also at Boston University, pursuing a doctorate in religious education, was Joe Sanders, a well known preacher in Tennessee. He preached for the church in Brookline, where I assisted him. Roy Ward came from Abilene to Harvard in 1956. We lacked many things, but one of them was not confidence. For example, we were all working with small and struggling churches which sometimes had well educated people or graduate students in them. Naturally, we thought that they would benefit from advanced study, so we started a weekly program of advanced studies in New Testament, church history, and so on at the Brookline church. A quite large number of people attended these.

Pat Harrell and I started planning RQ in 1956 and published the first issue in 1957. We had a number of goals in mind. First, we thought that it could contribute to the growing interest in scholarship in the church. In this regard, we thought of it as an intramural means of communication through which we and our peers elsewhere could communicate and thus create a community for scholarly discourse. Another goal was to contribute directly to meeting students' and preachers' needs by devoting a special issue once a year to a subject of traditional interest, such as baptism, the church, and apologetics. The most successful issue, in my opinion, at least the most substantial one, and the one that has had the greatest influence in the Christian colleges, was the

one on exegesis (RQ 5:4 [1961]). It is interesting to note that this issue was still used by doctoral students in places like Yale as late as the seventies, before books like the ones by John Hayes and Carl Holladay and by Gordon Fee were published in the 1980's.

Pat and I set out to compile a list of potential contributors and found that it was not very long, even though we included everyone we knew about with any degree beyond the bachelor's which contained recognizable religious element in it. The largest single group of potential contributors was the faculty of the Christian Colleges and we invited them to contribute articles. And immediately we ran into a stone wall. Pat and I had assumed that we would edit the journal, and that turned out to be as great an impediment as the fact that we had the effrontery to start a journal at all! It was reported to us that at one faculty meeting our invitation was discussed and it was decided that it was too dangerous to become associated with a "paper" produced by the two Harvard upstarts. The head of another faculty, who had been cultivating Pat to join his faculty, upon receiving his doctorate, dropped Pat cold, letting it be known that he had been planning such a journal and that he was, in any case, the logical editor of a scholarly journal for the church. The most surprising response came from someone outside the Christian Colleges, who had attained some stature as editor of a great church father. He declined our invitation on the ground that he considered the kind of scholarship we envisaged as inappropriate to the church. (He did later relent, joined the editorial board, and contributed an article or two).

It seemed that we were stopped in our tracks before we got off the mark. But, realizing that we were having to do with political factors rather than the merits of the proposed journal, we decided to proceed accordingly. We asked Joe Sanders, who had the requisite stature in the church and than whom there was none more correct in belief and practice, to be editor. Joe bravely agreed

to do so--on the condition that Pat and I do all the work, from editing through production and distribution. And so the first issue of RQ appeared in 1957--without any editor or editorial staff being noted on the inside cover! Having learnt our lesson, we decided on the old political ploy of distributing liability, and the second issue listed an editorial board consisting of Batsell Barrett Baxter, William Green, Reuel Lemmons, J. W. Roberts, Joe Sanders, and J. D. Thomas. Pat was business manager and I executive secretary. Pat and I still did everything to produce the journal. The journal having been launched, Joe asked to be relieved when he returned to Lipscomb.

We approached J. W. Roberts to be editor, and he accepted, assuming the editorship with the third issue. With the fourth issue Jack Lewis joined the editorial board. It was J. W. who secured a future for the journal. Although he had almost no formal theological training he had one of the finest theological minds I have known. Furthermore, he had the confidence of the churches, had a vision of what might be, and, heaven be praised, relished being a editor. J. W. was quite comfortable with the goals Pat and I had for the journal, but I did think that he continued too long to publish term papers when we were in a position to do better.

RQ was started on a shoestring. Pat and I worked part time with churches, and our wives had equally low paying jobs. It is to the credit of Nancy Harrell and Phyllis that they allowed Pat and me to borrow the equivalent of one fourth of our annual incomes to launch the venture. We were thus funded for just under a year. A more sustained source of support was Everett Ferguson's father, who for some years subscribed to RQ for every Bible major or preacher student in the Christian colleges. In addition to providing the journal with some financial underpinning, this far sighted gift provided future ministers with tangible proof that striving for scholarship could be viewed as natural to Christian learning. A third subsidy came from our printer. Reuel Lemmons,

then editor of the Firm Foundation, agreed to print the journal whenever his presses were not occupied with the Firm Foundation or the Texas State Legislature for which he did printing in order to stay afloat. He charged us the bare minimum, really only enough to keep his workers busy.

It was as difficult to keep the journal going as it had been to begin it. A major problem, in addition to financial precariousness, to which it contributed, was the erratic schedule of publication. This was unavoidable, given our arrangement with the Firm Foundation, and it was aggravated by the schedules of the two publishers, who were full time graduate students as well as preachers and founders of mission churches. In addition to soliciting articles and book reviews, we had to do much of the writing ourselves (or so it seemed), as well as take care of subscriptions, mailing, and all the other aggravations known only to people rash enough to start "papers". The business side of the operation only attained some semblance of order when Phyliss rescued it from utter chaos. Another source of frustration was the readership. Judging from the relative small number of Christian college graduates who continued their subscriptions after the Ferguson gift ran out, evidently not everyone thought that scholarship was as important as Pat and I did. Preachers, too, would subscribe for a year and drop it. It was for financial reasons that we eventually decided to sell subscriptions to the journal, through a jobber, to institutions beyond our fellowship. I was not happy to do so, since I thought that the sub-title, "Studies in Christian Scholarship", would acquire a pretentiousness in the larger academic world that we did not intend it to have intramurally.

In conclusion, I like to think that the appearance of the first volume of the Living Word Commentary, in 1967, ten years after the first issue of RQ is a pretty good index of what had happened to publishing in the church, and I am sure that RQ was an important ingredient in an extraordinary decade. But a detailed history of RQ and an assessment of what role it has played in higher education in the church in the last 50 years remain for someone with social scientific



competencies, and the research for that study should begin now, before more key figures like LeMoine Lewis pass from the scene.

Well, there you have it. Most of this is from memory, but I think the facts are correct."

Abraham J. Malherbe November 1991

My official connection with Restoration Quarterly commenced with Volume 7:1, 1963. Before that my contact was with Malherbe, who was more influential in determining the content than his remarks indicate, especially in recruiting materials. But the Roberts, especially Delno, did the mechanics of the actual editing.

R. Q. was sold in 1963 to a corporate board of members of the church, who also served as the editorial board. The main reason for this change, was, as Malherbe indicated, that the business and subscription matters in the hands of Harrell were in disarray and not conducive to either ascertaining the financial situation, or the good will of the subscribers. Before the sale, in 1960, Everett Ferguson of Northeastern Christian, and Joe White of Pepperdine had been added to the editorial board. The sale in 1963 brought about the departure from the board of Joe Sanders, Reuel Lemmons, Batsell Barrett Baxter, and Joe White. Those added were Pat Harrell, Abraham Malherbe, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Frank Pack. The change was principally the selection of persons who it was anticipated would either write or solicit articles. They were also scattered in various regions of the country. Malherbe had considerable to do both with engineering the removals as well the additions. In the constituting the corporate board, J. D. Thomas, I believe, was the first president. At that time I taught at Penn State. All the new board members were involved in graduate teaching at Christian Colleges except Harrell, who preached for the Bering

Drive congregation in Houston, and myself. The Quarterly at that time had about 400 subscribers but it was not clear how many were paid up.

In 1966 I spoke at the Abilene Christian lectureship. That was an exciting time. Malherbe, Roberts and others had encouraged a change in direction to include more scholarly lectures and addressing current matters such as the work of the Holy Spirit. I attended the Restoration Quarterly board meeting. The discussions revolved about securing more subscribers, and the editing of the journal while J. W. was taking off for a year to travel around the world, to visit missionaries and speak was the opportunity afforded. Malherbe was reluctant, probably for the reasons he mentioned, to do this himself. For some reason he thought I was less controversial. He also knew of my articles, book review editing, column, and occasionally editing a special issue of the North Atlantic, later North American Christian. I'm sure I was set up, but I didn't know of the proposal until the meeting. Abe could have told me, but he was not inclined to work that way. He wanted the news to be official. I therefore edited three issues and was identified as acting editor, 9:3, 4, (1966) 10:1 (1967). Ferguson was appointed book review editor, the first person so designated.

In 1967 we moved to Abilene where I started teaching in the Bible department. J. W. and Fred Barton engineered this, encouraged by Malherbe and Ferguson. There was considerable opposition, especially by Eugene Clevenger, but also Woodrow Wilson, Neil Lightfoot and others. They believed liberalism was gaining a hold on the faculty in Bob Johnson, Malherbe and to a lesser extent, LeMoine Lewis and Everett Ferguson. They viewed my appointment as another step in a sellout to liberalism. I felt warmly received by most people, however. Malherbe took a leave from Abilene Christian in 1967-68 and located in the Boston area. We lived in his house and Dorothy took over Phyliss's job of recording circulation and keeping books for the Quarterly. Abe returned to Abilene and taught from 1968-69, then he accepted a position at Dartmouth. He had

become disenchanted with the growing carping over liberalism. He aspired to be a publishing scholar and he viewed the Abilene teaching load and the constant need to put out brush fires prohibitive. He also felt that Abilene Christian was more interested in athletics and fine buildings than in scholarship.

In that year Malherbe had another vision for the Quarterly. He decided that preachers and church members generally were not that interested in the Quarterly. Abe had hoped that it would be something analogous to Expository Times from Edinburgh which had considerable readership among clergymen throughout the English speaking world. Growing numbers of theological seminaries, colleges and universities were subscribing to the Quarterly. This proved an embarrassment to Abe because of the quality of several articles, which had actually been written as term papers. He therefore proposed that we upgrade the journal by securing a standard journal printer and increasing the scholarly quality of the articles. At the same time we were to publish on schedule. J. W. Roberts had certain scholarly qualities, but few as a manager. Whatever systemization the Quarterly attained was due to Delno. Abe therefore worked behind the scenes both to change the directions of the Quarterly, and the management. I was to become associate editor. This development was first so indicated on the editorial page in 13:1 (1970) which was the first new issue. Abe recruited money from Ray McGlothlin, Jr., to help pay for the added expense. We now worked hard to secure subscriptions from libraries. We upped the subscribers to about 800, above 300 of whom were libraries. The printer was Stinehower Press of Lunenburg, Vermont. They were the best press I have ever worked with. They printed when they promised and they gave us proofs that were essentially error free.

Unfortunately, however, we discovered that it was very difficult to recruit the quality of articles we had in mind. We hoped to do articles based on solid scholarship, but written in such a

way that they would appeal to graduate students and preachers. We also went to a scholarly cover and format. By 1970 we had a much larger range of scholars from which to draw. We discovered, however, that it was not easy to recruit articles. The scholars of promise were either finishing up dissertations or seeking publication in major journals so as to enhance their careers. When I reported to Abe the difficulty of recruiting articles and how much money we would have to raise each year, he responded that there was no point raising money to publish mediocre articles. He recommended that we go to another printer and set our sights a bit lower. Since Futura Press in Austin was printing Mission, I asked them to bid on the Quarterly. Since the bid was almost half of what we were paying Stinehower, we went with them. We continued along the same line until a year after J. W.'s death in 1973.

In the first ten years which takes us through most of the sixties, writers with more than 5 articles and book reviews were: Tony Ash, ACU, Everett Ferguson, ACU, Pat Harrell, Bering Drive, Houston, Don McGaughey, LCC and Pepperdine, John McRay, Lipscomb, Malherbe, ACU, Olbricht, Penn State and ACU, Frank Pack, Pepperdine, Jim Roberts, Johns Hopkins, J. W. Roberts, ACU, R. L. Roberts, ACU, Fausto Salvoni, Milano Bible school, J. D. Thomas, ACU, Roy Bowen Ward, Miami, and Paul Watson, Erskine, Pepperdine. The top seven in items published were: J. W. Roberts, Everett Ferguson, Pat Harrell, Abe Malherbe, Roy Bowen Ward, Fausto Salvoni, and Olbricht.

Specials, always volume 4 each year, were on baptism, the church, Corinthian epistles, Acts, exegesis and interpretation, apologetics, John, restorationism, Old Testament, New Testament, and the second century. The favorite topics were Biblical, Restoration history, church history, the Greek Language, eschatology, and Alexander Campbell. It is clear that most of the articles were either biblical or historical. That reflected the training of most of our people with

graduate degrees. The people from speech who published tended to write on historical topics, often of persons in the restoration movement. The topics were mostly those of interest to the scholarly guild, but sometimes controversial in the larger religious community or the restoration movement.

### **Conclusions:**

1. The first and greatest contribution, I believe, was the networking of the growing number of scholars. This gave those in the various graduate programs the opportunity to learn of other scholars, how they worked through various scholarly problems and what they were doing. The journal functioned to foster self awareness that a coterie of scholars was developing in our midst.
2. The journal encouraged scholarly work about the scriptures and our movement. Some of the persons who published went on to publish major articles and books. Others published in our own journals and Sweet materials.
3. Though the influence was not nearly as rapid as Malherbe hoped, the journal opened the doors for accepting the helpfulness of scholarship to preachers and other church leaders. It especially opened the door for entertaining Biblical criticism.
4. It encouraged the acquiring and utilization of the Biblical languages, especially Greek.
5. It cut out a new community of authors, something of a new power base, which set its own agenda of interests, in scholarly, rather than controversial topics.
6. It laid the grounds for a dichotomy of interpretation as Gary Collier has proposed, the traditional restorational and the newer intramural Biblical criticism of academia.
7. The outcomes in the church have been long range and gradual, mostly promoting grammatico-historical interpretation of the scriptures and increased awareness of restoration history.

The Restoration Quarterly in the sixties took the lead, after we crossed the tracks, in pointing toward the academy in which the scriptures and related religious and theological topics are professional enterprises. Some of those so involved have exerted considerable energy making such insights palatable in the pews.

## **MISSION**

Walter Burch provided suitable background for Mission from a certain perspective. His perspective is paramount since it was he and his associates who had the energy and audacity to give birth to Mission. I say Walter and his associates because he was especially urged on by the persons he mentioned such as Dwain Evans and Bud Stumbaugh. In Kansas City (SBL Annual Meeting, November 1991) I asked Don Haymes what he remembered about the beginnings of Mission. From his perspective the person behind the scenes who kept the project on target was Dwain Evans. Walter, however, was the front man. He was the person who traveled. He was also especially good at organization and behind the scenes planning. For such people the leading motive was addressing the principle problems of the 1960's. The feeling was that our preachers and churches were still too much engaged in battles of the past, the fights over premillennialism and institutionalism, internal problems, and the polemic regarding the inadequate understandings of our religious neighbors in regard to baptism, instrumental music, the Lord's supper, and the organization of the church. Our people rather needed to address racial discrimination, the needs of the poor in the inner city, the recognition of the work of the holy spirit, and a new commitment to dedication, morality and ethics. Along with these concerns was a call for a more ecumenical spirit.

Other motivations, however, fed the desire for another sort of journalism. Perhaps I can best lay these out autobiographically. When we moved to Massachusetts in 1959 I first became aware of The North Atlantic Christian. The journal was regional, and therefore did not create a big

stir in Texas and Tennessee. It was different in that it employed colors, graphics and upscale layout. It was the sort of journal, as some said that you would not be ashamed to leave on the coffee table for your friends to see. That was not the case, so the forward looking people thought, in regard to the Gospel Advocate, and The Firm Foundation. Those of us attending the schools of the northeast were actively involved in the production of The North Atlantic Christian, especially Roy Bowen Ward and myself. Another key person was Bob Lawrence. Abe wasn't too much involved, but he was always ready with advice and an occasional article. We tried to be encouraging and inspirational, as well as providing solid substance, but not in depth scholarship. We reviewed scholarly books, and for a few years I did a regular column on the world of religion, noting what was happening in other groups and making some comment on how these developments influenced our movement.

In 1963 Walter and others initiated meetings leading to the exhibit at the New York World's fair, 1964, 1965. People associated with The North American Christian such as Roy and I were involved. Our contribution was as writers of distribution materials. We wrote brochures and a Bible correspondence course. Our publication committee also talked about the distribution of journals. We would use Twentieth Century Christian, Power for Today, The North Atlantic Christian, The Christian Chronicle, and other journals, but we dreamed of a revamped or new journal of quality. Some discussion centered upon upgrading the North Atlantic Christian, but nothing was done, probably both because of costs and the time involved in these productions. The skills of the quality writers, so it was thought, were tied up with the non-journal publications.

After the fair was over the discussion of a new journal continued. The camaraderie of the fair inspired group endeavors by which to address the problems of the sixties. A channel of communication was needed. Several persons agreed, for different reasons, including a higher

quality journalism, and higher level of scholarly insight, a more open environment for the discussion of ideas, and an addressing of the problems of the sixties as presented in the media. For most of these people, the outlook prevailed that the church needed to climb out of old trenches and storm new no-man's lands. The Nashville meeting of 1966 continued to fan these flames. I was present at that meeting which mostly consisted of activists, not scholars, as charged by Reuel Lemmons in a later Firm Foundation editorial.

Soon meetings were called specifically in regard to a new journal. Since I spoke at the lectureship that year I was in Abilene for the first official meeting regarding the journal. Walter Burch has given a brief account of these meetings in *Mission*, September, 1986. In Abilene we discussed the name of the journal, its direction, and its organization. We wanted a positive, forward looking posture, and thought that the mission of the church broadly conceived would serve as a suitable focal point. George Gurganus, who was present, hoped for a journal more specifically focused on missions in the more narrowly classical sense. He did not receive much support. It was decided to draw up a statement about the journal which Walter would mail to several persons for their suggestions. In June of that year we met in Memphis to go over the statement. The one item I remember from that meeting was that Otis Gatewood proposed that we incorporate, sell stock and establish a bookstore. He conceived the enterprise much like *Twentieth Century Christian*. The majority, however, were not interested in a business enterprise, but a means of establishing a new voice among our people. As Walter put it, "Our objectives were to: (1) to create a new editorial voice within Churches of Christ; and (2) to provide a forum in which writers with different perspectives could express themselves freely, even if their view were unpopular." (p.

10) The Memphis statement was modified until it became official, titled, "The Task of Mission" and appeared in volume 1:1.



I myself was a bit surprised at the final layout of the journal. It was different from any of our other publications, but not that appealing in my view. I expected something more upscale perhaps like The Herald of Truth's Upreach. Walter explained that such a format was too expensive. As I recall, the first mail out went to above 700 subscribers, but that was not nearly as many as hoped for.

Probably at the advice of Malherbe, Mission appeared without an editor so as to spread the liability. The intention, however, at some future date was to appoint an editor. The decision was to go with an editorial board each of which would recruit one of the monthly issues. A six person board of editors was appointed: Walter Burch, Ray Chester, Hubert Locke, Thomas H. Olbricht, Frank Pack, J. W. Roberts and Roy Bowen Ward. Walter probably solicited the first issue. It is not accidental, I think, that these were popularized articles by those of a scholarly bent, in order, Malherbe, Ward, Olbricht, McGaughey, Wesley Reagan, and Juan Monroy. Board of Trustees of Mission included all the editorial board along with Bill Banowsky, Dwain Evans, Everett Ferguson, Don McGaughey, Frank Pack, Don Sime, Carl Spain, and Ike Summerlin. The effort was distribute the liability as much as possible among forward looking identifiable persons. Several others had been approached, for example, Norvel Young, Batsell Baxter, and Ira North. These men had been involved in the famous Nashville meeting of 1966, but they thought being connected with Mission a serious liability.

I propose now to set out my role with Mission and some of the problems attendant. Then I will make a few observations on the materials and the controversies which emerged. Finally, I will comment on the contribution of Mission in its first five years.

### **My Role**

In August 1967 my family and I arrived in Abilene from Pennsylvania to take up a new career. At Penn State I taught courses in speech and the humanities. At Abilene I was to teach Bible courses, especially Old Testament, Biblical theology, and philosophy. My first year I only taught one course twice, so that all my preparations were from scratch. When we arrived Walter Burch was living in Abilene, but he had made arrangements to move back to Long Island. Having no other option, so it was thought, the whole of Mission was dumped in my lap. It may have in part have been Malherbe's idea. But he was always cagey. He took a leave the same year and headed northeast with the outcome that I couldn't saddle him with part of the load.

I looked over the editing, took the manuscripts to the printer, read proof, though I believe Delno did this too, undertook the mock up, and Dorothy and I sorted the journals and took them to the post office for mailing. Then there was the job of raising money, increasing subscriptions and worrying about paying the bills. Walter was great for getting something going, but not strong on designing a feasible balance of income and outgo, and carrying the burden of the heat of the day. He had employed a full time circulation person, Kay Price. Kay was a fine person, but had little sense of the job, including the need for accuracy or doing it rapidly. She had a difficult time keeping up even though paid full time. It soon became apparent to me that if Mission were to survive we had to cut the costs since we were generating neither the gifts nor the subscriptions anticipated. I first therefore decided that our full time person had to go. Dorothy and I knew that she could do the work in less than half the time and with more accuracy because of her work on Restoration Quarterly. The next action was to find another printer. Mission was being printed by the company for which Walter worked, called then, as I remember, Fidelity press. But their prices were high even for Abilene. I called or wrote for bids from various presses. I'm not sure how I

heard about Futura in Austin, perhaps through Ray Chester. Soon we had our expenses at least manageable.

We worked at raising money, especially life time subscriptions at \$250. I got a few friends of former days to do this and one took me to task when Mission folded twenty years later. We wrote letters to everyone we knew and then called them. I remember calling Jim Bill McInteer and asking for a \$100. He has had inherited money most of his life. He was very cordial and said he would send a check. When I opened his letter it was for \$5. Carl Spain was involved with me in calling. He was consigned to approach Pat Boone, but Pat was in transition and I think we didn't get any money. I conceived the idea of asking a hundred people to secure 10 subscriptions so as to double our subscriptions. We ended up with 106 and they are listed in the back of February 1968 issue. I managed to get commitments from certain persons who no doubt later regretted it, for example, my brother Owen, David Thomas of Freed-Hardeman, John T. Smithson III, Ervy Boothe, Walter Fennel, and Joe Malone. I mention these persons to indicate that at first Mission may have raised a few eye brows, but it was not yet off limits in a sense that it was to become later.

As the first board meeting drew near, the persons who wanted to fan the flames, and they were people like Walter, Dwain, Bud Strumbaugh and others, pushed for an editor who would launch a definite program. Interestingly, the issue most criticized was one I put together on grace. I did not react in kind, for it did not turn out as I had hoped. I had solicited European missionaries I had met there in nine weeks of speaking and teaching in 1967. I had heard them comment on the need to discover grace. But unfortunately they were not too good at expressing ideas. I think especially they did not report on conversions from legalism or attack current or past views. After the first year, therefore, Roy Ward was appointed editor, and Ray Chester managing editor. I did not object since I had more than enough to do. But the way it was put by some was almost that

they had to rescue Mission from my influence. I felt somewhat hurt at this implication since both Dorothy and I had invested all our spare time and extra cash in the journal. Had it continued on the early track it surely would have folded. I think it would have continued, however, because of some determined people, but away from Abilene.

Before long the influence of educated and go easy voices were overshadowed in order to push platforms and programs. It's not that my kind disagreed with what was being pushed. We would have gone about it differently.

I was always much more interested in action than agitation. I remember in Nashville in 1966 asking a group of about ten persons who were waxing eloquent over the plight of Negroes if they had ever entertained any in their homes. None reported they had. They said they hadn't thought of that.

Mission continued in much the same vein until 1973. In January 1973, Vic Hunter was announced as editor. By now Mission had become quite controversial. My family criticized me for my connections. I heard of places in which I was declared persona non grata. Vic attended a January preacher's meeting that year in Abilene. He made a point to attach himself to me. I did not know him prior to that gathering. I did not discourage him, but did not go out of my way to be with him. Vic decided to talk with Reuel Lemmons who was there. He said to him that there was something of a problem with Mission because of its image. Reuel was blunt. He told Vic that he himself was the problem. What could Vic say? He left it at that.

Four of us at ACU were on the board, Ferguson, Roberts, Spain and myself. John Stevens began getting considerable flack from certain ACU board members over our involvement. Carl resigned in August of 1970. In late 1972 Mission quit identifying the board members in the journal so we would not bring down so much wrath. John kept talking with us, but said he thought we

were going to have to resign. I decided to resign, because though I had resigned as business manager, Dorothy was still doing the books and I was pressed into considerable work and advice. I needed to get on with publications and I decided the only way I could get out from under the burden was to

resign from the board altogether and then I could tell Dorothy she would have to talk with Carl Stem. Carl took this well and called her frequently. The person most adamant was J. W. Roberts who told John he would not resign. J. W. was somewhat put off with John anyway. When Don Morris was president J. W. was his religious advisor and Delno ran the university. When John became president he went with J.D. Thomas, and found a job for Delno teaching, and later in the library. It would have been interesting to have seen how this conflict played itself out.

Unfortunately, J. W. died of a heart attack in April 1973.

In the first six years, 1967-1973, the articles in Mission addressed the projected topics. For the first year, each monthly journal presented a single topic: mission, discipleship, church, this generation, missions, war and peace, baptism, communication, ethics, grace, urban ministry, and the Christian and politics. Beginning with the second year the articles, both recruited and volunteered, covered myriad subjects, some of the most frequent and controversial of which discussed evolution, and racial relations. Other topics reflecting on the current scene focused on the inner city and medical ethics. In the third year, topics regarding ethics came to the forefront. Also addressed were matters of freedom in the churches and Christian colleges, and the music of worship. Articles of the early seventies focused upon student unrest, psychology and religion, the Holy Spirit and tongue speaking, Christian colleges and politics, and Viet Nam. This period ended with articles on Church of Christism and American civil religion. Along with the more

controversial articles were those which focused on faith, inspiration, the cross and being simply a Christian.

**Conclusions:**

Mission obviously represented a new chapter in Churches of Christ journalism.

(1) I think the achievement of Mission in the late sixties was first of all to provide a vehicle for alternate voices and herald the decentralization happening in American society and in the brotherhood. It was indeed a great threat to the life and death control of editors in the 40's and 50's. The situation is such in the nineties that few pay much attention to editors, of course, to the chagrin of some, but not so in 1967.

(2) The journal addressed several topics of concern in the sixties with a new openness, such as race, evolution, Viet Nam, the Holy Spirit, freedom, exclusivism and political positions in the Christian colleges.

(3) Mission provided a harbor for many persons who had become disabused of the carping and legalism in the churches of Christ. They were on the verge of leaving. We heard from several. They stayed; a few perhaps for limited years.

(4) New ideas, for various readers many could be found in Mission having to do with the Holy Spirit, Biblical criticism, racial equality, concern for the poor, doors of mission for all, freedom and openness, and criticism of some of the older standard fundamentalistic views.

I think myself, however, that Mission was not so controversial for its articles, as what it represented, that is, a change in the hegemony and outlook of the brotherhood. Change in the late sixties and early seventies was too rapid for many. They charged Mission with adding fuel to the flames of transition both in the church and without.