

Centennial Moments

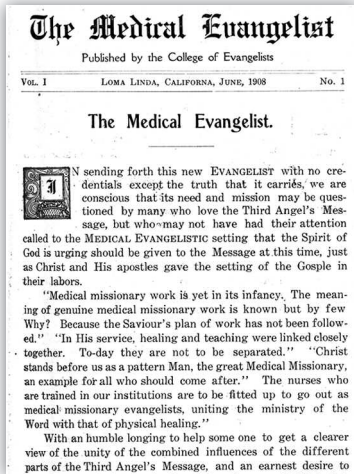
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The Medical Evangelist

One of the most unique innovations in American Christianity has been the development of religious periodicals. Church historian Mark Noll writes that the “potential of print” was intoxicating and allowed untrained people to read and write about theology. Early Seventh-day Adventists and their Millerite forebears used the printing press, and the periodicals they generated, as a powerful medium for communicating the gospel.

James White, one of the founders of Adventism, in 1849 published his first periodical *The Present Truth*, which has now become the denomination’s main periodical, *The Adventist Review*. By 1866, as the Church became conscious about the importance of health and wholeness, the Church branched out with the beginning of a new health publication, *The Health Reformer*. With a strong connection between Adventists and the press, it therefore comes as no surprise that the early founders of Loma Linda would very early on create their own publications as a means of disseminating the message of health and healing.

The first serial periodical at the College of Medical Evangelists was aptly named *The Medical Evangelist*. With encouragement from Ellen G. White, 40 cases of type and a job press arrived in Loma



Loma Linda in 1908, addressed to John Burden, who said that until then he “knew nothing about printing.” However, within a few weeks the first issue of the “little paper” called *The Medical Evangelist* was published with Burden serving as the first editor.

Early contributors to *The Medical Evangelist* read as a “who’s who” list of denominational and institutional leaders. In addition to Ellen G. White, other contributors included George K. Abbott, V. H. Lucas, and Drs. Risley, Shryock, Vollmer, Kress, Magan, and Thomason. Early Loma Linda faculty did more than just write for *The Medical Evangelist*—they supported it financially! In one issue published in 1919 there is a note that “Elder G. B. Starr has donated \$100 to *The Medical Evangelist*, to be

applied to a publication fund. This fund will give us a substantial financial backing, and will be drawn on in making the paper bigger and better as conditions permit. Elder Starr believes *The Medical Evangelist* has a mission, and he believes it strongly enough to put \$100 into it.”

The Medical Evangelist continued publication from 1908 until 1962 almost uninterrupted with the exception of a few months during World War I. Throughout the years, formats have changed as did editors. The last issue of *The Medical Evangelist* appeared during the last month of the first year when our institution was renamed Loma Linda University. It carried the story of the 50th commencement of the institution and the first commencement service to be held as a university. In 1962, the magazine was succeeded by *Loma Linda University Magazine*, which is now known on campus as *Scope*.

Last year (2005) marked a major initiative started by the department of archives and special collections in collaboration with the office of University relations to digitize *The Medical Evangelist* and other campus periodicals. They are now available electronically, text-searchable, through our departmental website at <<http://heritage.llu.edu>>.