

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

INTRODUCTION

I have chosen one development from the several that are important to the history of the Restoration Movement in Canada to illustrate how we can “learn from the past.” This story is important because it is central to the unfolding experience in Ontario in the 19th century. It is important because it is directly linked to the tragic outcome of the 19th century effort so significant to our own past. It is important because it is illustrative of how good intentions can be side-railed into negative results. And most importantly, the story examines the clarification of a central truth relative to Christianity, the insight gained through historical development, the all-sufficient church. The story is about two men of sincere convictions and, consequently, about two “camps” that emerged and that could not find a middle ground for accommodation.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF “OUR” PAST

- Restorationists seek to identify with the church of the first century, with Christ as founder, and the apostles and their scriptures as the source of their belief statement.
- Churches of Christ in Canada in the twenty-first century, a Restorationist fellowship, therefore identify as “New Testament Christians” who have their beginning in the ministry of Christ and his apostles.
- In terms of current history, Churches of Christ in Canada, look to the beginning of the 20th century when a path separate from the Disciples of Christ was chosen. They also chose not to associate with the more fundamental of the Disciples who, in the 1930s through 1950s separated from the Disciples as the Christian Church.
- These three groups look to the developments of the 19th century in Canada as a common heritage. The Canadian Restoration movement identifies a beginning in the Maritimes in 1810 and in Upper Canada in 1820. As was the case in America, these beginnings in Canada were identified as “Reform Baptists” in the early years. Transition into the “Disciples” or “Christians (only)” identity occurred in America in 1830 and in Canada as early as 1836.
- Restoration in North America drew upon such early developments as Luther's reformation, the Anabaptists' move to a “free” church, i.e. rejecting the church-state establishment position, the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century, and the subsequent evangelical movements in Ireland and Scotland of that time. The shape of free congregational churches was advanced by John Glas of Scotland beginning around 1725, and expanded upon by his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman. Former Sandemanians, also driven by a “back to the Bible” mandate, added adult baptism to their practice, beginning

the Scotch Baptist movement in about 1765. The English Baptists found converts and established churches in Scotland beginning in 1801. The Haldane evangelical movement, beginning in about 1797, also accepted the principle of believers' baptism in 1808. These three Baptist movements all affected Restoration in North America. In the US this was through their influence, although somewhat indirectly, upon Alexander Campbell. In Canada the influence was quite direct through men immigrating to Canada with these principles in mind. And this is where we take up the details of our chosen story for today.

JAMES BLACK AND DAVID OLIPHANT JR

- The men who later became protagonists in the developing story are James Black and David Oliphant Jr. In 1820, James Black, age 24, arrived in Upper Canada, a native of Kilmartin Parish, Argyllshire, Scotland, arriving at Aldborough Township, on the shore of Lake Erie, in Middlesex County. In the same year David Oliphant Jr. was born in St. Andrews, Scotland. These both emerged as major players in the Ontario Restorationist movement. Oliphant died in London, Ontario, in 1885, age 64. James Black died in Eramosa Township, in 1886, age 89.

- James Black was a Presbyterian in his early days. His education was received from his older brother, Hugh, and by age 15 he was teaching poor children in a local school. He fell under the influence of the Baptist preacher, Dugald Sinclair, in nearby Lochgilphead, and was baptized in 1817 at age 20. With this decision he lost his teaching position. No doubt tutored by Sinclair, he began to preach. Upon his arrival in Canada, he engaged in farming, teaching, and preaching for the local band of Baptists in Aldborough. In 1825, he moved to Nassagaweya Township, Halton County, and continued his preaching, ending up spending a year, 1828-29, preaching for the Baptist church in Beamsville. In 1830, he moved northward into Eramosa Township, to become one of the earliest settlers in that Township, settling on Concession 7, Lot 7, on a farm he called "Lismore." Here he preached for a growing band of Baptist settlers, and built a log church building on his farm in 1832.

- In that same year, 1832, David Oliphant Sr. and his family moved from Dundas to settle on a farm 1 ½ miles northwest of Black. Oliphant Sr. had grown up as a Scotch Baptist in Largo, Scotland. He married Sophia Watts who had accepted the teachings of the Haldanes. This occurred in 1808, the year the Haldane brothers accepted baptism. Sophia followed their example and was baptized. This couple became members of the church in St. Andrews that included Baptists and Haldane congregationalists and where Oliphant developed as a Baptist preacher. In 1821, Oliphant Sr. and his oldest son, Alexander immigrated to Canada, visiting first the new Baptist church in Norval (later Disciple), and then moving on to Dundas. His wife and the four younger children, including David Jr., arrived in 1823. Oliphant Sr. became quite active as a Baptist preacher in Dundas. It is clear that he was moving out of his Scotch Baptist position, moving away from Calvinism and becoming acquainted with the teachings of Alexander Campbell coming from the relatively nearby Virginia (West Virginia).

- In Eramosa, Oliphant Sr. influenced James Black with Campbell's restorationist teaching. Here, David Jr., a twelve-year-old, quite possibly was one of Black's students. He grew up in the congregation that met in the log church building and that was transitioning into the Disciples' position. His father died in 1841, and David Jr. inherited one-half of the family farm. He went on to Campbell's new Bethany College in 1841 and was in the first graduating class in 1844, receiving gifts from both Alexander and Thomas Campbell, a copy of "The Declaration and Address" from the latter. He returned to Canada and in 1845 settled in Picton, Prince Edward County where there were several new Disciples congregations. Here, at age 25, he determined to begin a periodical that would serve the growing community of Disciples in Ontario. He began with *The Witness of Truth* and would continue editing—his paper went through four more titles (*The Christian Mirror*, *The Christian Banner*, *Banner of Faith*, and *Message of Good-Will to Men*)—through to 1865, and continued to be active in writing and editing up until his death in 1885.

- James Black continued farming and teaching, and on the weekends preaching. He with the church in Eramosa was directly responsible for planting a dozen or more congregations in the surrounding districts. He became the first agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society in Upper Canada. He also formed a society for producing the Bible in the Chippewa language. In the winter of 1843 he and Alexander Anderson were quite successful in a preaching tour in Ontario. This helped to spark the idea of more serious evangelistic endeavor, and sixteen churches gathered in Norval, Ontario in June to consider ways by which they might combine their efforts to advance the cause throughout the province. Thus, 1843, the year of the first "June Meeting," is a pivotal year for the history of the Restoration Movement in Canada (cf. Edwin Broadus, *How the Disciples Came Together in Early Ontario*), and is the year for the launching of the rest of our story. Black's influence, i.e. by his evangelistic example, quite likely the one who promoted the idea of "cooperative" action, and his consistent support of the resulting "Co-operation" in both promotion and participation as one of its evangelists, won for him the title, "Father of the Co-operation."

COOPERATIVE EVANGELISM BEGINS

- Cooperative efforts in evangelism were common throughout the religious community of that time. Fellowships such as the Baptists and the Methodists maintained conferences that organized the sending out of their missionaries. The Catholics had their "orders," several of which were evangelistic by design. The Scotch Baptist congregation in Edinburgh established an Itinerant Fund (1804) for home missions and asked for support from the congregations of that connection. The Haldanes formed the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home (SPGH) in 1797, and the Scottish Baptists formed the Itinerant Mission in 1808 (selecting Dugald Sinclair in 1810 to become a missionary to the Highlands and Islands in Scotland). Following the union of the "Disciples" and the "Christians" in Lexington, KY, 1832, county and state associations among the American Disciples proliferated, leading to the formation of the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) in 1849. James Black was certainly aware of these arrangements, having

been under the influence of Dugald Sinclair. In fact, as late as in 1847, Black proposed to Sinclair that a branch of the Highland Baptist Mission Society be set up in Ontario.

- We remember that the communities of the early 1840s were still experiencing pioneering conditions. Most new congregations were in rural settings. Preachers were farmers by occupation. Very little cash was in circulation. Evangelistic preaching was done by itinerating preachers in between the seasons of planting, haying, and harvesting. For churches to engage in the cooperative support of travelling preachers was a logical step to take. The “June Meeting” held at Norval in 1843 was for just this purpose. That sixteen churches (or 2/3 of the some 24 congregations that subsequently were identified as Disciples existed in the province in 1843) should agree by sending delegates or letters to engage in such an effort indicates that for the first time a community identity had emerged. The irony of this initiative is that the first step to a united effort was as well the first step to a divided brotherhood, even though the division was forty or more years in developing. This first effort involved only a few churches and was viewed as a legitimate extension of the congregations. Later, when delegates elected a board of management, some feared that this would be the first step toward a supra-church organization.

- 1844. Some uncertainty existed at the 1844 “annual meeting.” W. W. Eaton, editor of *The Christian*, from New Brunswick, was in attendance. He reported to the *Millennial Harbinger* (1844, 379), “...fearful that their yearly meeting might grow into a calf, an ox, or something worse [cf. Exod. 32:19]...it was agreed that future [June] meetings should be only for the cultivation of Christian union, edification, and evangelism.”

- 1845. Joseph Ash speaks of an “old provincial co-operation...formed about 1845... under the elders of the Pickering, Oshawa, and Bowmanville churches,” and that continued for a short time. David Oliphant Jr. was supported as evangelist during portions of 1847-48.

- 1846. The leaders in Eramosa made a fresh attempt to organize for evangelism. On Feb. 8, “messengers from Erin, Eramosa, and Esquesing” met in the home of John Stewart (in Eramosa). This was the first formally organized co-operation as officers were appointed and a mission statement developed: “to establish adoption of measures for the more efficient spread of truth by means of evangelists.” Black and James Menzies were commended for their past evangelistic efforts. The decision was reached to send out two brethren over the previous route.

- 1847-48. The “co-operation” continued as a Wellington County initiative.

- 1849. Oliphant was employed to travel for the Wellington co-operation. Later that year, at a meeting on Sept. 29, the vision of a co-operation with a provincial identity was revived at Bowmanville, in which the Wellington churches invited “a more extensive union.” Churches were assured that “each participating congregation would have a voice in determining who shall be the laborers for the field.”

- 1850. Oliphant was named the co-operation's secretary, and he agreed to evangelize for it starting Jan. 1850. For the first time two men were engaged for a full year: Alexander Anderson and James Kilgour were given \$300 in advance. During the year they visited nearly all the brethren in the province, held nearly 365 meetings and baptized 114. However, in spite of the success the churches were reported to be unenthusiastic.

THE UNEVEN FIFTIES FOR THE CO-OPERATION

- 1851. No workers were in the field during the spring. The June meeting at Eramosa gained the consent of Alexander Anderson to "take the field as the messenger of the churches in Canada," i.e. to seek their cooperation and support. Black also agreed to serve "if he had a companion." However, a certain "R.R." [believed to be Robert Royce of Eramosa] wrote to the *Christian Mirror* (Jan. 22, 1851) and suggested that the co-operation be dissolved in favour of smaller groups of churches working together directly in evangelism in their own areas. It is noted at this stage that the ACMS had been organized as a national missionary SOCIETY in 1849. Oliphant confessed later in the *Message of Good-Will to Men* (March 1865, 56), that about this time he began to have reservations about the arrangement:

The year 1848 and 1849 dawned and closed. Chosen to be a scribe to a fervent company of disciples seeking to devise ways and means to sustain proclaimers, my studies were directed to the action of disciples at work in primitive days as described in the sacred writings. After my best intentions, I concluded that my readings and reflections did not fit with many beloved men, and my studies were measurably laid away in silence.

Nevertheless, in 1851 Oliphant spoke favourably about the co-operation's accomplishments and accepted responsibility as evangelist because of his desire "to show the same personal and practical interest in the co-operation now that I have shown in days past when first striving to get up and keep up such an organization" (*Christian Mirror*, June 1851, 218).

- 1852-53. David's brother, William Oliphant, wrote, inquiring if David would serve during nine months during 1852. In '53, the Disciples acknowledged "ten years of co-operative effort." In the meantime Oliphant continues to be troubled. In a letter written in 1853, but not published until 1857 (*Christian Banner*, Oct. 1857, 210), he wrote to a brother Mathes in Indiana:

We, too, in Canada, have a co-operation arrangement in the form of a special organization with a name... Some of our brethren look upon these organizations and their offices, separate from the organization of the Church of Christ, with a degree of distrust; and I frankly avow that I believe the Lord's church, officed and equipped according to the original model, will be found perfectly adapted to local and general well-doing...

Here, Oliphant begins to define the church as God's all-sufficient agent for accomplishing its mandate, "Disciple the nations!" Nevertheless, the annual meeting of the co-operation was held in 1853 at Williamsville, in which Oliphant served the meeting as secretary. Difficulties in finding labourers were reported. A number of resolutions were passed including that a petition should be sent to Parliament regarding exemption from military duty. And here we see the "co-operating committee" enlarging its mandate beyond evangelism.

- 1854. The annual meeting for this year was held at Jordan. Chairman of the "committee of management," Lazarus Parkinson of Eramosa sent a candid report of the year's work to the *Christian Banner* for publication:

...your committee have, as on previous similar occasions, to express deep regret that so little has been done...Realizing in years past, the difficulty of procuring acceptable ministers to travel and to labor as desired by the churches, your committee in their last report, suggested to the brethren the propriety of revising the present system of employing Evangelists, with the view to ascertain whether or not it was practicable to adopt a more efficient and scriptural method... After an earnest and faithful endeavor for a period of three years to carry into successful practice the view of the co-operation, your committee concluded that it is now due to themselves and to the cause of Christ to state, that they find those views to be impractical to secure the many and great advantages which a general co-operation of the Churches seem to promise...that a [further] attempt on their part to carry out the system hitherto pursued might only as heretofore prove unsuccessful. Already the feeling is gaining ground, that it is better for each brother to appropriate his contributions with his own hands, than to forward them to those who cannot employ them...

In other words, the centralized system was not working, and more individual responsibility for evangelism was required.

- 1855. James Black acknowledged in 1855, "The Board of Evangelizing Co-operation have tried during the two years past, but laborers cannot be obtained. Our Annual meeting will soon take place, and what to do, in respect to dissolving it and giving up the attempt or still continue it and try to get evangelists..." (*Christian Banner*, June 1855, 167). Later in the year, Oliphant weighs in with a long quotation from the *Gospel Advocate*, written by Tolbert Fanning, president of Franklin College in which he severely critiques the "co-operative movements in Tennessee and other States." An excerpt is here included:

...If the head of the Church had been pleased to appoint a system of co-operation such as many have seen fit to adopt, can it be doubted that He would have given us ample directions pertaining to it? The fact that we have to contrive and experiment, and try and re-try, and pass resolutions, and then pass other resolutions, perhaps to do something and perhaps to do nothing, and finally to be in doubt about everything except our own motives, would seem to prove a demonstration that we are on our own responsibility taking the lead—instead of the Lord taking the lead of our labors.

The time will come—we rejoice that it will come—when the spiritual building, fitly framed together and compacted, will subserve every purpose for which it was fitly framed without the ill-shaped and rickety little extras and slab-roofed additions and splintered props that we now rear around it by way of improvement. We have found strong minded and right-hearted brethren who, in candid investigation, would acknowledge that our co-operative movements are not scriptural, but who nevertheless practically sanctioned these movements because it was better so to do than to do nothing...

Later, David Oliphant was amazed that those adherents of the co-operation in Ontario believed that he, in his periodicals, was attacking their sincere efforts to organize for evangelism in the province.

- 1856. The report of the annual meeting of June 21, 1856 was not available for publication in the *Christian Banner* until January, 1857.

- 1857. It was acknowledged: “Not one evangelist [is] constantly in the field...within the past three years a plurality of evangelists have travelled and labored portions of each year.” James Black, as usual was one of these. The co-operation, in fact, had not become a communion-wide involvement. For the nine years in which churches supporting the co-operation are listed in the periodicals, only 33% of the available congregations on average participated.

- 1858-1860. The co-operation for the three years, 1858, '59, and '60, experienced an average of 18.7 churches participating, giving an average of \$45.63 each per year. (Later, in the years 1860 and 1861, the best averages were reported, 40% and 45% respectively.)

- In the mid-fifties, additional nation-wide societies were organized in the US, e.g. the Christian Publication Society, and the Bible Society, 1856. These, added to the ACMS, pushed Oliphant into attacking the American models in his periodicals. His objections and arguments were published in the *Christian Banner* and offered for publication in the *American Christian Review* published in Cincinnati by editor, Benjamin Franklin, who up until the early 1860s was in favor of the system. Oliphant rejected the main arguments for: The union is for the world's conversion; it is merely an expedient, it expresses a zeal for man's conversion. He argued: (1) Disunion is feared when “expedients” are pushed as more or less obligatory. (2) True zeal, promotes true conversion. He stated, “There are few broader signs of carnality than those seen in expedients, schemes, organizations, arrangements to impart or increase this zeal...” The arguments against the American arrangement hit close to home, however, and made those in favor of the Ontario “co-operation” unhappy with Oliphant. During 1857, Oliphant published at least four “Co-operative Efforts” articles that he addressed to Brother Loos of the ACR. In 1858, he followed with 10 numbers on “The Missionary Society” that he directed to Franklin. Oliphant reported that Franklin had promised to reproduce anything that he might write in response to Franklin's writing on the subject. Franklin's responses to Oliphant were limited. In the early 1860s Franklin reversed his position, and became the American

champion for congregational vs. co-operation evangelism. Oliphant's role in this change was major.

EXHAUSTION AND DISCOURAGEMENT FLAG THE SIXTIES

- A second paper in Ontario, *The Adviser*, was begun in July 1860, and edited by a committee of men in favour of and involved in co-operation activities. It was clearly a rebuke to Oliphant and was so perceived by him. After only one or two issues publication was suspended until June 1862, when it resumed its activity, continuing on until the end of 1864. The editing-publishing committee included James Kilgour, C. J. Lister, Edmund Sheppard, and later James Black and Lazarus Parkinson, some of the most active evangelists in the employ of the co-operation. Oliphant dismissed it as an "organ" of the co-operation, while ignoring that his conduct of his papers was an "organ" for the Disciples (July-Aug., *Banner of the Faith*, 1860, 196-198).

- Then in the Nov.-Dec. 1860 issue of the *Banner of Faith*, was printed the Oct. 14 circular letter that had been sent by the leaders of the East Lake, Athol Township, Prince Edward County congregation to the churches in Ontario. Briefly stated, it called for evangelism to be accomplished through the churches themselves, co-operating in small regional arrangements. The Athol congregation proposed to send a brother into the field and offered to assist any other congregation who would do the same. "Our contributions, placed in the hands of the stewards or deacons will be for this purpose...A number of churches have already expressed a readiness to co-work in some such manner... And it will speed our business to remark that we design putting into the Lord's treasury for the work from \$250 to \$300 the coming year, as we may be prospered, with the hope of extending our liberality hereafter." In the same issue of the *BF*, D.O. writes regarding "The Athol Letter," "This letter is the beginning of an effort to get nearer perfection in the business of co-operating." He went on to report a recent meeting at Bowmanville with James Black, "...a memorable meeting—a serviceable meeting—a capital meeting. The mischief makers and the religious busybodies who seek to throw explosive elements between brethren Black and Oliphant will find their labor in vain..." The May-June, 1861 *BF*, (126-127), refers back to this event when the appeal was to "appoint, send, and sustain proclaimers as originally [i.e. in the New Testament plan]...each church who can enlist each qualified worker available and send them forth," and those churches without workers can assist those who have, sending funds to appointed deacons in respective churches. He reported that the Athol church had spent "\$90 since autumn in the business of evangelizing and are disposed to send \$100 to be used by the brethren at Eramosa for the same purpose..." It would appear that the issue had been resolved. The return to publishing of *The Adviser* in 1862, however, indicated that the "co-operation" effort would persist in its usual manner.

- Oliphant worked at shoring up his relations with the Wellington group. In an 1863 statement (*BF*, May June, 85-87, "The Work of God Among Us, No. 2") he wrote, "...in the past 24 months the question has been proposed directly and indirectly 25 to 50 times, 'Are you, Brother Oliphant, in favor or against the Eramosa co-operation?'" His response: "The main action and object of the brethren's co-operation in these regions, we

have uniformly favored. Certain imperfections in the past we were not able to favor, neither can we at this moment...As a whole, the friends of Jesus...are entitled to a fair slice of praise for their fervency, constancy, and piety, in arranging and laboring to proclaim the word of life” (86). In the 3rd number (see above), D.O. writes, “We are called upon to aid [i.e. in his paper] 10 to 12 co-operative efforts,” and lists four in the Maritimes and six in Ontario: i.e. PEC, East/Toronto, West/Toronto, Niagara, SW ON, and Georgian Bay.

- Oliphant’s change of his periodical’s name to *Message of Good-Will to Men*, in 1864 indicated his determination to be at peace with all of his brethren. In the introduction to this new publication, he confessed, “... We can never again suffer as it has been our lot to suffer during the past five years. To be burned at the stake as a martyr would have been less painful. Still the truth of God has been vindicated in the conflict, the past campaign will be forgotten only as its bright and beneficial side may be edifyingly remembered, and at this moment we greet every man, helper and opposer, with a message of good-will” (*MGW*, Jan. 1864, 31.)

THE SAGA’S BITTER CONCLUSION REACHED

- The paper, *MGW*, lasted for a year and a half when Oliphant ceased his attempt to be the brotherhood’s editor. His implied hopefulness for the future was not to be realized. A pro-co-operation periodical was published briefly, *The Bible Indicator*, during 1869-1870. Two years passed without a general paper being published. Then late in 1872, the Beaty brothers, nephews of James Beaty Sr., Robert and James Beaty Jr. of Toronto, began publishing the *Bible Index*, a paper that lasted, with some volatility, to 1893. The editors stirred up a return to the lapsed June meetings, only now with multiple area meetings that filled June and spilled over into May and July. Discussions regarding the propriety of the “co-operation” seemed to be over. The 1870 annual meeting held at Everton, had dissolved the “General Co-operation” “...by mutual consent: and that consequently all churches hitherto connected with it previously are at perfect liberty to unite or co-operate together for the purpose of Preaching the Gospel in the most efficient and desirable manner they think proper...” It would appear that Oliphant’s crusade had come to a positive conclusion. A smaller co-operation would continue, however, involving the congregations of Erin, Eramosa, Everton, Mimosa, Garafraxa, and Nassagaweya. This was Black’s territory! However, the co-operation invited other congregations in the province to join their effort if desired and could send their delegates. Also, a Georgian Bay co-operation was established in 1870.

- The Wellington centered co-operation continued throughout the decade of the 1870s and on to 1886. Figures for five of the eleven years are available in the *Bible Index*. An average of eleven churches gave an average of \$87.00 each per year.

- The conservatism of Oliphant was surpassed by the ultra-conservatism of the Beatys, perhaps both reflecting and contributing to the polarization of the Disciples in the last quarter of the 19th century. The *Index* positioned itself in its first volume as against “paying the pastor.” An exchange on the subject was maintained in early 1874 with Isaac

Errett in the *Christian Standard* of Cincinnati, and the topic appeared in the *Index* to the end of the year. In support of the position, the Beatys conjectured that the “evangelist” of the NT age was a Spirit-guided worker and was not thus a possible office for the present time. James Beaty ultimately published a small book entitled, *Paying the Pastor: Unscriptural and Papistical!* Unfortunately, arguing on this extreme point obscured the central issue: would congregations be led by a plurality of elders or by a single ordained pastor? (Cf. John Glas in 1725; Archibald McLean of the Scotch Baptists; William Ballantine of the Haldanes in 1807, etc.) Those of the co-operation connection were vocal in their opposition. Alexander Anderson wrote to the *Index*, “A number of the brotherhood are not in sympathy with its teachings.” James Black responded similarly in 1874: “The Beaty-Errett discussion is now closed, I hope. Let it sleep. You say, ‘We are not divided on the subject in debate, and I think you try to *expound* the text a little to help us understand it better, but we see it better without the exposition and understand the difference well and settle down contentedly.’”

- The first full-time supported preacher was in place in Bowmanville in 1879. He was T. D. Butler, of Michigan. Butler then encouraged a province wide “convention” for the purpose of “quickenning the brotherhood, ascertaining the spiritual needs of the territory, and stirring up zeal and greater harmony “in our methods of working.” The convention was held in Erin in June and continued for two days with six speakers participating. An article in the *Index* (Dec. 1880) from “A. B.” stated, “Though the storm over our June convention is past...I feel, as it were, my heart ache in seeing alienation among our own brethren toward the ‘Index,’ (not all of them) I offered a free reading to a brother (one who attended the Erin Convention). He said that he did not wish to read nor to see it” (369-370).

- Into this unsettled condition of the early 1880s, arriving from Indiana, came the much energized Henry B. Sherman. The church in Ontario would never be the same again! Sherman reached Meaford in the summer of 1881. In short order he revived the Georgian Bay co-operation, becoming its evangelist. By November of the same year he launched the *Christian Worker*, a “news” journal (a second paper in the region that favoured only one paper). He took the initiative in December of organizing the church in Collingwood and set about to raise funds for a 300-seat building: the congregation began with 16 charter members. He then set his sights upon the province. In November 1882 he mailed a circular to the churches proposing a mission society for Ontario, with a meeting to be held shortly to select the board of managers. Sherman considered himself the man for the task of evangelist for Ontario. A meeting for this purpose was held at the church in Acton during the days of June 12 and 13. (The annual meeting of the co-operation had been held, as usual, June 2, 1883, at Erin.) James Black was among those who gave their names in support of this proposal, “...That we may consult together as to the wisest and most practical way of working...” The editors of the *Index*, were nearly apoplectic in their response: “A New Sect to be Organized. The Village of Acton, in the province of Ontario, will henceforth divide the honor with Rome of being the seat of a sect. The ‘Seat of the Beast,’ we are told is in Rome; the ‘Shadow of the Beast,’ not quite the ‘Image of the Beast,’ as fortunately for us, the ‘Shadow’ has not yet obtained the power of the State to enforce its bulls—has its seat or throne in Acton.... ‘We endorse everything that has

been done thus far,' says the misnamed *Christian Worker*. . .there is nothing in Heaven or in earth . . .like this miserable and pestilent thing . . .It is all of the earth earthy . . .Give way old sects for this new one!" In the weeks following, a barrage of demeaning words flowed back and forth between the *Worker* and the *Index*, until people on both sides were sickened and castigated both papers. Sherman did serve this society as Ontario evangelist for a year. In 1884 he resigned from the Ontario Co-operation and the *Worker*. He moved to Beamsville where he encouraged the Clinton Township church to move to town where they built the 1885 building. He left for Indiana in May 1886, having spent five tumultuous years in Ontario.

- The "Co-operation of Disciples in Ontario" was not made up of "delegates sent by churches; hence they were not authorized to speak for anyone except for themselves, and we have raised nearly \$1,000 thus far . . ." James Black was pleased with this development, noting that it fell on the 40th anniversary of the "oldest co-operation in North America, at Norval in 1843" (*CW*, June 1885, 2). The first annual meeting of the Provincial Co-operations was held in Aurora, July 1884. It was well reported but not well attended. The 1885 convention, held at Guelph was even smaller, and lacked the reason given for the low turnout of the previous year, i.e. in a remote spot—"only 18 preachers and brethren in attendance . . ."

- 1886 was a critical year for the Ontario Co-operation; it had to overcome its shaky beginning and move ahead. James Black, the "father of the co-operation" had passed away in April. The emotions surrounding this marker event no doubt spurred the Disciples to greater effort. Appropriately the convention was held at Everton, Black's home base for 56 years. At the meeting, the proposal was made to combine the two organizations, i.e. the Ontario and the Wellington co-operations. But representatives of the "old" co-operation insisted that the meeting could not decide the question without their consent. Finally, on Saturday it was agreed that the board of managers of the Ontario Co-operation should include two men from the Wellington group. But dissatisfaction remained. On Monday members of the two former boards met and concluded that the former Wellington board plus three men, would manage the reconstituted board. Thus Wellington, long the leader in cooperative activity, won the day. This reconstituted board backed away somewhat from Sherman's 1883 intent that it be a co-operation of disciples rather than of churches. Contributing churches were encouraged to send delegates. However, voting delegates were also drawn from the various societies and due-paying members, who paid either annually or as "life" members.

- The 1887 convention organized the Women's board of Missions. The 1889 meeting framed a constitution. By this time some of the old stalwarts of the earlier co-operation days were becoming alarmed. C. J. Lister, writing in the *BI* (Oct. 1890, 298), remembered that the old co-operation would not maintain Sunday Schools, encourage union with different religious bodies, support colleges and publications, employ pastors of cities and town at \$1,500, nor interfere with individual congregations. The Ontario Co-operation on the other hand, was involved in all of these activities. As well, it had made no effort to employ an evangelist for weak churches or preach where there were no

churches. The board took the initiative to consult with the Christian Church (formerly the Christian Connection) on the possibility of union. This was too much for even the editor of the *Disciple of Christ and Canadian Evangelist* publication, George Munro, who cried out, "Brethren, where are we at!" He resigned his post and closed down the papers! A telling statistic as the 20th century drew near: except for the disappointing effort of Robert Moffet in 1894, no evangelists served the Co-operation during the years 1890-1896. The churches were now saddled with the cash demands of multiples of para-church organization within their midst: the Ontario Christian Women's Board of Missions, the Young Peoples Societies for the younger and the older young people, the Christian Endeavor groups, the Ontario Children's Mission Bands, and the nationally organized Sunday School programs. The churches throughout the nineties contributed less to the Co-operation than did these societies. For much of the decade the churches, 40 on average (less than 50% of the congregations) subscribed \$900 annually, or about \$22.50 per church. Thinly veiled, the Co-operation had devolved into a device for the collective leadership of the churches while it maintained its existence in the name of evangelism.

- The conservative cause among the Disciples was faltering in the 1890s. The *Bible Index*, losing readership closed. To take up the cause, H. M. Evans of Stouffville and H. F. Stevens of Beamsville began the *Gospel Messenger* in February 1894 which continued for two years and three months. It was filled with articles from conservative American writers. At the turn of the century, "loyalism," i.e. opposition to innovations, had strength in the Niagara District, the Georgian Bay area, for a time in parts of southwest Ontario, and in part of Toronto. A "mass meeting" of the conservative brethren was called for in 1895 in the *Gospel Messenger*, but nothing came of it.

- The number of congregations in Ontario dropped from 85 to 80 during the decade of the '90s, in contrast to a growth of 58 to 85 in the '80s. Of these 48 or 60% identified as "Disciples of Christ" in the 20th century and 32 or 40% with "Churches of Christ." The two preferences of the '50s had become two camps by the '80s, and two separate fellowships by the '90s.

INSIGHTS

- James Black was a good man, unassuming and diligent, one who was committed to the reform movement of his day. Perhaps no one in Ontario contributed more to the growth and developing identity of the Disciples in the 19th century. But he remained convinced of the propriety of "co-operation" throughout his life, even though the evidence was clear, the movement was getting out of hand. In this, he reflected his early training as a Scottish (i.e. "English") Baptist. He was about 40 when he acknowledged the accuracy of Campbell's views. He was in his mid-forties when he led in the formation of the first co-operation at Norval. And it was shaped as Scottish Baptists, but not as Scotch Baptists, would have shaped it. For the following 33 years he never wavered in his support of the co-operation, even though its record was at times unimpressive. Clearly, he believed that the co-operation was the best means by which the churches could engage in evangelism. It is interesting that there was no strong tradition of examining the arrangement of co-operation from a "thus says the Lord" point of view, only that it was "expedient," and

that evangelism needed to be done. Black had the heart of an evangelist. His early influence was that of the great missionary to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Dugald Sinclair; and Sinclair was influenced by both Christopher Anderson and George Barclay, English-style Baptists who had earlier studied in the Haldanes' school of evangelism. The insight gained here is that good men with good intentions are not assured of being right. It is also understood that it is difficult to undo ones early conditioning. As well, departures are often gradually developed with incremental changes. Note: we have examined a division that was 80 years in the making! And finally, all plans and schemes need to be rigorously assessed in the light of Scripture, an exercise in which the "progressives" seemed to have little interest.

- David Oliphant Jr. was also a good man, energetic, a prodigious worker, intelligent, a leader without airs. Whereas, perhaps James Black was getting on in years when he entered the Restoration Movement, perhaps Oliphant was too young to take on the responsibilities of editor for a new but burgeoning movement. He was only 45 when he stepped out of the limelight in 1865, the age when Black was just getting going. He was only 45 when he stepped out of the limelight in 1865, the age when Black was just getting going. Oliphant faced the hazard of developing an editor's ego. When the issue of "two papers," i.e. *The Adviser* vs. the *Banner of Faith* in 1861, there is some evidence of a wounded ego in Oliphant's writings. Nevertheless, there is no doubt, that along with Black, the influence of Oliphant through his writing and his evangelism was major in the advancement of the Disciples in 19th century Ontario. It is also evident that he burned himself out in the service of the Lord. Oliphant lost his wife at this time. He went on to remarry, a Baptist lady in the London area. For the last twelve years of his life he was with the Baptists in worship as much as with the Disciples. When he passed in 1885, there was little attention paid to his life and his extended years of valiant service given to the cause, perhaps for the reason of his partial defection. Yet, Oliphant is to be remembered as the Canadian that altered the course of the Restoration Movement in North America, this through his extended hammering of Benjamin Franklin who finally agreed with Oliphant's position and went on to champion the principle of the all-sufficiency of the churches of Christ to carry out the great work they are called on to do. Today, we need to reflect on the 55-year struggle to achieve a clear vision that the church as God designed it is wholly adequate to fulfill God's great purpose, the redemption of the world.

CONCLUSION

A lot of religious baggage has been accumulated over the passage of two thousand years. For servants of Christ, for whom the task of reaching, convincing, and instructing the world in Christ is so urgent, we must become a people who go forth without the burden of "gold or silver or copper in our belts, with no bag for our journey, or extra tunic or sandals, or a belt" (Matt. 10:9-10). We must go lightly and swiftly. To accomplish this we must both learn from and be tutored by our history, as we learn from and are instructed by our Lord!