

# The Alabama Restoration Journal

An Historical Perspective of  
Churches of Christ In Alabama



**Alabama Christian College *of Berry ca. 1920***

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 4

*November 01, 2006*

## A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

The object of The Alabama Restoration Journal is to preserve and disseminate an historical record of the Restoration Movement primarily as it functioned in Alabama prior to World War II.

Brotherhood controversies as they unfolded in the years following this period are not included in this history, not because they lack historical validity, but because they do not fall within the frame of our primary time and area of coverage and because our interest is basically in our common roots.

Some articles and items may extend beyond our borders of state and time period, when the editor deems them pertinent to the main objective, when they are reflective of, or connected directly with, earlier history, or when they are purely of a human interest nature.

The Journal is not a "church paper" and is not designed to teach doctrine as such. It will not promote any hobby, controversy, or theological point of view that does not fall within the scope of the Restoration ideal within the time and area of primary interest.

The editor and contributing editors are responsible for keeping the material they submit for publication, whether written by them or selected from other sources, in keeping with the objects of The Journal.

The editor will retain the right to make the final determination of whether an article, or a portion thereof, fits the objective of The Journal.

No editing of material, other than routine editorial work, will be made on any writer's work without his prior knowledge and consent.

All historical material submitted for publication must be verifiable by documentation. Any opinions or conclusions based in part or whole upon supposition, while valid, will be given as such and not as historical facts.

Simple documentation may be supplied within the articles published, but it will be our purpose generally to omit footnotes.

The editors may not agree on all aspects of New Testament Christianity as currently practiced, but they have a common interest in Restoration history that transcends other differences, hold one another as brethren in Christ, and consider each other as committed to and capable of representing the Restoration ideal of speaking where the Bible Speaks and being silent where Bible is silent.

The writing of a particular story or the recording a particular event should be understood as reflecting the editor and associate editors perception of history and not necessarily as reflective of their own personal view.

Every effort will be made by the editor and writers to record history as it is and not to rewrite it as they might like for it to be. Historical revisionism is not the object of The Journal and will be excluded to the extent of our ability.

Source information for all articles will be available for those who request same.

The Editors

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### OUR COVER

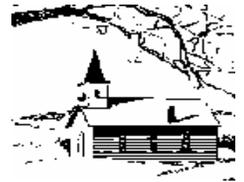
Once again, Earl Kimbrough has done a splendid job on our cover for this issue. This painting of the main building of Alabama Christian College of Berry is a wonderful likeness of the school. If you would care to order a print, see the ordering instructions in the News & Notes column..... **LEW**

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# The Alabama Restoration Journal

*An Historical Perspective of churches of Christ in Alabama*

*"Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is," Jer 6:16*



Editor  
Contributing Editors

Larry E. Whitehead  
Earl Kimbrough  
C. Wayne Kilpatrick  
Frank Richey  
Scott Harp  
Hilda Logan

Volume No. 1 Issue No. 4 Date November 01, 2006

Administration

## EDITORIAL

The first article in the first issue of this journal was a short history of Alabama Christian College Of Berry, Alabama. This story evidently touched the memories of many of our readers and we were surprised at the response elicited by the article. Many of our readers contacted us to tell us of a mother, father, brother, sister or other relative that had attended the school. It became evident that there was tremendous interest in the school and its history. Many were anxious to share their memories of the school. Flavil Nichols remembered his father's days there. Aubrine Nichols told of meeting J.D. Tant while his father, Cary, attended the school. Enloe Billingsley shared his memories of his family boarding some of the young men who attended. Leo Plyler gave us a tape of his father, Asa, telling of his days as a student there.

Family names that are well known in the Lord's church in Alabama such as Nichols, Plyler, Deason, Dobbs, Logan, Anthony and McCaleb, attended the school and had a major impact on the church and its growth through the years. Teachers at the school included some of the above as well as Gus A. Dunn, Frank Baker, James Nelson and Hal P. McDonald. We need not mention the good accomplished by these godly men and women.

It is difficult to realize that almost one hundred years have passed since the school opened and eighty four years since its closing, the influence of this small school in Northwest Alabama is still being felt today. Our guess is that the enrollment in any given year never exceeded one hundred fifty students. Many of the graduates of the school went on to successful careers and more importantly, most went on to be successful workers in the Lord's vineyard.

The church at Berry meets to this day on property where the college once stood. Brother Norman Berry is the very able minister for this congregation. We are especially grateful him and his wife, Carol, for their help in bringing the story to our readers. The members of the Berry church have shown more than a little interest in the school and its heritage. We are grateful to them for their interest, encouragement and help. Sisters Hilda and Lavaga Logan provided the pictures from the collection of their older sister, Angie, who was a graduate of the school. We are thankful to them and to all who had a hand in memorializing this important history.

In that first issue, we asked those who would care to, to make a contribution to a fund to put a historic marker on the site of the school. Brother Rolf Feltman, a member at Berry, volunteered to donate the funds in memory of his wife,

Linda, who was a faithful and beloved member of the Berry church. Sister Feltman passed away in 2005. We are especially thankful to Brother Feltman for his gracious generosity. A marker will also be set to honor Sister Feltman's memory.....LEW

**LINDA FELTMAN**  
Norman Berry

All of the restorers of the Lord's church did not live in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. It was almost a



*Linda Feltman*

year ago now, November 14, 2005, Linda Feltman was delivered from cancer and went to be with the Lord. Her husband Roth, her family, the church in Berry, Alabama and all who knew her still miss her presence in a very real way. Linda was one of the most dedicated and effective workers in the Lord's kingdom that we have known. When cancer had taken her energy, and she was confined to home and bed, she still continued to teach and encourage others. In the last year of her life, she was able to lead one more to salvation, and to influence many more. The congregation at Berry and the church everywhere will continue to feel the loss of this great worker. "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." [Revelation 14:13]

**The "unveiling" of the historic marker will take place on Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup> at the building of the Berry, Alabama church of Christ at 2:00 P.M. A singing will follow. Come and be a part of this historic event. All are invited and especially those who had ancestors or kinsmen who attended the school.**

## News & Notes

### Renewals

This issue marks the last issue of our first year of publication. If you subscribed for 1 year, your subscription expires with this issue. A renewal notice is enclosed.

**Please renew in order to continue receiving the Journal.**

We are planning a bonus issue for the coming year. That will be 5 issues for the price of 4. Future issues will feature Alexander Campbell and his influence in Alabama, Campmeetings in Alabama, John Taylor and his work in Northwest Alabama, The church at Mooresville, The Randolphs, John T. Lewis and the Church in Birmingham, Hal P. McDonald and his Temple of Knowledge, Barton W. Stone and his influence in Alabama and the Church in Montgomery. Be sure and renew so that you won't miss a single issue.

**1 yr. \$ 10.00 2 yrs. \$ 18.00 3 yrs. \$ 25.00**

### Prints

We are offering numbered and signed prints of some of Earl's paintings that appear on our covers. Two sizes will be available, 11X15 ( \$ 20.00 + 5.00 S&H) and 8X10 ( 12.00 + 5.00 S&H) Contact Hilda at **P.O. Box 398, Russellville, Alabama 35653** to place your order.

### Mooresville

Be sure and watch for our special issue on the Mooresville church. There are some great articles that you will find of interest. This old building is the oldest standing meetinghouse of our brethren in the State of Alabama. It begs to be saved as a historical site, not only for the restoration movement but also the State's history. We think you will agree after reading the articles about its glorious history.

### Goals

While we have been delighted with the response to this Journal and frankly have exceeded our meager goal for the first year in terms of the number of subscribers, we would like to increase that number. We did not do a great job of getting the message out in the beginning about the Journal, mainly because we were inexperienced in publishing and promotion. If you have any ideas about reaching those whom you feel would have an interest in such a paper, let us know. There are many Christians that have never heard about the Journal that would probably be interested. We solicit your help and ideas. Our goal for the coming year is five hundred new subscriptions. If you are an Elder or Preacher, think about telling your membership about the paper and solicit their subscriptions...*LEW*

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## In This Issue

This issue opens with a great article by *Earl Kimbrough* on the **Ghost Churches of Franklin County**. *Brother Kimbrough* carries us back 120 years or so when such men as John Taylor, John T. Underwood and others established congregations that for whatever reason failed to succeed and ceased to meet. *Earl* gives us a report on **Ben Bogard**, the "famous" Baptist debater and his run in with our brethren in Hodges, Alabama. Next we have an excellent article by *Frank Richey* about the **Old Upping Stone**. More than likely most of our readers have never heard of an upping stone. *Brother Richey* explains in his unique way. *Earl* has as his third offering an article about the number of baptisms that were often had in rural Alabama. The article is titled "**Additions to the Church.**" *Larry Whitehead* has a biographical piece on one of the great preachers of days gone by in an article on **Gus Nichols** in the *They Being Dead Yet Speaketh* column. *Uncle Isaac* is sure to raise some hackles as he opines about some of the goings on in the brotherhood. *Earl Kimbrough* has an article titled "**O.P. Spiegel's Anti-Room**" which tells the story of some of Spiegel's antics as he sought to turn as many churches as possible away from the old paths to his liberal ways." *The Beyond Our Borders* column is an article by *James A. Harding* and his disappointment in **J.W. McGarvey**. *Earl* follows with an offering on "**J.D. Tant in Northwest Alabama.**" *Larry Whitehead* gives us the story of an unusual **conversion** in Marion County. *Brother Kimbrough* begins a new column which we will see from time to time titled "**In The Heart Of Dixie: Restoration Ramblings**". This column will have "short takes" that will surely be of interest. *The Poets Corner* has a poignant poem by one of the greats, **W. Curtis Porter**. *Earl* has a lighthearted article about the early **brethren and their hounds** and *Chester Estes* comments on some "**lazy brethren.**" *Frank Richey* has a classic tale about **Raccoon John Smith** and a "threatened" baptism. *Earl* gives a report on **G.C. Brewer's first Gospel Meeting**. *C. Wayne Kilpatrick* puts the wraps on his wonderful series on the church in Northwest Alabama. He closes with **Colbert and Franklin** Counties with short bios on some of the players. *Brother Scott Harp* has a biographical piece on one of "Marion County's own," **O.C. Lambert**. *Larry* has an article on "**The Mystery Preacher of Fayette County.**" We have added, for this issue, 2 pages we call "**Nostalgia Pages**" with some photos that most have not seen before. The final article is by *Earl* and tells the story of a "**run in**" your editor had with a famous judge and *Larry* has the "**Final Say.**" Hope you enjoy.

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## “GHOST CHURCHES” OF FRANKLIN COUNTY

Earl Kimbrough

A “ghost town” is a once-thriving community that has been permanently abandoned. Restoration history contains many instances of what might be called “ghost churches”—once thriving congregations of earlier times that seemingly vanished forever. Up until a few decades ago, traces of some old meeting houses could be seen by a careful eye, or the site could be pointed out by an aged Christian who remembered hearing of a church worshipping there. But in most cases, nature or modern development have claimed the site and erased any evidence that a congregation of New Testament Christians once met there.

Now, even most if not all of the members of these “ghost churches” rest in silent graves, sometimes in close proximity to the place where an old meeting house stood. All that now remains of most “ghost churches” is a name and perhaps a few remarks in a musty journal, or in someone’s memory of the place where a great-grandparent said an old church of Christ once met. Shifting populations, economic changes, improved transportation, and the death of leaders likely contributed to their demise.

In the Russell’s Valley region of Franklin County, there were once active churches of Christ at places like Frankfort, Mount Pleasant, Mount Zion, Bunker Hill, Lost Creek, Spout Spring, and Kimbrough’s Chapel (Antioch). These places now are the sites of “ghost churches.” Frankfort itself, a once-bustling county seat, faded when the courthouse was moved to Belgreen. The nearby Shady Grove church evidently took its place. The remnant of the Mount Pleasant church, three miles north of Belgreen, merged with the Belgreen church. A home coming for the old church was held at Belgreen in 1932 and R. N. Moody of Albertville, Alabama, who often had preached at Mount Pleasant in its glory days, was the speaker.

The late C. O. Stout told the writer many years ago that he remembered the old Bucker Hill church when he was a boy and described the old log building in which the brethren met. Mount Zion church was one of John Taylor’s preaching points, as were some of the other by-gone churches. Paralee Annie Gassaway, a granddaughter of Taylor, told the writer that she remembered, as a two or three year old child, going to “old Mount Zion” with Taylor.



**John Taylor**

“Dumpy,” as Taylor called her, remembered riding with him on his horse, holding the saddle horn on the way, and seeing him hitch the mare to a tree at the meeting house. She then sat behind the old

preacher on the pulpit bench while he exhorted the congregation.

Paralee was ten years old when Taylor died. She said he requested his friend John T. Underwood to keep the Mount Zion church going after his death. When he died in 1885, Underwood secured “Brother Billingsley,” whom Paralee described as a “one-legged preacher from Mississippi,” to preach at Mount Zion. Billingsley preached there every third Sunday for several years, coming to Russellville by train from Mississippi. He was able to keep the church “going” some eight or ten years after



**John T. Underwood**

Taylor’s death. According to the granddaughter, there once were also churches of Christ at Lost Creek and Spout Spring where Taylor preached. (Paralee Annie Gassaway, Interview with the Author, July 1966.)

The Mississippi preacher who preached at Mount Zion after Taylor’s death was J. B. Billingsley. There are a few extant reports of meetings he held at Mount Zion and Kimbrough’s Chapel in those days. In 1889, he wrote: “I assisted the brethren in a meeting at Mt. Zion, Franklin County, Ala., including the 3rd Lord’s Day in July, immediate results, twenty additions by baptism, four reclaimed. We continued the meeting over the 4th Lord’s Day. The brethren number about eighty. Bro. J. T. Underwood did valuable service through the meeting.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 18, 1889.)

A year later, when the Mississippi Christian Missionary Society was creating a disturbance among the churches of Christ in that state, Billingsley declared himself against such unscriptural organizations in evangelism. He tersely wrote: “I am poor and ... have a large family to maintain, but am willing and resigned to drag along on scanty pay and a scanty living if need be and work as the Lord directs.” (*Gospel Advocate*, May 7, 1890.) A little later that year, he held a meeting at Cherokee, Alabama.

In 1891, W. O. Srygley, writing from Frankfort, Alabama, said: “Bro. Billingsley began a meeting at Mt. Zion the first Lord’s day in the month and continued six days, visible results two from the world, three from the Baptists and three reclaimed. Began the second Lord’s day at Kimbrough’s Chapel, results two from the Baptists, one from the Methodists, one from the Presbyterians, three

from the world and one by recommendation. Interest good. Bro. B. is an able preacher.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 30, 1891.) W. O. Srygley was also a gospel preacher. He is named in a church history among the early preachers at Jacinto, Mississippi.

W. D. Harris of Russellville, Alabama, reported in 1893 that “Brother Billingsley of Mississippi” was to preach in a meeting at Kimbrough’s Chapel, five miles north of Russellville, the third Sunday in August.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Aug. 10, 1893.)

While Billingsley and others were able to keep Frankfort, Mount Zion, Mount Pleasant, Bunker Hill, and Kimbrough’s Chapel going for several years, by the early 1900s they all had faded into history. But while the congregations themselves ceased to exist and their meeting houses converted to other uses or fell into decay, the members did not cease. Perhaps some became unfaithful, but most likely moved on to worship with other congregations until they finished their earthly pilgrimage. There very well may be a grand reunion by the River of Life of those who began their journey to heaven or served the Lord for a time in one of the old “ghost churches” of Franklin County, where now only a fading memory hovers over the sites where they met.

*Editor’s Note.* There are many “ghost churches” throughout Alabama where faithful Christians once served the Lord. Readers with knowledge of these churches of by-gone days, especially those that existed before the early years of the twentieth century, are invited to write an article about them for the *Journal*.

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**The Alabama Restoration Journal is published quarterly. The subscription price is \$ 10.00 per year. The Journal is published by Clay Publishing Company, P.O. Box 398, Russellville, Alabama 35653**

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## **BOGARD’S RECOLLECTIONS OF HODGES**

**Earl Kimbrough**

Ben M. Bogard, the famous Landmark Missionary Baptist preacher of Little Rock, Arkansas, who died in 1951, held many debates with gospel preachers among the churches of Christ in the first half of the twentieth century. N. B. Hardeman, J. D. Tant, Joe S. Warlick, C. R. Nichol, A. G. Freed, and many other able men met Bogard in debate. Bogard had a long ministry of 63 years. He served 27 years as pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church in Little Rock.

In 1929, Bogard wrote some historical articles for his paper, *Baptist and Commoner*. He called the series, “Recollections of a Half a Century.” One of the pieces began: “My recollections of Hodges, Ala, are sufficient for one chapter in the series. My experience there has been unusual and very interesting.” He debated J. L. Hines at Hodges that year, but F. B. Srygley quoted Bogard about an earlier event, which no doubt led to the Hine’s debate. A



**Ben Bogard** ”Brother Nichol,” whom Srygley had not met, preached at Hodges. Bogard called him “a little, one-horse buffoon” and claimed he challenged anyone, including Bogard, to debate.

Bogard also said: “[Nichol’s] motive in putting my name in the list of those he challenged was that he almost knew that I would not be invited there, because the Baptist Church there was a Convention Church, and that being true, he felt safe in including me.” Bogard was a Landmark Baptist, but some Baptists at Hodges did send for him and he came. He attended Nichol’s services and asked to speak. When told to sit down, he refused, saying Nichol was “a moral coward.” He then said: “You have told falsehood after falsehood, and you shall not get away with it.” He said Nichol then had him arrested, but the court cleared him.

Srygley did not know the facts in the case, but he knew Bogard well enough not to believe all that he reported. He said: “Brother Nichol might have done wrong, but I see no buffoonery in it...It should be remembered that Mr. Bogard was giving his own recollections, and his recollection is so good that he can ever remember another man’s motive, a thing he could not have known.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Nov. 14, 1929.) Whatever happened at Hodges, Alabama, in 1929, it left a permanent mark on Bogard’s mind. Enough, he said, for a whole chapter in his memoirs!

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## THE OLD UPPING STONE

Frank Richey

For most of the people that were born in the twentieth century and are still living, the memory of primitive conditions of days gone by is faded or non-existent. Most people today do not remember going to the outhouse, cooking over a wood stove, riding in a horse drawn wagon, or walking to town. Most cannot imagine cutting a tree with an axe or building a house without a circular saw. Times have changed and with it, the memory of many everyday things of the previous centuries.

With the advent of the automobile, the days of conveyance by animal power came to an abrupt halt. As automobiles became more dependable, even the people in rural areas began to depend more and more on mechanized transportation and equipment. Soon the oxcart and horse drawn wagon, carriage, surrey and landau, were replaced. With these passing antiques, another item of daily use in the olden days was lost to remembrance by succeeding generations. This item was the upping stone. It was also called, upping rock, upping block, leaping block, leaping stock, and jossing block. All of these terms refer to the same item—an item of convenience a century ago. These stones graced courthouse lawns, business establishments, city streets, churchyards, and homes.

The upping stone was used to “step on” to mount or dismount horses, wagons, carriages, etc. Many times the conveyance stood three feet from the ground and that first step was a giant one. As people today pull their vehicles under the “drive through” at the church building to conveniently unload passengers; in years gone by, carriages, wagons and people on horseback would line up in the churchyard at the old upping stone. Children were often handed down, while the ladies would gingerly step from the conveyance to the upping stone to dismount. The reverse process was in order after services.

If only these stones could talk. They could tell of life a century ago. They could tell of the things that went on around them. They could speak of the children playing on them. They could speak of ladies with multiple petticoats and fashionable shoes gently stepping on them as they dismounted. They could tell of the rough boots of a man accustomed to working in the fields, grinding his hob-nailed heel across the stone as he attempted to mount his horse. The churchyard upping stone could tell of gospel meetings gone by, of all day singings and dinner on the ground. They could tell of the children running and playing in the churchyard. It could tell of funerals held in the building, and of drab dressed mourners with tears streaming as they walked to a nearby cemetery to bury a loved one. If they could smell, they could tell of the smell of animals and the smell of sturdy leather leads, straps,

and saddles made for the animals that stood nearby. They could tell of the smell from nearby farms, and of the smoke from tobacco being smoked by men in the churchyard. If they could hear, they could tell of thousands of sermons and songs and prayers they had heard. They could tell of being watered down by a preacher and new convert as they returned from a nearby stream or pond where a baptism had taken place, and now returning to the building to find privacy to change their wet clothes.

The old upping stone could tell of the glory of the changing season; of being covered with snow in the winter, of the beauty of spring and trees and plants springing to life around it. The upping stone could tell of the heat of summer and of wagons gently rolling by to the store or to the fields. It could tell of the glorious colors of fall as leaves gently fell around the stone forming a soft carpet.

One old upping stone that is still around today is the upping stone of the Rock Creek Church of Christ located in rural Colbert County, Alabama. This upping stone is perhaps a one-hundred-fifty-years-old. It stood in the churchyard for many years, and if seeing, would have seen men like T. B. Larimore, John Taylor, and the Srygley family (who lived close enough to walk to the building), which produced two nationally known gospel preachers, Fletcher Douglas Srygley and Filo Bunyon Srygley.

Recently this writer saw a brother in Christ that had lived in the Rock Creek area all his life. When asked if he remembered the old upping stone, brother Hershel Henry replied, “I sure do”. He told of having two steers that were broke to a yoke. He said, “When I was a boy I would ride an old steer to the church and use the upping stone to dismount from the steer.” He said that the steer moved slowly, but it beat walking. He also told of occasionally having the privilege of riding a horse to the church. He enjoyed the horse more because it was faster than the steer.

The church at Rock Creek quit meeting in the 1960’s and the property was sold. The new owner of the property, being afraid that the stone would “disappear,” donated the stone to Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, some thirty miles away. Wayne Kilpatrick, Professor of Church History at HCU, moved the stone from Rock Creek, and placed it in a fitting memorial garden on the HCU campus. Even though moving the stone caused an uproar by those of the Rock Creek community, it was felt that for preservation purposes, it would be best to move the stone to the new location.

The Rock Creek upping stone measures 21 inches by 22 inches at the base and is 29 inches tall. It has two

steps, and weighs several hundred pounds.



*The Meetinghouse of the Old Rock Creek Church.*



*Brother Richey in the pulpit of The Old Rock Creek Building.*

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## ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH

**Earl Kimbrough**

In the early years of the nineteenth century, especially in the years before World War I and most often up until the time of World War II, there was hardly a gospel meeting held anywhere in Northwest Alabama that did not result in several baptisms and “restorations.” Some preachers naturally were more successful than others in “winning souls.” But nearly any preacher who could gather a crowd could report a number of lost sinners baptized into Christ in the course of his efforts.

Gus A. Dunn, Sr., who often preached in that region in Northwest Alabama in the early years of the twentieth century, held three meetings in the little community of Hodges in Franklin County from 1911 to 1915. There were seventy-three baptisms in his meeting there in 1912. D. C. Williams, in reporting Dunn’s last meeting at Hodges said: “Brother G. A. Dunn, of Nashville, Tenn., has just closed an interesting meeting at Hodges, with twenty-two baptisms.



One old brother, eighty-two years old, who was unable to walk, confessed Christ and was baptized in a chair. One Baptist, who was the daughter of a Baptist preacher, obeyed the gospel. This is the third meeting Brother Dunn has held here, and one hundred and five have been added, together with one hundred and two baptisms under his preaching.” (Gospel Advocate, Oct. 17, 1915.)

Gospel meetings do not have such results today and now they are often bob-tailed until some can hardly make it through three or four days. There are many reasons for having fewer additions to the church, but one of them is not the gospel itself. The gospel has not lost its power to save sinners. It has as much power now as it did at Hodges, Alabama, in 1912-1915, and as it did on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We do not need a new gospel, but what we need most of all is people who want to be saved. Paul had little success in ancient Athens for that very reason. Yet, the same man with the same gospel saw many responses at nearby Corinth on the same missionary journey.

When F. B. Srygley heard a brother say, “We are not baptizing enough people,” he said the brother was wrong. “I baptize all who are ready to be baptized.” (Gospel Advocate, Aug. 13, 1936.) We cannot scripturally baptize any others.

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**GUS NICHOLS: *Gospel Preacher***

1892-1975

Larry Whitehead

The first time this writer ever heard Brother Nichols preach the ancient gospel was about 1947 at White's Chapel church of Christ in Fayette County, Alabama. He drove up to the building in a big black buick automobile. He was dressed in a dark suit and was wearing a white panama straw hat. With his friendly smile and his gold teeth, he was the most imposing figure that I had ever seen. Since that first meeting, I heard him speak many times. I never heard any man who could proclaim the good news any better.



***Gus Nichols***

He had that unique ability to connect with the audience and to make one feel as if he was preaching to them and them alone. His messages were powerful and the responses were many. It is said that he baptized over 12,000 people in his lifetime. Among those were my parents and many of my kin.

For many years Gus Nichols was the most influential gospel preacher in North west Alabama. He held gospel meetings in just about every city, village and hamlet. The people loved him, respected him and knew him simply as "Brother Gus."

Bunyan Augustus Nichols was born in Walker County, Alabama, on January 12, 1892. He was the oldest of ten children of William Calvin and Velma Elizabeth Wyers Nichols. He obeyed the gospel in 1909 under the preaching of Charlie Wheeler. He met and married Matilda Brown in 1913. She was converted under the preaching of John T. Lewis and baptized by Charlie Wheeler. Together they set out to make their mark on the world. Little did the young couple know what a mark it would be.

Gus began preaching whenever the opportunity presented itself shortly after his conversion. He farmed and worked in the coal mines around Carbon Hill, Alabama. In 1916 he began preaching at the Iron Mountain School. He farmed, worked at Galloway Coal Company in Carbon Hill, and preached for a time. He held his first meeting at Dogtown near Carbon Hill. He continued to farm and mine as well as preach. As he became known, he was called for an occasional meeting

by other small country churches in the area. He associated himself with and was influenced by such men as Charlie Wheeler and John T. Lewis. Both these men were well known in Walker County and the surrounding area and held gospel meetings in the County on a regular basis. His study habits became legendary. Many are the accounts of his plowing a mule in the early days with the bible in the bib of his overalls. As he would make a turn at the end of a row, he would read a verse and reflect on the verse as he made the round. At the next turn he would do the same. He took every opportunity to study and the result was that he became recognized as one of the most knowledgeable Bible students among our brethren.

Realizing his need for more education, Brother Nichols enrolled in Alabama Christian College at Berry, Alabama in 1918. He was encouraged to do so by Lewis who was instrumental in starting the school. He moved his small family to Berry and became a full time student. He studied under Hal P. McDonald and the excellent faculty at the school. During the annual lectureships, he became acquainted with such well known personalities as J.D. Tant, E.A. Elam, C.M. Pullias, Gus Dunn, J.C. Mcquiddy, J.W. Shephard and others. These names were household names in the brotherhood. After finishing his education in 1922 he preached part time the next two years and worked in secular jobs to provide for his family, but the desire to preach full time was strong and he sought and found a congregation to begin his ministry.

Brother Nichols' first full time work was with the church at Cordova, Alabama. He worked with this congregation from 1924 until 1926. He then moved to Millport, Alabama to work with the church there. This association lasted until 1932. Following six years with this congregation, he moved his family to Jasper, Alabama and spent the rest of his life working with the church in that city.

In the 1940's, radio was a relatively new medium. Nichols became somewhat of a pioneer in Alabama in the use of the new medium to spread the gospel. He conducted a daily radio program out of Jasper for over 30 years. In addition to Walker county, the station carried into the adjacent counties of Fayette, Marion, Winston and the Western parts of Jefferson. He was able to reach thousands of listeners that he otherwise would have been unable to. He mixed local news, death announcements, births, etc. into the program with the preaching of the gospel. It became one of the most listened to programs each day.

Realizing the need for the training of men to lead the services of the various congregations in the area, he began

a monthly training class to be held on Friday evenings at Jasper. Hundreds of men, both young and old, attended these classes over the years. Many became teachers, preachers, Elders and Deacons in the church as well as leaders in their communities. This may very well have been one of his greatest contributions to the cause in the Walker county area, especially in the early days. Several of the men who attended these classes became gospel preachers of note themselves.

Brother Nichols was from a family of Gospel Preachers. His brothers Cary, Pervie and Charlie were gospel preachers. A fourth brother, Archie, also preached some. He and Matilda raised several sons who became preachers, Flavil and Hardeman being the most recognized names today. Three of their daughters married gospel preachers. In addition, brother Nichols influenced many young men to make their life's work the preaching of the gospel. Only eternity will make known the powerful influence that he wielded for good on the many lives he touched, both old and young.

He and Sister Nichols were known for their hospitality especially toward young preachers. Rex Turner, in a tribute to bother Nichols after his death, told of just "showing up" on their doorstep one day and announcing that he came to study under Brother Nichols. He was welcomed and made to feel at home. There are many other stories of like nature.

Brother Nichols was one of the first preachers among us to use charts to illustrate his points in his sermons. These were the forerunners of today's power point presentations. These added a new dimension to his sermons and became popular with his listeners. One of the great stories concerns a young man in Winfield who was a drug and alcohol addict, but a very talented artist (*this story is found on page xx of this Journal*). The young man came to brother Nichols' attention and was engaged to paint Nichols' charts. As he painted the charts and read the scripture references he was impressed more and more by what he read each day. The result was that he was converted from the charts he painted and became an outstanding Christian and teacher. As brother Nichols' use of charts became known to other preachers, they engaged the young man to make their charts and he became quite successful in this field as well as his commercial art.

As brother Nichols' reputation grew, he was called for meetings in an ever widening area. His schedule in the Spring and Summer would fill up quickly each year. He was called for meetings outside Alabama more often. Requests began to come in for college lectureships and meetings far from home base. He was in demand constantly for funerals, especially in his home area. The work load must have been staggering. In addition to his daily radio program, he wrote a regular column for the local newspaper. He wrote articles for the Gospel Advocate and other publications of our brethren.

While he did not seek recognition as a great debater, he held several debates in his long career. The most famous was the Nichols - Weaver debate in 1943. Weaver was a prominent preacher for the Holiness church. This debate was published and thrust Nichols into the role of our leading authority on the Pentecostal movement. He had several debates with the Baptist. His debate with Albert Bates on Holy Spirit Baptism and Instrumental music in the worship in 1967, is available on tape.

He was at home before any audience, whether a small country congregation, a large city congregation or an auditorium of several thousand at a college lectureship. He participated in the annual lectureship at Freed-Hardeman College for forty years and became somewhat of a fixture at this event each year. He was one of that schools biggest supporters. He served on the board of trustees of Alabama Christian College, now Faulkner University. The library there is named for him. He served on the board of Childhaven, the home for orphan children in Cullman, Alabama which he was instrumental in creating. He preached regularly for the Sixth Avenue church of Christ in Jasper for over forty years. In the later years his services were in demand all across the nation. He conducted gospel meetings in many States. He gave lectures at most of the colleges and universities operated by the brethren. A list of his accomplishments would be long indeed. Many honors were awarded him including several honorary titles. Many thousands were touched by him in his lifetime.

With all of the honors and accolades, it is the belief of this writer that he probably preferred to be known simply as "Gus Nichols, Gospel Preacher."

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## **FIFTEEN MILES FROM HEAVEN**

Earl Kimbrough

**One Hundred Vignettes  
Relating to the  
Restoration Movement**

Stories about Some of the Men and Women  
Who Pioneered the Restoration of  
New Testament Christianity in The United States  
and Others Who Have Continued to Keep the  
Movement Alive.

**One of the most interesting and informative books we have ever read. Includes more than 150 pictures. Price: \$14.00 pp.**

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### Uncle Isaac Sez

Was reading an article the other day by Brother Glenn McCoy called "The Rise Of A New Generation"(If you haven't read it, you should). The question came to my mind, "Why does about every other generation forget what the Bible teaches, if they ever knew, and try to destroy the Lord's church with their silliness and tomfool ideas. Some graduate from college and suddenly It's almost as if they think they're smarter than God and the thousands of Godly men and women who have gone before. Now they tell us they have found a new hermeneutic, what ever that is, and all these good folks that have gone before were just dead wrong. Poppycock! I expect that men like Lipscomb, John Taylor and the Srygleys had more Bible knowledge and common sense in their little fingers than all the PhDs our schools turn out every year combined.... These Godly men understood the biblical teaching on authority, something that is not in the modern day vocabulary amongst many of our brethren...Like an old politician said one time,"if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen! So all you "new lights," might want to consider taking your new hermeneutics and your false doctrines, and your so called "contemporary worship" and do yourselves and the rest of us a favor, and just get out of the kitchen.

Speaking of new hermeneutics, see where a congregation in Virginia has created a new office for the Church. They have hired one of the sisters as a "Creative Arts Director." Surely the original translators made a mistake. Paul must have told Timothy to "appoint Elders, Deacons and Creative Arts Directors in every church." On the other hand, this is 2006. Paul probably didn't have a vision of our needs today. After all, he was just an old traditionalist and the fact that he was an inspired Apostle shouldn't make any difference and he may have been senile anyway.....

One of the good Sisters was complaining the other day about one of the "brotherhood" colleges calling her two or three times a month asking for a donation. She said they tried to put her on a guilt trip each time they called. I allowed as how she ought to explain that they needed to learn to live within their budget or maybe attend one of the financial seminars that have become commonplace in some churches of Christ....Ummm...Seems to me all the schools of higher learning in this country, both religious and secular, have one thing in common.. A hunger for money. Fact is, the only time I ever hear from any of them is when they want a contribution or want to sell me a ticket to some fund raising event to hear some sleazy politician or even sleazier Hollywood celebrity. Either one is an excellent example for the young minds we send there to learn.

A local newspaper recently carried an

announcement about a local church of Christ celebrating "Men's Day" on the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the week...Excuse Me!...I thought Sunday was the Lord's day...When are we going to have Women's day?. Better not forget that the women's libbers might raise a fuss, Gotta have equality, don't you know?...Is there no end to the silliness? I believe some of our brethren can dream up more things to celebrate than the congress can dream up holidays for the Federal workers to get a day off...There's another similarity, Congress is spending the taxpayer's money and the dreaming brethren are spending the Lord's...Ah me!

Heard one of the brethren lamenting the other day that the congregation where he attended couldn't find a good college educated preacher that they could afford. Kinda reminded me of ole J.D. Tant complaining many years ago about the brethren not wanting to hire him because he didn't have a college degree.. Said Tant "I beg to state the college I went to did not give degrees. I went to school at Jerusalem under Christ. Studied zeal and determination under Paul. and studied culture and refinement under Sampson who tied fire brands to foxes tails, and slew a thousand men with the jaw bone of an ass. So I am not lacking in Bible zeal, Bible knowledge, and Bible refinement"..But alas, he didn't have that Doctorate from one of our "Christian Colleges," so he wasn't eligible....

Seems that I remember Brother L.L. Brigance saying " It is generally believed, and not without reason, that college professors have, upon an average, less common sense than any other class unless it be preachers. There are many PhDs and D.DS. whose heads are filled with fanciful, intellectual theories that have so little common practical sense that they need a guardian."(L.L.Brigance-Freed Hardeman College-1939.)

Lest some of you think Ole Isaac is against education, I'm sorta like ole brother Josh. He says "I ain't agin edjication. I went to school for three months and got all I could stand. Ain't never needed all I got." What I am opposed to is the so called "Christian Universities dictating to the Lord's church what they can do and how they should do it and elders and preachers that are terrified to make a move without the blessing of some college or university, run by the brethren, for fear of the wrath of said school. Seems to me the tail is wagging the dog. Our Young people need to determine whether their loyalties are to the schools or to the word of God.

Didn't mean to get on such a rant folks, but when I read where some of "our schools" are apologizing to the world for teaching and believing that the Lord's church is the one true church and that baptism is no longer essential to one's salvation and that we need to unite with those whom we left a hundred years ago because of their modernism and now they are filling our young'un's heads with this liberal, modernistic mush, my blood begins to boil.....Til next time.... ISAAC.....

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## O. P. SPIEGEL'S "ANTI-ROOM"

Earl Kimbrough

Oscar P. Spiegel of Falkville, Alabama, was a student of T. B. Larimore at Mars' Hill College for three years. In fact, he preached his first sermon there on his 18th birthday. Larimore regarded him as one of the purest, brightest, and best boys ever to enroll in the school during the seventeen years of its existence. But it always rankled F. B. Srygley that Spiegel, one of "Larimore's boys," used his excellent ministerial talents and charming personality to promote the "progressive agenda" among the Restoration churches of Alabama, especially as the division became more apparent in the early years of the twentieth century.



However, other influences besides Larimore had a hand in directing Spiegel's ministry. He was for many years what some would call a "professional student." After Mars' Hill, he spent nearly seven years in Kentucky University and the College of the Bible, where he studied under J. W. McGarvey, Robert Graham, and I. B. Grubbs. He also did postgraduate work at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. In 1932, he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Bob Jones College, then located at College Point, north of Panama City, Florida.

Spiegel was one of the very few of those whom Larimore referred to as his "boys" that went with the "progressives," favoring a more liberal interpretation of the Restoration Movement. This "liberalism" first became apparent in the use of instrumental music in Christian worship, missionary societies in evangelism, and the preacher-pastor system in the organization of the local church. Many churches were led to adopt these innovations or were encouraged in that direction by Spiegel. He is credited with establishing about thirty Christian Churches and served two terms as "state evangelist" under the Alabama Christian Missionary Cooperation, which was organized in 1886. He was president of that missionary society in 1892 and 1893 and served as its "State Evangelist-State Secretary" 1894-1897 and in 1920. For seven and a half years, 1915-1922, he edited of the "progressive" *Alabama Christian*, 1915-1922.

Writing in the *Alabama Christian* in 1913, Spiegel told about the meeting place of the church where he then preached. In addition to its main hall, the building had two anterooms that could be used for classes. Spiegel said: "We meet in Odd Fellows' Hall. It has two 'anti-rooms.' One of the Sunday-school boys asked me what the 'anti-rooms' were for, and I told him we put our antis in there." (*Alabama Christian*, April, 1913.)

Srygley, who rarely allowed a good quote or notable act of Spiegel to go unnoticed by him, replied: "No doubt he would be glad to put all the 'antis,' as he calls them, in the 'anti-room' and lock them up in there till he got though with his unscriptural practices. If Peter and Paul were living and should happen to attend O. P.'s church, I guess he would put them into the 'anti-room.' You know they were both inclined to speak out against things contrary to the teaching of the Spirit. Paul said: 'But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.' (Gal. 2:11) This shows that Paul was in the habit of speaking out to the face of even an inspired man. And any one can see that Brother Spiegel should put him in the 'anti-room' for such conduct as that." (*Gospel Advocate*, July 31, 1913.)

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### Book Review

#### **Fifteen Miles From Heaven**

**The Author:** Earl Kimbrough is a well known gospel preacher and writer. He was born and raised in Franklin County, Alabama. He began preaching at age 20. He has preached regularly for churches in Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. In addition he has held numerous gospel meetings in many parts of the country. He has written for several of the journals published by our brethren. He is an excellent historian. He is also a great storyteller. Most historians can give you the facts, but Earl can give you the facts in a way that makes a beautiful story. He does it in a scholarly way with a "down home" touch that makes his work a delight to read.

In *Fifteen Miles From Heaven*, the title story is a touching account of a slave's love for his young master and his desire for his master to learn and obey the gospel. One can hardly read the account with out shedding a tear as the beautiful story unfolds. The lamented Moses E. Lard is the preacher in the story and he relates the after effects of the young man's conversion. Another wonderful story is entitled "Sister Reynold's Letter. This is this reviewer's favorite story. It is an account of a letter written by this wonderful lady to a Baptist church in Vermont that she and her husband had left as they pursued their desire to return to the old paths. Her letter is the clearest statement of the scheme of redemption and the New Testament plan for man that I have ever read. Earl relates the story as only he can.

The book is composed of 100 short stories or vignettes of the Restoration Movement. Several deal with the movement in Alabama. Stories about Joe Holbrook, T.B. Larimore, John Tyler McCaleb and the Srygleys are included. Many of the stories are humorous. Some poignant. All are worth reading. You can order the book from:

**Clay Publishing**  
**P.O. Box 398**  
**Russellville, Al. 35653**

## J. W. McGARVEY AND A VERY DARK SPOT

James A. Harding

One of the greatest Bible teachers of post-apostolic times left us when J. W. McGarvey died. I doubt if there has lived on the earth since the Apostle John a man who



*J.W. McGarvey*

more thoroughly understood the two covenants of the Divine Word and their relations to each other; who could handle with such clearness, ease and vigor, the facts and truths of inspiration. No advocate of error was a match for him in discussing the truthfulness of the Bible records; no man among us so ready, clear and powerful in crushing the false doctrines of

infidels and atheists. I shall

never forget the eagerness and delight with which I read his first Commentary on Acts. I think it ought to be reprinted. I have loved J. W. McGarvey with a grateful heart from that day to this hour. Sometime after I had read his first commentary we became personally acquainted. He was nineteen years older than I. He was preaching regularly for the Bethlehem congregation in Clark County, Kentucky, when I was called to hold a meeting for the church. This was the beginning of our personal acquaintance. The more intimately I knew him the more I loved and admired him. He was very great, very gentle, very unostentatious. During the excitement, bitterness, hate and turmoil of the Civil War, Brother McGarvey never forgot that he was a Christian—and that a Christian's duty, first, last and all the time, is the upbuilding of his Master's kingdom. Other preachers in Lexington in those days were full of the war; but J. W. McGarvey was full of his Master's business. They were eager for the latest news from the front, from Lee, or Grant, or Johnson; but McGarvey would inquire: "How is the church at Winchester doing now?" "When will your protracted meeting begin?" "How is the cause prospering in your region?" I remember very well how my father used to contrast Brother McGarvey's interest in the cause with the interest of other preachers in the war.

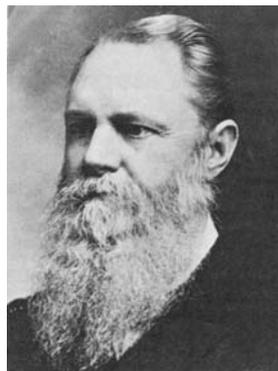
But with all of his greatness and goodness, and he was very great and very good, there is one passage of Scripture that, I think, he neglected. He knew it very well, and quoted it often; but, it seems to me, he did not put it into practice. He did not impress it upon the minds and hearts of the brethren as he could have done, as he ought to have done. So, at least, it seems to me. The passage to which I refer reads as follows: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and

occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent." (Romans 16: 17, 18).

In this paragraph it is boldly and strongly affirmed that we are to mark and turn away from "them that are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling," contrary to the doctrine we learned. The inspired apostle says they who cause these divisions serve not our Lord Christ. He affirms that they serve their own bellies, and beguile the hearts of the innocent.

Among us, who profess to take the Bible and the Bible alone as our rule of faith and practice, who and what have caused the divisions that have occurred in our churches? There is no room for a doubtful answer to this question. For fifty years I have been deeply, personally interested in the Church, and an eager reader of its literature; and I know that more congregations have been divided among us by pressing instrumental music into them than by all other causes. Next to the organ, the missionary societies have been our greatest causes of division and strife.

There are few of the great and good whose lives are not marked by some serious blemish, some dark spot, a spot that seems all the darker because of the brightness



and beauty that shine around it. And, it seems to me, our beloved brother, although so wise and great and good, did not escape the common lot of frail humanity. Brother McGarvey was bold and strong in declaring his opposition to the use of an organ in the worship of the church. He would not abide in a congregation that regularly used instrumental music in its

worship. When the Broadway Church, Lexington, Ky., introduced instrumental music into its worship, he withdrew from the congregation, and worshiped with another which had not departed from the divine rule in this respect. And here arises the matter in which, it seems to me, he failed: while he would not abide in a church that regularly used the instrument, it was not at all uncommon for him to accept an invitation to preach for a congregation that regularly used it. He often did this. And herein, it seems to me, is the dark spot in this wonderfully bright life. If Lard, McGarvey, Graham, Grubbs, and men of like faith, had resolutely marked and turned away from them that were causing the divisions

and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine they learned; if they had resolutely turned away from them, if they had marked them as they really are—as men who do not serve the Lord Christ, as men who serve their own bellies, as men who are enemies to God and his Church, who by their smooth and fair speech beguile the hearts of the innocent—if the brethren I have mentioned had resolutely refused to have any fellowship whatever with these dividers of churches, these lovers of their own bellies, we would have had a very different story to tell now. What they ought to have done then, we ought to do now. We ought to have no fellowship whatever, religiously, with those who have divided, or are dividing churches. Unless they repent, confess their sins, and turn resolutely from them, all Christians must mark and avoid them—or bring upon themselves the curse of an outraged God. — Potter Bible College, Bowling Green, Ky., November 28, 1911. *Christian Leader and The Way* Vol. 25, No. 49 (December 5, 1911), 8.

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### A Mosquito or a Frog

In one of his several debates with the prominent Baptist debater, D.N. Jackson, W.Curtis Porter was discussing the necessity of baptism. Porter made the point that “man was born of the water and the spirit.” Jackson of course denied that it was necessary, saying that only three things were born of water; a mosquito and a frog and a Campbellite. Porter responded “Mr. Jackson, it happens to be that I know that the very act which makes one a Baptist is immersion in water. That is the final thing that puts a man into a Baptist church. The Baptists therefore are born of water. You say there are only three things born of water: a frog, a mosquito and a Campbellite. I know you are not a Campbellite. I want to know which are you? A frog, or a mosquito?” *Quibbles That Backfired – W.Curtis Porter*

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### Straight Talk

The sermon of many sectarian preachers is divided into two parts:

- (1) telling how bad they used to be;
- (2) telling how good they are now.

I am always inclined to believe the first  
—Gus Nichols.

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### How True

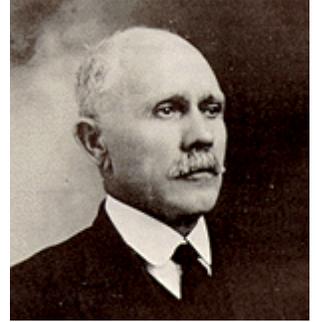
The Bible is not a good-luck charm; it brings a blessing only when studied and obeyed.

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## J. D. TANT IN NORTHWEST ALABAMA

Earl Kimbrough

The famous Texas preacher, Jefferson Davis Tant, preached extensively in Northwest Alabama in the 1920s. He held a debate at or near Russellville in 1922 with A. N. Dugger, a Sabbaterian. It is said that: “Much interest was aroused and much good done.” About that same time Tant held a gospel meeting at Bear Creek, in Marion County, which apparently did not pan out too well. In 1929, Tant returned to the area and visited for several churches including those at Haleyville, Bear Creek, Phil Campbell, Spruce Pine, and Russellville. In regard to Bear Creek, where he had held a gospel meeting seven years before, he said:



J.D. Tant

“They paid me thirty-four dollars and all got sick and mad because they did not relish the medicine he prescribed for the brethren there, but in view of his reputation, it likely was the old time gospel undiluted in strength and without any sugar in it; or he may have, as he often did, stomped the toes of the profusion of tobacco users in the country.

Tant remarked that soon after his thirty-four dollar meeting, the Bear Creek church paid two other well known preachers \$100 and \$200 respectively for meetings. Evidently the medicine they gave the church was more palatable. Sometimes brethren would pay more for sugarcoated pills than for bitter tonics.

The great evangelist’s visit to Russellville was on the last Sunday of Will J. Cullum’s short ministry there and he preached to the church on Sunday night. Cullum said: “I finished my work with the church at Russellville, Ala., last Lord’s day, preaching to a good-sized audience. J. D. Tant preached at night and presented a splendid lesson to another good audience.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Mar. 24, 1929.)

Dr. T. Stratton Jones, Sr., in a personal interview with the author in 1962, recalled Tant’s preaching in the building at Russellville. His only comment, that I recall now, was that Tant did not wear a coat or tie in the pulpit. This did not please Dr. Jones. Such ministerial decorum at Russellville in that day was probably unheard of. Being reared in that congregation, I suppose that I absorbed some of that same sentiment. I still feel that a preacher is out of place in the pulpit without coat and tie. But I also question the propriety of preachers dressing in styles that call more attention to the man than the message.

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## THE CONVERSION OF A NEW YORK DRIFTER

Larry Whitehead

In the 1920's Winfield, Alabama was a sleepy village in Northwest Alabama located in the southern half of Marion County. A general store or two and a cotton Mill were its main businesses. Into this small village walked a drifter from New York who was penniless. He was looking for a meal and a place to lay his head. He went into Dee's café and was treated to a meal. He said his name was Lloyd Pemberton and he was from New York. He was slight of build, dark skinned with dark hair and a pleasing personality. How and why he chose Winfield, Alabama is a mystery until this very day.

Mr. Dee offered him a job doing odd jobs around the cafe. It was soon learned that Pemberton was an artist and he talked Mr. Dee into allowing him to paint a mural on the café wall. This served as an advertisement for his talents and soon the citizens of the town were asking him to do paintings for them. Within a short time he was selling enough paintings, along with his commercial artwork, to make a living. He saved enough money to buy a few acres of land, east of the town a few miles, and announced that he was going to build his dream home on the property. The house was unique not only because of its Spanish hacienda design, but the odd materials used to build it. Rocks, concrete, stucco, glass of all shapes and all types of tiles were used. The two most unusual features of the house was a bell tower (with no bell) and a huge built in aquarium in the living room. There was a fireplace in every room. Outside the house was a courtyard with a fountain and a small flower garden. It is said that every man has a dream and this house must have fulfilled Pemberton's dream.

Pemberton had a dark side to deal with also. He was a drug and alcohol addict. The Pemberton family name was one of New York's elitist family names, both socially and financially. "Pem", as he was called by his friends, may very well have squandered his fortune on drugs, alcohol and riotous living much like the prodigal son of old. His family may have disowned him as a result. He would mention on occasion that he had a son and daughter in New York. At one point in this odyssey, he became very ill and was at the point of death. A couple, who were members of the Winfield church, had befriended him and nursed him through his trial and long recovery. They cared for him and carried him food and water each day for several months as he fought the demons of his addiction. After his recovery, he remarried (His first wife had been a victim of cancer) and settled in to a new life. The Christian couple later introduced him to brother Gus Nichols who was in the area frequently in

gospel meetings. This was likely the defining moment in "Pem's" life. Nichols was beginning to use visual aids in the form of charts in his sermons. He needed someone to paint the diagrams and scripture references on the charts for him. He hired "Pem" to do this work. As "Pem" proceeded with the tedious work, he engaged Mrs. Pemberton to verify the scriptures as he painted them. She would "lookup" the passages and in this way they both began to study the scriptures. After a few weeks they both were baptized for the remission of their sins, probably by brother Nichols. They literally had converted themselves by this daily study of the scriptures. Brother and Sister Pemberton became active in the Winfield church and for several years Pem taught Bible classes in the congregation. He had a pleasing personality and evidently had a unique style to his teaching and over time became a favorite of the young people that attended there. He continued his painting and when the church built a new building, he was asked to paint a mural behind the baptistery. The scene he painted was of a beautiful stream flowing down toward the audience. I have seen many baptistery scenes over the years but none stand out in my memory as vivid as the one Pem painted for the church at Winfield. It was so realistic that when a baptism took place, it appeared as though they were being baptized in the stream.

It was about this time that "Pem" decided to build a church building on the property he owned several miles East of Winfield. It too was built largely from rocks, stucco and concrete. He named the church Chapel Hill church of Christ. He would teach Bible classes there and the worshipers and especially the young people, again found his style of teaching different and very interesting. He brought some creative ideas to hold the young people's interest. He would hold the Bible classes on the front lawn of the house, weather permitting, near the small orchard that he had grown over the years. The congregation was small but effective. Services were conducted there for several years.

Brother Pemberton evidently had a need to preach the gospel. At this time in his life he was nearing the threescore mark. He sold the house and property and moved to Tennessee in the late 1940's. The brethren moved to a location nearby and meet today as the East Winfield church of Christ.

This writer has personal knowledge of some of the facts mentioned in this article. My father rented the Pemberton house in 1949 and 50. Our family attended Chapel Hill church. I have many fond memories of the house and the small country church. Although I was a young child, I remember some of the families that attended there. The Butler family (daughter Loretta is

today the wife of the preacher at Winfield, James Wyers). The Rufus Aldridge family, the Lee family and the Willard Dodson family were members. Doyle Mills, who studied under Pemberton, and would later affectionately refer to Pem as his "father in the gospel," became a gospel preacher. I talked with Brother Mills while researching this article. He visits family in the Winfield area often and was a great help to me in verifying my memory.

I was never acquainted with brother Pemberton as he had moved to Tennessee by the time my family rented his house. He preached for the church in a small town near Knoxville, until his death around 1960.

As far as this writer knows, this prodigal served his Lord faithfully until his death. He left his mark for good on the many people who came under his influence. There are Christians alive today who were brought to the truth of our Lord (some are mentioned above) by the drifter from New York who changed his life and became an obedient servant of the Lord. This story proves that no matter our lot in life, we can change for the good and serve the one who gave his life for us.

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### **Benjamin Franklin's retort**

'One day in Anderson, Indiana, the venerable Benjamin Franklin was taking some people down to the branch to baptize them. The town atheist, seeing the procession, called out, "Where are you going with those people, Brother Franklin?" Franklin replied, "I'm taking them down to the branch to baptize them. You'd better come along and obey the gospel yourself." "No, thank you," the man said; and then, with studied insolence, "I'll be damned if you ever get me in that water!" There was a moment of stunned silence as the little group stood in embarrassment at the insult of this profanity. Then Franklin rose to the occasion, "Young man," he thundered, "You say you'll be damned if you do; but God says you'll be damned if you don't. Take your choice, sir!"

\*\*\*\*\*

### **They Heard Him Not So Gladly**

Brother John T. Lewis had a reputation as a very plain-spoken man. Once, after delivering a sermon on denominational error, in which he came down hard on a particular denomination, a visitor, who was obviously a member of same, met Brother Lewis at the door and in a fit of temper exclaimed, "I heard you but it will be the last time I ever hear you," to which Lewis responded, "well I thank God you got to hear me this time."

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I like the word “rambling.” When I was growing up, my mother had some rambling rose bushes on the covered part of our front porch. I do not know what they were called, but, as I remember, they looked a lot like a rose called Adam, an old fashioned yellow tea rose developed in 1838. I loved my mother’s rambling roses. It may be that I very early felt a kinship to their rambling spirit.

The late newspaper columnist, Earl Tucker, of Thomasville, Alabama, used to write articles called *Ramblin’ Roses and Flyin’ Bricks*. I believe it was carried in other newspapers where I read it. I enjoyed his writing and always liked the *Ramblin’ Roses* caption. However, I’m not so sure about the *Flyin’ Bricks*. I think I will leave that part to Uncle Isaac.

Much of my study in the pursuit of Restoration history has been of the rambling sort. In fact, that may characterize more of my whole life than I am willing to admit. One definition of the word is: “To walk about casually or for pleasure.” This sort of depicts my love affair with Restoration history. While much of it has involved serious research and careful study, there has also been an awful lot of old fashioned rambling.

I would like to share with you some of the delightful gems that I have encountered and collected while rambling through musty pages of old books, journals, and records of various sorts, especially those that pertain to or affect Christians in Alabama, “the Heart of Dixie.”

### RECORDING HISTORY

J. Edward Mosley has written: “A people who have not the pride to record their history, will not long have the virtue to make history that is worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great.” There is sufficient truth in these words to justify our desire to record as much of Alabama’s Restoration history as possible. This is a major reason for publishing *The Alabama Restoration Journal*.

### THE PERFECT CHURCH

One of the most obvious aspects of studying the history of churches of Christ in Alabama, as elsewhere, is the reality that there were and are no perfect Christians and consequently no perfect congregations. Viewing Christians and churches from a historical perspective makes us less likely to either cover or magnify the mistakes of brethren, as we may be more prone to do with some of those nearer to us in time.

H. Leo Boles, who not only was an excellent Bible scholar, but a man of great wisdom, wrote: “It is a mistake

for one to draw the conclusion that the church should be perfect. The church is made up of members. It is made up of members who are imperfect. If we should gather together the best people on earth today and could form a congregation with them, patterned after the New Testament order, we would have an imperfect church. The church is made up of imperfect members, and it cannot be any better than its members. For the infidel or the alien to expect perfection in the church or any of its members is to draw an erroneous conclusion. How can God make a perfect church of imperfect material? How can imperfect man group together imperfect men and women and make a perfect church? We should think clearly and logically on these matters before we reject the church or any member of it.” (*Gospel Advocate*, Mar. 9, 1933.)

It seems to us that if brethren recognized and acknowledged this fundamental truth, we might be more tolerant of one another when we stumble in our words and deeds while earnestly striving for the perfect standard. F. B. Srygley said: “God, I hope, will accept many of his children in heaven; but if he does, he will accept some imperfections.” (*Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1929.)

### SCATTERING OUR WORK

Charles Holder, Sr. (1873-1961) centered his ministry at Bridgeport, Alabama, throughout its duration. Asa M. Plyler, in writing about Brother Holder in 1947, said: “The thing that has made his work count is the fact that it has been concentrated, in that he has not spread out over a vast territory; two or three counties located near his home has served for his field of work. And this field he has cultivated well. In a radius of forty or fifty miles he has established many congregations, and has done a great work in strengthening those that were already there.”

“On one occasion he was asked by a preaching brother, ‘brother Holder’ said he, ‘Why don’t you spread out further away from home, it seems that you never get out of your neighborhood?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘If I had my time to go over I think I would not even cover as much territory as I have. I would concentrate even more than I have.’” (Asa M. Plyler, *Historical Sketches of Churches of Christ in Alabama*, 16.)

The pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement often scattered their work over wide areas, ranging sometimes into several states. The conditions and circumstances of the times, as well as their concept of evangelism, no doubt contributed to their spreading out their work. However, more lasting work may have been done, if they, like Charles Holder and Philip, the evangelist in New Testament times, had concentrated their work closer to their own neighborhood.

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

John T. Lewis not only had an exceptional knowledge of the word of God, but he had the wisdom to make simple, sensible, and practical applications of it to the Christian life. This is evident in his illustration of how a Christian, with a limited knowledge of the whole plan of God, need never walk in the dark. He said: "We do not hesitate to take a lantern, or an artificial light, and begin a journey in the darkness, not because we can see the end of our journey, but because we know as we travel the light will go before us and light our way. So we must take the word of God and begin our pilgrimage to that 'city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Not because we see our way clear into the city, but because we have the word of God as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, and being thus guided we will never take a step in the darkness." John T. Lewis, Birmingham, Alabama. (*Gospel Advocate*, Jan. 12, 1933.)

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## THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR

This age old truth is illustrated by the following story: Mr Bush of Campton, Kentucky but whose post office was in Zachariah in the next County, was sitting on his front porch reading his Bible, when Brother Peter Legg, an old time Campbellite preacher passed along the road out front. "Good morning, Brother Bush," said the preacher, 'I'm glad to see you reading the scriptures this fine morning.'

"Thank you Brother Legg," replied Mr. Bush. "But I'm afraid appearances are deceiving. To tell the truth , I've ordered a gallon of whiskey from Brown-Forman, and I'm looking in the Bible to see how to spell Zachariah." (*A Treasury of Southern Folklore*)

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## Quotable Quotes

These Alabamians were only the first of Christians to come to Texas. Many others came from other areas of the U. S. but a disproportionately large number were from Alabama. This explains why so many of us multi-generational Christians in Texas can often trace the origin of our family lines as well as our faith back to Alabama. 1 Cor 4:15, "*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*" – Marc Smith

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**Amen**

"Some say that a dancing foot and a praying knee do not grow on the same leg?" .....*Granville Tyler*

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## The Poets Corner

W. Curtis Porter was a great gospel preacher. He may have been an even greater debater. His polemic skills were legendary and were often compared to the great Campbell. He was stricken with a rare blood disease in 1945 and given only a short time to live. With treatment by experimental nuclear medicine and the care of a loving and wonderful wife, he survived some fifteen years. Sister Porter was then stricken with a fatal disease and Curtis was at her side night and day until her death. Among his many talents was his talent for poetry. He penned this poignant and beautiful poem in tribute to her as she lay dying.....*Lew*

## **WHEN YOU ARE GONE**

When you are gone beyond this vale,  
And I am left behind,  
With loving grasp that cannot fail  
I'll hold you in my mind.  
For thoughts are things that will not die  
As memory lingers on;  
The tears will blind each failing eye,  
My dear, when you are gone.

When you are gone to that fair land  
And lonely here I roam,  
I'll not forget the things your hand  
Has touched around our home,  
The chairs, the shades, the spreads, the floors,  
The silverware and such,  
And all the dishes, pots and doors  
Made sacred by your touch.

I'll see your smile in every flower  
That grows and buds and blooms;  
I'll hear your voice each day and hour  
Echoing through the rooms;  
I'll feel your kiss upon my brow  
As evening zephyrs blow,  
And live again, in memory now,  
The days of long ago.

The joys we shared I'll not forget  
Through dripping, blinding tears;  
The bitterness of deep regret  
Can't blot out memory's years.  
When you are gone wave me your hand  
At midnight, morn and noon,  
And beckon me to that fair land  
For I'll be coming soon.

*Written by her grief-stricken husband,  
W. Curtis Porter*

Sister Porter died in 1955. Brother Porter passed on in 1960.

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## ADVICE TO OWNERS OF NON-RELIGIOUS DOGS

Earl Kimbrough

Dogs were a vexing problem to rural churches in pioneer times. Every household had a few and they were usually free to roam the countryside at will. Many of them went to church as often as their owners, if not more often. That wouldn't have been so bad if the dogs had had any religion, but they didn't; nor did they have any respect for the worshippers who did have. The dogs would congregate in the meetinghouse yard where the least agitation roused them to a crescendo of growling, barking, and howling; or the slightest provocation set them off in a free-for-all, or worse. The commotion, though mostly ignored by the indulgent churchgoers, sometimes reached the point where it challenged the preacher for the church's attention, and someone had to be appointed to call the dogs to order.

One pioneer preacher, Jacob Creath, Jr., who evidently had had his share of sermons interrupted by canine racket, breached prevailing opinion when he observed in print that, "No well-bred persons will carry their dogs to church with them." But he risked his popularity, and maybe his life, when he ventured a simple solution to the problem. "There are two ways to prevent them from following you," he said. Shut them up or kill them, and then they will not follow you." (**Memoir of Jacob Creath, Jr.**, pp. 186-187.)

It isn't reported whether Creath's advice was implemented to any noticeable degree, but if church members then were as fond of their hounds as those today are of their poodles, some of them no doubt would have preferred shooting Creath.

Such is the lot of one who tries intelligently to counsel people about their problems.

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## SINS & SNUFF

"One man I baptized was very short in stature and wore overalls. When we waded out from the bank into the water, and as I was ready to baptize him, a little snuff box floated out of the bib of his overalls. One of his little sons who was standing on the bank cried out, 'Daddy, there goes your snuff box.' Some in the crowd laughed out, and I had to ask them to be quiet, and proceeded to baptize him. Not only was the subjects sins washed away, but so was his snuff box." *Chester Estes- The Faith That Overcomes*

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### **Rock Creek Philosophy**

The man who says he makes no mistakes makes a great mistake in making such a statement. (*Gospel Advocate*, Jan. 31, 1929.)

## TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

Chester Estes

*Many of us today take for granted the many comforts we enjoy. Nice buildings with padded pews, heat and air conditioning and well lighted. It was not always so, and not that many years ago. Brother Chester Estes relates a situation that he ran into with a small rural congregation near Winfield, Alabama in the 1920s. Read it and give thanks for men like Estes who paved the way for us today.*  
LEW

The meeting continued on through the week with crowds getting larger and larger, but still no lights. We had only the same old lamp I had encountered the first night in the home of the "leader." I was still "fussing" and telling the leaders to go out somewhere and get some lights. But, the "leader" continued to bring that lamp from his house and put it on the center table each night. He would hold it in his hand as he led a few songs and then put it on the stand for me to "see how to preach." While I was "seeing how to preach, he would sit on the front seat with a small child on his lap who was usually asleep. When time came for the invitation, he would put the child on the bench, pick up the lamp, hold it in one hand and the song book in the other and lead the invitation song. The people who sang, did so by memory. One night when time came for the invitation song, he picked up the lamp and as he began to sing he accidentally blew it out. There was no invitation song that night. We dismissed and went home.

By the time this meeting closed the leaders were much upset because I had preached so much against their laziness. They were so upset they did not go with me to baptize the only convert. The only one to make the confession was a teenage boy. His mother went with us to a big ditch not too far away. The boy and I climbed down the embankment into the ditch and I baptized him there in that ditch under the bridge in the darkness of the night. It was so dark that we had to feel our way down into that ditch. We disturbed the frogs and other night creatures and I wondered if there were not some snakes down there with us. After the baptism, we three, the mother, the boy and I, went on our way rejoicing, they to their humble home and me to Winfield about 35 miles away. Those were the days of gravel roads and Model A's.

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### **Rock Creek Philosophy**

If one monkey developed into a man, why did not all monkeys develop into men? They all had the same chance. (*Gospel Advocate*, Jan. 19, 1928.)

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## BAPTISM WITHOUT CONSENT

Frank Richey

In Louis Cochran's classic restoration novel, *Raccoon John Smith*, Cochran relates a story about Smith as he was riding past a Methodist camp meeting one day. Smith observed a rebellious infant being sprinkled. The baby squirmed and resisted, but to no avail. The infant was baptized according to the Methodist Discipline. Cochran relates that Smith dismounted his horse and grabbed the Methodist preacher by the arm and attempted to lead him toward the creek a few yards away.

"What are you trying do, Brother Smith:" the young preacher protested. "Are you out of your mind?"

What am I trying to do?" John affected deep surprise. "Why, sir I am going to baptize you by immersion into the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,

according to his commandment." "But I have no desire for such baptism. I know of you; you are called 'The Dipper.' But you are not going to dip me. I'm a Methodist; let me go!" John tightened his hold on the man's arm while the crowd watched, some in apprehension,



others in amusement. "That is a scoffer's blasphemy of a holy ordinance," he said sternly. "Are you a believer?" "Of course I'm a believer," the preacher said indignantly. "But I'm not willing to be immersed. It would do no good for you to baptize me against my will. It would be wrong!" "I don't understand," John said. Only a few minutes ago you baptized a helpless baby against its will, although it screamed and kicked. Did you get its consent first: Come along, sir, we will have no more of this foolishness."

The crowd broke into open laughter, and John gave the young preacher a quick pull toward the creek, and then as suddenly released him. He waved to the people for silence.

"Brethren and friends, I shall be in the neighborhood for a little while visiting among you; let me know if this poor, misguided man ever again baptized another without his consent. For you have heard him say that it would do no good, that it would be wrong.

Cochran writes that Smith spoke to the crowd for almost an hour and the people listened closely. He pointed out the gospel plan of salvation. When John Smith extended the invitation, seven young people, all from Methodist families responded, requesting baptism by

immersion. He led them to the creek and baptized them.

As he stepped back on the bank, the mother of one of those baptized, confronted him. "You are a demon," she cried. "When you led my innocent young daughter into that water, you led her that much further toward hell."

Raccoon John was much shocked and surprised by the statement; but then replied, "My good sister," he said quietly, "When you read your Bible more and your Methodist discipline less, you will learn that people do not go to that place by water."

Cochran says in his account of this incident that Smith used the following passage in his sermon: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4) *Raccoon John Smith*, pp. 324-325

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### "Square-Bale Campbellites"

This term came from the form of bales made at cotton gins. The old, original and standard bales of cotton were and are in square shape; hence "square-bale." Some 100 years ago, more or less, a new gin began to be built through the cotton belt of the south. The new bales were round; hence "round-bale." All this caused much friction and comment in its day. The "square-bale" was the old original, and the "round-bale" was the innovation. The church of Christ was the old original, and the Christian Church, so called, was an innovation — made by innovations. "Square-bale" and "round-bale" as designations for churches were descriptive terms based on the knowledge that one was an innovation — a digression from the ancient order." Thus, some detractors referred to the original as "Square Bale Campbellites."

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### As Srygley saw it - and said it

"It is said that a man in Kansas claims that he has discovered a process by which he can make eggs, which will actually hatch chickens, faster and cheaper than hens can lay them. Possibly so. Many preachers claim that they have discovered a process by which they can make Christians without preaching the word of God which is the seed of the kingdom of heaven."

—F. D. Srygley (1891)

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## G. C. BREWER'S FIRST GOSPEL MEETING

Earl Kimbrough

By any fair standard, Grover Cleveland Brewer (1884-1956) must be regarded as one of the great preachers among churches of Christ in his generation. His influence among many of his brethren across the land had a huge impact that transcends his lifespan. He was a true Bible scholar, an uncompromising advocate of the Restoration ideal, and a voluminous writer of thought provoking articles on numerous themes. Yet, he was also a controversialist and many of his own brethren disagreed and disputed with him on many things. F. B. Srygley, a fellow writer on the *Gospel Advocate* for many years, often tangled with him on the pages of that journal.

While Brewer was born in Giles County, Tennessee, he grew to manhood in Northwest Alabama, where, after the sudden death of his father in 1901, his family lived in what he called "the dark shadow of want." The four children that were old enough to be employed in public works in Florence, as the laws were then, made it possible for them to keep the family together. Brewer writes: "We worked for a very small wage, paid for our father's funeral and managed to feed ourselves and keep a roof over our heads We would



**G.C. Brewer**

bring our small wages home to Mother and all of us would put our money in her lap as we knelt around her knees and prayed to God to continue to guide and help us and we thanked Him sincerely for the blessings that we were receiving." (G. C. Brewer, *Autobiography of G. C. Brewer*, 29.) Brewer began preaching at Florence, Alabama, in about 1900, when he was sixteen years old. He very early began to make a favorable reputation for himself among churches of Christ, first in and around Florence and soon in other parts of the state. Asa Plyler tells about a gospel meeting that Brewer held at Ernest Chapel in Walker County, Alabama, in about 1905, when he was about twenty years old. Plyler had been told that this was the first gospel meeting Brewer ever held and that in that meeting he did his first baptizing.

The church at Ernest Chapel had never seen Brewer when they engaged him for a meeting. He was a total stranger to that part of Alabama. Two of the brethren, John Davidson and Sam Blanton, were asked to meet the new preacher's train at Oakman and conduct him out to his appointment southeast of the town. Plyler writes: "The train rolled into the station and these brethren were standing by looking as the passengers unloaded from the train, but to their surprise they saw no one that they thought looked like a preacher. Finally, after the train pulled away from the station,

they noticed a young man standing off to himself with a big old suit case nearly as large as he was. They approached him and said, 'Young man, we were looking for a preacher to come on that train. Did you see any body on that train that looked like he might be a preacher?' 'Yes, sir,' he replied, 'I am a preacher myself, and I am looking for some one to meet me here. Brewer is my name, brethren,' he said, as they shook hands." Davidson and Blanton did not think Brewer looked much like a preacher, but they took his word for it and took him out to the place of the meeting. When the crowd arrived and looked Brewer over, they formed the same opinion. Plyler said: "But when the young man went into the pulpit the whole church was surprised and delighted with his first discourse. He was not dressed like a king, but he was, as they expressed it, eloquent in speech, witty, accurate in quoting the Scripture, and everything that it took to make a first class preacher.... Brethren from area congregations come to hear him preach and he was invited to other places to hold meetings. For several succeeding years he came back to Walker County and held meetings. He baptized hundreds of people during those years in this section." (Adapted from, Asa M. Plyer, *Historical Sketches of Churches of Christ in Alabama: Walker County*, 11,12.)

It was not many years after Brewer's 1905 meeting at Ernest Chapel in Walker County, Alabama, before the young man with the big old suitcase, which the brethren there at first sight would not take for a preacher, became known by Christians throughout the nation as one of the foremost defenders of the ancient gospel. Through his protracted meetings, debates, local work, and writings in the *Gospel Advocate*, his name became a household word through a little more than half of the twentieth century.

It was the writer's privilege to meet G. C. Brewer and to hear him in a debate with, J. D. Holder (Primitive Baptist) at Fulton, Mississippi, December 27-30, 1949. I was not only greatly impressed by Brewer's knowledge of the Scriptures and his unwavering defense of the truth, but by the kind and courtly manner in which he nailed his opponents hide to the wall. He took no notes, but answered in chronological order every argument or quibble Holder made. In his affirmative on baptism, Brewer based his entire case on Romans 6. This greatly distressed and agitated Holder, who could not deal with Brewer's clear presentation of Paul's argument on baptism, but was thwarted by his inability to use the quibbles he had prepared against other Scriptures he expected Brewer to use. From that I learned a most powerful lesson: God does not have to say a thing but once to make it so, and when one sticks to what God says, without equivocate, it cannot be overthrown by any manner of spacious reasoning.

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## THE CHURCH IN COLBERT & FRANKLIN COUNTIES

C. Wayne Kilpatrick

### Colbert County

By a legislative act on February 6, 1867, the northern half of Franklin County was organized as Colbert County. Later that year the county was abolished, but in 1869 it was reestablished with Tuscumbia as the county seat. Tuscumbia is one of the oldest towns in the Tennessee Valley. It grew up around a large spring of freestone water, which gushes from under a plateau upon which the city sets. Tuscumbia lies only about ten miles across the Tennessee River from Florence.



**Dr. William H. Wharton** set up his practice at he “Big Spring,” as Tuscumbia was then called. The young man was William Henry Wharton. He had just moved from Huntsville where he had set up his first practice. On July 3, 1823, he married Priscilla Dickson, whose parents were reputedly the first white settlers at Tuscumbia. Wharton, at the time, was Presbyterian, and by the early 1830’s had become an elder in the Presbyterian Church. Some time before 1834, he had been driven out of the Presbyterian Church. He writes concerning the episode: I was formerly an elder in the Presbyterian Church and for obeying Peter, into whose hands the keys of the kingdom were given, I have been discarded, called a Campbellite, opposed, calumniated, misrepresented, abused, denied entrance into houses consecrated to the worship of the only living and true God as an authorized teacher of the living Oracles; but although I have been cast down I am not destroyed; though opposed, not overcome. . .

It seems that Dr. Wharton was cast out because he had been immersed. In the same letter, he leads us to believe that Walter Scott had been instrumental in his conversion. He states: I did desire greatly to see your face (Scott’s face) and shake your hands in gratitude to God our Heavenly Father who through the instrumentality of your labors has imparted to me so much favor and mercy, joy and peace in believing the Gospel concerning his Son. After his immersion and rejection by the Presbyterians, he aligned himself with the Baptists. By June 1834, Wharton and eleven others were excluded in an unceremonious manner. He writes: Sometime in June last, a few names in this place, together with myself, were judged unworthy of longer fellowship, and accordingly been cut off from all connection (sic) with the Baptist Church, and subsequently with the Association. This pharaical act, though not unprecedented in our days, was quite an unceremonious one - - having been accomplished without entering into a formal trial, or preferring a single charge, save a suspicion that we were C- - ites, resting upon a desire on our part to take the Christian Scriptures, as all

sufficient rule of faith and practice. Wharton goes on to say that twelve of them had organized themselves into “the Church of Christ at Tuscumbia.” It has already been discussed in the preceding chapter how the Muscle Shoals Association had passed a resolution in 1830 against “Campbellism.” It seems Wharton and friends had fallen victim to this resolution. After their expulsion, Wharton wrote to three brotherhood journals – The Millennial Harbinger, The Evangelist, and The Christian Messenger. This indicates his wide range of reading from the brotherhood writings, even previous to his being “discarded” by the Presbyterians. Not only did Wharton read brotherhood publications; there were five others, a Brother Tennent, John Hogan, William B. Hooper, William Hudson, and Willis H. Patterson, reading the Harbinger before June 1834. From these facts, one can see the potential influence, the journals had upon the thinking of these people, causing them to search the scriptures for the favor and mercy, joy and peace in believing the gospel concerning the Son. These brethren, in contrast to the Lauderdale brethren, were starting out with the strong influence of Campbell and his fellow workers like Scott. From the beginning of the Tuscumbia church until September, they grew from twelve to thirty members. The little band was growing, but not without opposition. Early in 1835, Wharton had a debate with “a disciple of the Oxford apostle,” on the subject of “baptism for the remission of sins.” The Methodist preacher in Tuscumbia at this time was Barton Brown. Wharton said he (Brown) grew “testy” and would have no further discussion with him after this debate.

Shortly after this little skirmish, Brothers John Foster from Nashville, E.A. Smith, and W.H. Wharton held a meeting at Tuscumbia. The church grew slowly due to the fact that many of the faithful were claimed by death. By October 1836, the number was at twenty-seven. Dr. Wharton blamed the slow increase on death and members having moved away.

Late in the year of 1836, the brethren began to think about building a meetinghouse of their own. They had been repeatedly refused the use of the local houses of worship; Wharton wrote the situation was being remedied. Later the Baptist claimed rights to the building, but Wharton said: The house was built for me especially, because I was refused the use, upon one occasion by the Presbyterian church to preach the funeral of an estimable young man. The building was completed sometime in early 1837. It was a brick building and contained a basement. The brick work was done by the Ragland brothers, whose mother was a member of the Tuscumbia church, and the wood work was done by Willis H. Patterson, who was an elder in the church. For sometime before the Civil War, our brethren shared the building with the Baptists and Episcopalians, when they desired it. In spite of having a building in which to meet, the congregation was still to face many obstacles. From October 1836 until February 1837 only five more souls were added at

Tuscumbia, bringing the total to thirty-two members. The Work had grown to nearly one hundred members by 1842. Most of this number moved away. This is evidenced by some of their names later appearing in other congregations.

Before this exodus from Tuscumbia, many preachers came who helped in the Work at different times. In September of 1839, Carroll Kendrick came and held a meeting. In the spring of 1842, Tolbert Fanning stopped here and visited with Dr. W.H. Wharton and other friends. While here, he baptized six people. Later that year, after Fanning's visit, Dr. Wharton moved to Nashville, Tennessee.

After the removal of Wharton, the Work began to decline rapidly. By October 1848, Brother S. Randolph was preaching in the vicinity of present day Sheffield but made no mention of any work in Tuscumbia. In December, Alexander Hall's Christian Register listed the churches in Alabama, and makes no mention of any work in Tuscumbia at this time. It seems that the Work was dispersed completely. By October 1860, John Taylor had been working in, then, Franklin (containing modern day Franklin and Colbert counties) and he made no mention of any work at Tuscumbia at all during the North Alabama Cooperation Meeting held in LaFayette County. They only Works mentioned in Franklin County at that time were found in the southern end of the county, which is modern day Franklin County. This indicated a complete absence of any Work in the area known today as Colbert County. The Work in Colbert County went into the Civil War in shambles. It seems that the Work had been built around the man who started it, Dr. William Henry Wharton. There were other persons of note in the church at Tuscumbia: Dr. Lewis C. Chisholm, a prominent member of the church, was son-in-law to Dr. Samuel Sevier of Russellville. Chisholm had married Jane Sevier, the fourth daughter of Dr. Sevier. Chisholm's father, Gillington Chisholm, was baptized by Dr. Wharton in the early 1830's. Abraham Ricks, who once owned three hundred slaves and 10,000 acres of land, was a member of the church. His wife taught the children of the slaves about the Bible. It was on Ricks' plantation that probably the oldest congregation of our black brethren was founded. Ricks built a little log house for them to use to worship, and it was called the "Mother Church." He let the black brethren hold their services to suit themselves. They were allowed to preach, shout, and sing as much as they wished, so long as they conducted themselves with decorum. No one was allowed to molest them or to go there in derision. This was the true Christian character of a servant of God manifested. T.L. Ricks, also from this area, was graduated from Bethany College on July 4, 1848, with the Bachelor of Arts degree. Young Ricks delivered an oration, "The True Path of Honor," during the commencement exercise. Ricks had enjoyed the company of classmates such as J.W. McGarvey, Moses R. Lard, Thomas Munnell, T.D. Gore, and J.H. Armstrong. There were others of lesser fame in the community, such as Pheribee Ricks, who was baptized by Dr. Wharton, Milo Gist, A.R. Sevier, and Mary McLarrin, all members in Tuscumbia. There are countless others whose names are only known to God the

Father. Even though the work of these first saints was not permanent, it made a permanent impact upon the Tuscumbia and Colbert County communities.

### **Franklin County**

Although the movement to restore New Testament Christianity came to modern day Franklin County, the southern half of old Franklin County, by the 1830's it was in a dormant state. Dr. Samuel Seiver, son of the late Governor John Sevier of Tennessee, had moved to Russellville, Alabama from Overton County, Tennessee, where he had obeyed the gospel in 1825. Sevier had studied at Martin Academy and Washington College in East Tennessee. He



**Tolbert Fanning**

became a prominent physician in Russellville. In spite of these achievements, he and four ladies were the only members of the church found by Tolbert Fanning in February of 1842 when he arrived in Russellville. Fanning takes credit for congregating these souls into a church. It was on February 14, 1842 when Tolbert Fanning and his wife, Charlotte, rode into Russellville. preached that evening on "The Importance of Searching the Scriptures." So few came to hear Fanning, that the next day he attempted to travel further south. About a mile south of town, a spring on his carriage gave way and he and Charlotte had to walk through the mud, back into town. He began preaching while waiting for his carriage to be repaired, and began to baptize people. After a week, he sent back to Tuscumbia and requested for Dr. W.H. Wharton to come to Russellville and help. Wharton came and between the two of them, they baptized 74 by March 8, 1842. Fanning reported that doctors, merchants, public officials, a lawyer, the jailor and his household, the wife and daughter of the county sheriff, and people from all walks of life obeyed the gospel. He says: The best part of the whole matter is the "eloquence of facts" has done it all; and I am more fully convinced than ever that the truth needs no embellishment to render it victorious. When Fanning left town on March 15, over one hundred persons had been baptized. Only God knows the exact number of souls converted that month. The figure has been given from 105, by Fanning, 133 to 200, 134 by Dr. L.C. Chisholm, who was baptized during that meeting. We can only say that many souls were saved at the beginning of the church in Russellville. George W. Dehoff gives the following as some of the charter members of the congregation: Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Lucy Maude, Mrs. Rufus Nance, Mrs. Louisa Nance, Dr. and Mrs. D.V. Sevier, D.V. Sevier Jr., probably Samuel Sevier Jr., Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Orman, and Mrs. Jessie Keelon. Other members not listed by Dehoff, included Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Sevier, Robert P. Bates, N.R. Ladd, and James H. Trimble, Esquire. This newly formed congregation had many intelligent men and women in its number. From this explosive beginning the church began to go forward. It prospered and remained faithful with

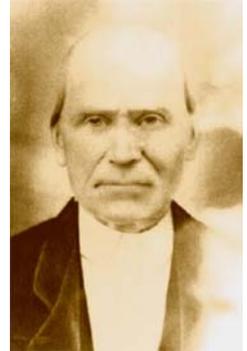
preaching brethren stopping in to keep their spirits refreshed. In the spring of 1844, Brother J.H. Dunn moved from Paris, Tennessee, to Russellville. Here he purchased a house and became the resident minister for nearly four years. Brother Dunn would preach from one to three times a week. It was during 1844 that another evangelist passed through Russellville. Brother Abner Hill came through on his way to Texas. In November of that year, Fanning returned for two days. There were one hundred and sixty members at that time. Russellville had suffered some difficulties before Brother Dunn came, but by that November, they were doing well. Just how well the band was doing is shown by their having appointed elders, deacons, and evangelists by January 1845. Dunn states: Thus we are prepared to practice what we acknowledge in theory-But how long it will be before we carry out practically, what we have theoretically received, I cannot say. . .”Dunn expressed his hopes that things would get even better now. Things did seem to get better that year.



**Dr. Samuel Sevier**

Nine of the Christians began taking the Millennial Harbinger and others were exposed to Fanning’s Christian Review. Their expressed interest in reading now indicated a certain willingness to mature as Christians. By January 1846, things seem to slow down again. N.R. Ladd writes: We are moving on here slowly. Many of our brethren are moving without the limits of the congregation, and no new additions have been made recently to the good cause. The problem of members moving “without the limits of the congregation” became so disturbing that Brother Dunn wrote Fanning asking if members in distant communities, who did not have elders or preachers, could meet and take the Lord’s supper. Needless to say, Brother Fanning gave a sermon on this problem. Brother Dunn helped get things back on track once more and things rolled on smoothly. He labored throughout the next year until December, and then moved to Moulton. His labors in Russellville had helped the church grow from an infant into an adult congregation. Like most all congregations of this section of the South, however, it had good times and bad times. After Dunn’s departure the Work went into a decline. It really received bad stock when one of its most respected members, Dr. Samuel Sevier, died. Sevier died on September 25, 1849. He had served as one of the elders in the Russellville church, until his death. The congregation remained in a stunned condition for nearly two years, producing very little work; but in the fall of 1851, things began to pick up once more. That fall eleven were baptized under W.T. Crenshaw’s preaching. Three more were baptized that winter under the preaching of J.J. Trott and J.H. Dunn. Trott writes: “. . .the church at this place is reviving and bids fair to do well. . .” Brother Dunn expressed his joy at seeing the church, where he bestowed so much labor, experience the dawning of a better day. This better day

did not last long. One man, whom Fanning never named, took it upon himself to do all the work, thus causing the church to grow weak. By 1857, in the month of November, the church at Russellville was only meeting when preachers came to them. By this time, other healthy congregations had sprung from the Russellville congregation. Just one year prior to this, John Taylor had gathered the brethren in Frankfort into a church. Upon his coming Frankfort, a town northwest of Russellville, five or six miles, he found thirteen disciples in “a disorganized condition.” By 1859, they had grown to sixty-three members. By 1860, they had one hundred and sixty-three. During the month of February 1858, Taylor had two debates with Baptist preachers,



**John Taylor**

to

Mr. Rahauf and Mr. William Alexander. Each preacher finally refused to continue with Taylor. After this, Taylor had little or no resistance from the Baptist community. Sad to say, this congregation was scattered during the Civil War.

Another effort put forth at this time by Taylor, was the congregation at Spout Spring. This Work came across the pages of the Advocate and then vanished forever. We only know that a John A. Taylor and a James Taylor were members there. They attended the cooperation meeting of 1860 in LaFayette County, Alabama. The congregation had seventeen members at this time. It also donated \$40.00 toward evangelizing for the next year. George L. Brown preached there on occasions during 1861. By winter of 1859, the church in Russellville had ceased meeting. John Taylor reorganized the church during the winter and baptized four new persons. By the end of 1860, it had thirty members and was described as “doing tolerable well.” In October of 1860, they contributed \$100.00 to the Evangelistic Committee of the cooperation meeting in LaFayette County. Tolbert Fanning wrote that there were some brethren who were still faithful at Russellville in May 1861, but he did not seem to optimistic about their future. The brethren at Russellville went into the Civil War in a bad condition and came out worse. The rest of Franklin County fared better. In spite of the Work conducted by so many men, the candlestick was removed from its place in the Franklin County churches.

**Conclusion:**

In spite of a frail beginning, opposition from the denominations, and an unfavorable religious climate dominated largely by sectarianism and strong Calvinistic influence, the Church of Christ in northwest Alabama managed to grow into the largest religious body in this area. Reflecting back upon the church’s past history, one wonders how such a small, frail infant church could have grown to adulthood. Needless to say, it took many tears, prayers, and much diligent work of Godly men and women to nurse the church to its present state. There are many questions one could ask concerning this growing period, such as: What would the Church be like today, if the Civil War had not

occurred? What would the Church be like had Campbell's people come first instead of Stone's followers? We may never know the answers concerning these questions, but we can learn a few facts about this early work. We can now see that it was not, solely, Larimore's work that made this area so well blessed with churches. Many of Larimore's preaching engagements were at churches already in existence when he came to north Alabama. We can now appreciate men such as Ephraim D. Moore, James E. Matthews, Dr. W.H. Wharton, and others whose names have almost been lost to obscurity. We can now appreciate the lessons learned from building churches around personalities and then letting them die when the personality is gone. From the "off" and "on" activity of these churches, we should try to avoid making these same mistakes –Who wants to see their congregation become a "Liberty" or a "Frankfort"?

APPENDIX A

**Tolbert Fanning's Baptism**

Several writers have placed Tolbert Fanning's baptism in the month of September 1827. James R. Wilburn in *The Hazard of the Die* 160 and Earl I. West in *The Search for the Ancient Order* each place the date in 1827. In the obituary of James E. Matthews, Fanning, himself, gives the date as 1827; also, in "Sketches in the Life of Alexander Campbell, No. 4," he gives the date as 1827. Fanning gives the date in other places as 1827; however, in 1847, he gives the date as September of 1828. It should be remembered that too often writers have taken the word of a participant without realizing that human memory can be extremely unreliable. Few people, if asked concerning the date of their baptism, could give a ready answer without much thought, and sometimes no answer can be given, because memory has failed. Fanning's first mention of his baptism is the 1828 date, and closer to the time it occurred than any of the others given. B.F. Hall is partly blame for the popular date, also. In *Autobiography of Elder Samuel Rogers*, he places the year of Fanning's baptism at 1827. It should be remembered that Hall's account was given some years later, after Fanning was well known. In Hall's earlier accounts of his work from 1825 until 1827, he gives a different picture. In 1843, he wrote: I remained in Alabama until the spring of 1827, preaching all the while. . .I then returned to Kentucky, preaching where I went, the same glorious truth. . .That summer and fall (1827) I spent in the counties of Mercer and Washington, (Ky.) and ere the snows, and storms, and chilling blasts of winter, together with fatigue, and the indisposition of my young family compelled me to retire, for a short time, from the field of labor. . .In this account, it sounds as though Hall remained in Kentucky in September of 1827. To further support this idea is a letter written to Barton Stone by Hall in January 1828. Hall wrote that in August of 1827, he preached for two weeks in the Harrodsburg, Kentucky, area. He further states: In September I moved to the neighborhood (Harrodsburg), and took the oversight of the church at Mud meeting house. Since my settling here, I have baptized about 40 persons. This, again, sounds as though he was in Kentucky for the entire month of September.

Another fact, which causes us to believe that Fanning was baptized in 1828, is that Hall encouraged James E. Matthews to write upon the subject of baptism for the remission of sins at this time. Matthews did write three articles upon the subject and they were printed in the *Messenger* in 1829. This indicates that Matthews was just as excited over this doctrine as Hall had been when he first realized the truth. So he wrote upon the subject shortly after Fanning's baptism, which would be in 1828. It seems logical to believe that Matthews wrote on this subject a few months after he learned the truth and that he was still excited over it. We are led to believe that Fanning was accurate in his first published date of his baptism, 1828.

APPENDIX B

**James E. Matthews**

He was born in Kentucky, in 1799. He had become a Christian under the influence of Barton Stone and was baptized in his twenty-fifth year. In 1826, he began to preach. By November of that year he was already working in Florence, Alabama, and was an agent for *The Christian Messenger*. It was Matthews' hands that immersed Tolbert Fanning in the cold waters of Cypress Creek.<sup>173</sup> Matthews worked in Lauderdale County, Alabama, until the year of 1837, when he sold his three hundred and fifty-two acre farm, near Florence, and then moved to Mississippi. By 1842, he had become a Mississippi politician and was serving as Auditor of Public Accounts. He served as State Representative for Desoto County in 1856 and 1857. While serving in the legislature, he took a stand on the anti-bond issue. He accused the legislature of going "outside of the constitution" in order to satisfy the cravings of a few interested persons. This is the type of atmosphere to which Fanning, doubtlessly, referred when he said: His influence was somewhat marred by a deceitful net of political preference . . . Matthews was described by his colleagues as an able man and "very adroit in debate."

Matthews, even though he was in the legislature, never grew lax on his religious obligations. He was one of the earliest workers in the church in Jackson. In Desoto County, he continued to preach until his death. He would preach for two hours, which was his usual length of time. He traveled from groves to store-houses in order to preach and either went by foot or horseback with a saddle-bag full of clothing. His converts could be counted by the hundreds; but as H. Leo Boles wrote: Matthews would always be remembered as the "preacher who baptized Tolbert Fanning."

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**REMEMBERED QUOTE**

"Those people who think they know everything are very irritating to those of us who really do."...*Vanguard*

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**Sad fact of life**

"When a woman has a temper she can't control, she usually has a husband she can." (Don't write. We read it somewhere.)

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## ORLANDO CLAYTON LAMBERT

1890-1972

adapted by Scott Harp

Orlando Clayton Lambert was born September 16, 1890, of very poor parents in the poor hills of Alabama, only 25 years after the devastating Civil War. In fact, his mother was born three weeks before the assassination of President Lincoln. There were no schools worthy of the name, and no market for any surplus from the farm, so as a lad he could see little prospect for escape from severe poverty. For some reason, at a very early age, he acquired a passionate love for books. When he



*Orlando Clayton Lambert*

was 17 years old he secured a teacher's certificate, though at the time he had never attended a grade school, or sat at a desk. Since his earliest memory he had wanted to preach, but teaching was the only thing that he could see to do. He knew no one more experienced to advise him, and no one years teach with means to whom he could appeal. He spent 12 years teaching at a starvation salary. About the only book the family had at first was a large family Bible, and he learned to love it. When he became a ploughboy he would paste a page from a cheap New Testament on the plow handle and he memorized a great portion of the New Testament while he worked. He began to lead singing for gospel meetings while yet a teen-age boy trying to learn from the older preachers before he gained confidence enough to try his own wings. It never entered his mind that a man could spend all his time preaching the gospel and live, for the preachers that he knew best were farmers whose family made the living while he baptized hundreds and planted churches.

For several years after he began preaching he would teach the short term of school in the winter, "make a crop" in the Spring, preaching on Sundays, and holding meetings in the Summer. No one thought enough of his preaching to send him out to preach, or to send for him, so he *went!* He preached in school houses, residences, under brush arbors, and under the trees, where the church had never been planted. Many times he would go into a sectarian neighborhood, work up a singing school, stay in the homes where people were not members of the church, but his main purpose was to hold a meeting at night. After half a century he looked back with great pleasure to see that in almost every place where he helped plant the church, others had watered, and the result was good churches over a wide area. Those years were fruitful in the converts made, but most of all for the spiritual growth it afforded him. But there was no money in it, he frequently had difficulty paying his fare back home, to begin teaching again. Financially he was in a poor circle.

His struggles continued unabated as he finally attended college. First at Highland Home College (long ago discontinued), then Nashville Bible School and Peabody.

In those early years, when a beardless boy began to preach in a sectarian neighborhood he was invariably challenged by older and more experienced denominational preachers. He looked back with pride to some of those debates. Knowing that these doctrines would have to be met, he bought all the denominational books that he could find regardless of the sacrifice he had to make to buy them. This helped in defending the truth. Before he had preached many years he moved into a section where 65 percent of the people were Catholics. He had for years been accumulating their books. He wanted to know of a certainty what they taught and what they had done and were doing. He remained in this area for 16 years, and most of his converts were from the Catholic Church. The church was very weak in that area, but now it is thriving. Many of the elders and preachers were among his converts. Volumes of interesting stories could be written concerning those converts.

Life had been so hard that he dreaded the prospects of poverty in old age, so he established a printing business. Though he had opposed the Catholic Church vigorously, one of his pleasant surprises was that some of his best customers were Catholics. He established this business for several reasons. First, he wanted to be able to print this material which he had gathered through so many years, which brethren in whom he had great confidence insisted that by all means it should be printed. He wanted to keep his three boys near him, and to have some means of living with dignity and honor in old age.

His health, which had never been robust, was steadily declining. In 1941 a series of misfortunes overtook him and quickly wrecked and brought to nought his carefully nurtured plans. First, his business burned, then a few months later his faithful wife, who was apparently in excellent health, died suddenly, leaving him with a 13 year old son. Soon thereafter he suffered a series of nine serious operations which kept him in and out of the hospital for four years. All of his life's savings were gone and he could see no reason to even hope to be well again.

One year after the death of his wife, he married again, which proved to be one of his life's greatest blessings. He married Sallie Russell. She nursed him back to health, bouyed him up when he was discouraged, and in every way proved to be "a help meet" for him. Looking back on his 56th year, so dark, it seemed almost miraculous that nearly 20 years later his health had continued to improve year after year and he was enjoying more vigorous good health than almost anyone his age. By the time he reached his 60th year his health had so improved that he began to believe that his long interrupted dream of putting his material into print could be realized. So, beginning at the age of 62, he spent

two years, working early and late, putting the manuscript for "Catholicism Against Itself, Volume 1" into shape. When he was 64 he had gathered more than 1,600 names and addresses of brethren, mostly preachers, who said they wanted his book. After he had it printed and had a printing bill for about \$6,000, he sent out notices, and to his consternation more than 1,200 of them never replied. Twelve hundred preachers had moved. He was now 64 years old! He could think of no possible way of paying this debt, except to travel among the churches, lecturing on this important theme and selling his book. For eight years he traveled almost constantly, visiting 40 States and most of the provinces of Canada. He lectured in more than a thousand churches. To add to his financial difficulties when he launched out on his lecture tours, he moved out of a church owned home, and had to provide some place to live. He borrowed a thousand dollars to make a down payment on an old home that no one else would have. "During the years of my travels my wife superintended the remodeling of our old house and built a library for my books, and a workshop, while she taught school to keep the wolf away from the door," he recalled.

There was a great deal of important matter that could not be crowded into Volume 1 of his book, so, stopping his travels he decided that if he ever wrote and printed Volume 2, he would have to get busy at it. When he checked up on his finances he was \$7,000 in the red. He had worried no little about what would become of his library after his passing. Knowing the Catholic doctrine of Mental Reservation, he knew they would deny every quotation he gave unless the books were available. This was the reason that when every resource was exhausted due to his misfortunes, he kept the books, even though he had offers to buy them. Several colleges asked for them. When Abilene Christian College learned of his financial difficulties they offered to pay off his indebtedness in order to secure his library. This relieved his immediate need, but during the three years he spent doing the fabulous amount of research in writing Volume 2, he had nothing besides a Social Security check to live on. There were three churches that gave him what altogether amounted to \$40 per month. It was difficult to live on this amount, but, without it Volume 2 could not have been written. Volume 1 and Volume 2 of "Catholicism Against Itself" have long since been printed and reprinted and widely circulated through the nation. In addition to these two volumes, Lambert authored three other books: "Rumbling From Rome," "Russellism Unveiled," and "Catholicism Against Itself-Abridged." O. C. Lambert died March 5, 1972, at Winfield, Alabama. He is buried at the cemetery in Gu-Win, Alabama.

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#### ATHEISM

The thing formed says that nothing formed it; and that which is made *is*, while that which made it *is not!*  
The folly is infinite.  
— *Jeremy Taylor*

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## THE CLEVELAND CHURCH

Earl Kimbrough

The gospel preachers of Northwest Alabama established numerous New Testament churches among the mountains and valleys of that region in the nineteenth century. Many, if not most, of these left no early history. Knowledge of their origin and early times is gleaned, if at all, from traces found in incidental references here and there in sundry papers, or transmitted by often unreliable oral tradition. One of the more fortunate in this regard is the church at Cleveland, located about five miles east of Fayetteville, Alabama. Chester Estes held gospel meetings there in the 1930s. In his autobiography, *Faith That Overcomes*, he said it was at Cleveland that he held his greatest meeting from the standpoint of conversions. The meeting resulted in "about 48 baptisms and many restorations." It was during a meeting at Cleveland that Estes found tacked to the wall of the meeting house, a brief but informative history of the church reaching back to its origin in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Estes sent a copy of old record to F. B. Srygley, who published and thus preserved it in the *Gospel Advocate*. It is entitled, "The Church of Christ at Cleveland." The record says: "The church of Christ at Cleveland was established the year of 1876 by Jerry Randolph and J. A. [J. H.] Halbbrook. The church site was given by W. A. Hyde, and the building was built the year of 1877. Jerry Randolph and J. A. Halbbrook held the first protracted meeting in this building, and many obeyed the gospel. In 1876 F. D. Srygley held the meeting, and twenty-nine obeyed the gospel. The present building that we are now in was built the year 1926. Gus Nichols preached the first sermon, and O. C. Dobbs held the first protracted meeting. During the fifty-five years (1876-1931) we have never failed to meet on the Lord's day, except a very few times, when providentially hindered."

The original meeting house of the Cleveland church was built of logs and stood for half a century before it was replaced in 1926. Although not mentioned in the history, F. B. Srygley remembered preaching in a short gospel meeting at Cleveland in the fall of 1882, when he first went into that region with John Taylor. He said: "Joe Halbbrook then lived not far from the New River Church.... I made my home with Brother Halbbrook, while Brother Taylor went from place to place among the older brethren whom he had known so many years. Jerry Randolph [and] Brother [W. A.] Wade, his brother-in-law, were the preachers of the neighborhood." (*Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 3, 1936)

Recalling the older pioneer preachers whom he knew in his early ministry led Srygley to speak of the great hardness they endured to plant the cause of Christ in that country. He then concluded thoughtfully: "I am wondering how many preachers we have now [that] would have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ as they. We certainly have the right to admire the men who endured persecution and thus made the way easier for those who came after them. Preaching now is too much a profession, and preachers are looking too much for an easy place." (*Ibid.*)

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## THE MYSTERY PREACHER OF FAYETTE COUNTY

Larry Whitehead

In the mid 1960s a new marker was placed on an old grave under an old magnolia tree in the cemetery of the Cleveland church of Christ in Fayette County, Alabama. The marker was purchased by donations from members of the church. It replaced the original marker that had begun to crumble from age and the elements. The original marker had these words engraved thereon: "SAMUEL S. CARSON, NATIVE OF ENGLAND, 1839 – OCTOBER 31, 1909. THE TRAVELING PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL WENT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE BRINGING THE GLAD TIDINGS OF SALVATION. LOVED BY ALL."

Little is known of Samuel Carson's early life in England or what led him to the small rural community of Cleveland in Fayette County. It is known that he served most of his adult life in the British Royal Navy. He was an orphan and was raised, along with his brother, in an orphanage in England. When he left the orphanage to join the navy, his brother gave him a small silver coin to remember him by, which he carried with him the rest of his life. The brothers never saw one another again. Samuel retired from the navy in the late 1800s and spent the rest of his life trying to locate his brother, all o no avail.

It is not known when or where Carson obeyed the ancient gospel. He was a Christian when he came to Cleveland and became united with the Cleveland church. He soon began to preach for the church and those who heard him said that he was an excellent preacher with a powerful voice and a gentle and kind demeanor. In appearance, he was slender in size and always neatly dressed. He was a bachelor and lived by himself. It is said that he would wash his clothes and neatly fold them. He would then sit on them as his way of pressing them, a trick he learned in the British navy.

As his reputation as a preacher grew, he received calls from other churches of Christ throughout Marion and Fayette Counties. In addition to Cleveland, he preached at Thornhill, Whitehouse, Berea, and New River, among other places. He walked to his appointments. He was known affectionately as "Uncle Sammy" and was much beloved by all who knew him.

Carson became a close personal friend of John Tyler McCaleb, a prominent citizen of Fayette County and himself a gospel preacher. McCaleb was also an elder in the New River church. This writer's grandmother, Minnie Belle Ehl, a niece of McCaleb, heard Brother Carson preach many times at Berea and New River and attested to his ability as a gospel preacher. She said that he had an unusual power to persuade the unbelievers. Most of his hearers had probably never heard anyone speak with a British accent. More than likely, this drew some to hear him that otherwise would not have attended his meetings.

After hearing him proclaim the simple New Testament gospel in his unique style and accent, many were convicted.

How and why Carson came to America and ultimately to Fayette County is unknown. It has been said that "the Lord works in mysterious ways" and it could be that he

providentially led the preacher to Fayette County for a noble purpose. The number of souls that obeyed the gospel under the preaching of this mysterious native of the British Isles is unknown. It may have been in the hundreds. Whatever his reason for coming to this part of Alabama, he had an impact for good on those who came to know and love him, and especially to those who were edified by hearing him proclaim the word of God.

"Uncle Sammy" spent his final days in the John Enis home in Cleveland, where he was lovingly cared for in his last illness. Grieving friends laid his slight body to rest under the old magnolia and his dear friend, John Tyler McCaleb, purchased the original stone that marked the final resting place of this much beloved soldier of the cross.

Myrtle Aldridge, a local news paper columnist, wrote these poetic lines in an article about Brother Carson in 1964: "Through these many years the glossy leaves of the magnolia tree has shaded his grave and the creamy petals of its blossoms have drifted downward. 'IN LOVING MEMORY' we had engraved on the new marker. This for a man we never knew and yet one for whom we feel a tender kinship."

To this we would only add: "And a kindred spirit that can only be found among those dear ones of 'like precious faith.'" That orphan boy from across the briny sea found a home and family with Christians among the rugged hills of Northwest Alabama. It was the greatest family of all, for it was God's family, from whom even death can only make us orphans for little while. It is most pleasing to think that "Uncle Sammy" found a family he no doubt had longed for since childhood among the Lord's people in Fayette County. Maybe, just maybe, that was why the Lord directed his way to that area in the first place. But to his new family he most likely gave more than he received. "*Blessed are those who dwell in Your house.*" (Psa. 84:4.)

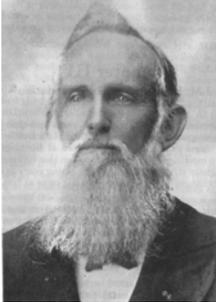


*Uncle Sammy's tombstone*

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NOSTALGIA

Justus M. Barnes worked with a young John T. Lewis in Birmingham in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We thought you might be interested in the following bit of history from 1907...*LEW*



*J.M. Barnes*



*John T. Lewis*

**TENT MEETING**

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5th Street and 5th Ave.

**PRATT CITY**

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**J. M. BARNES and JOHN T. LEWIS**  
**PREACHERS**

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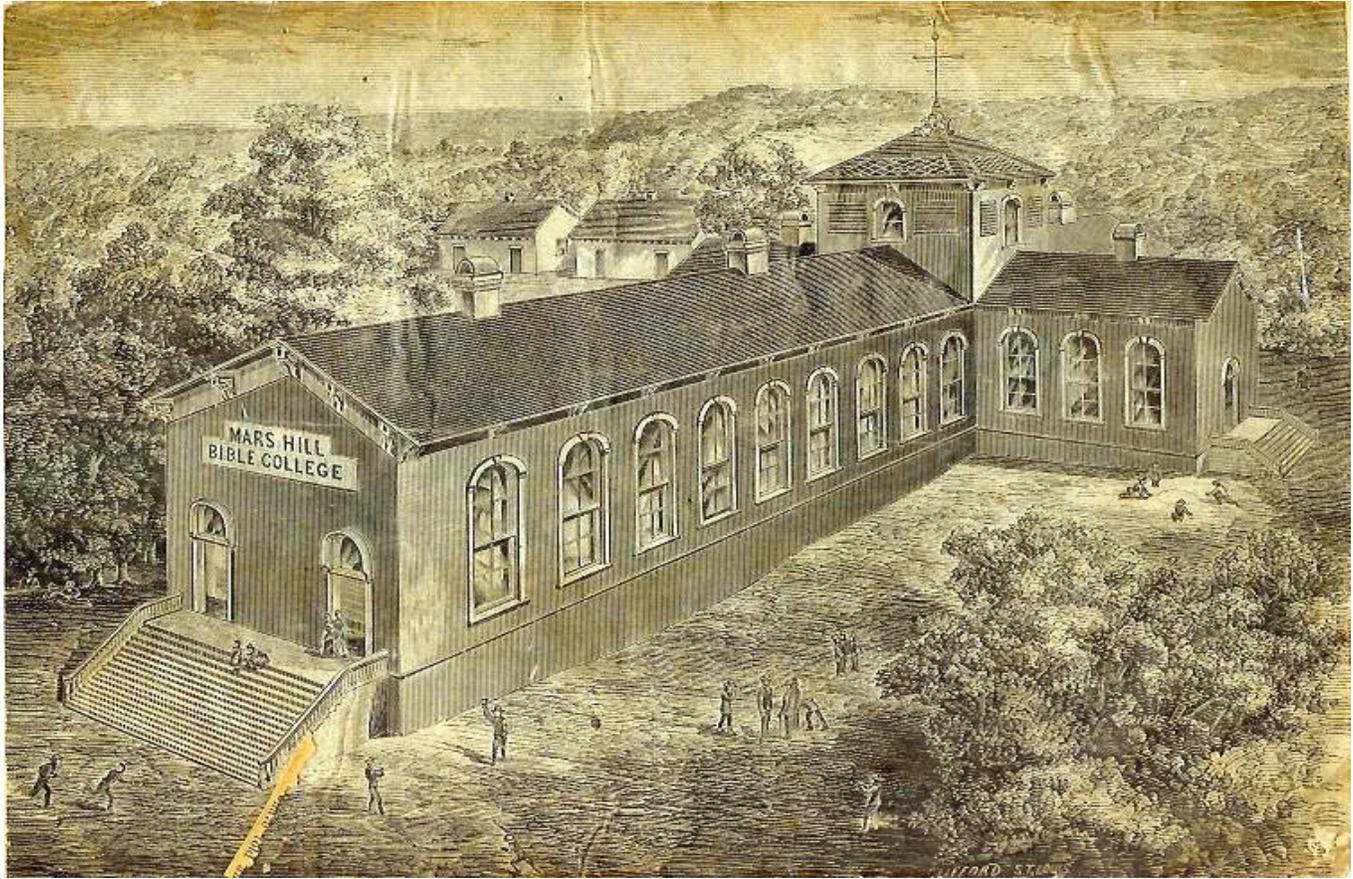
SATURDAY, AUG. 31st AT 11 A. M. 1907  
" " " 7:30 P. M.  
SUNDAY SEPT. 1st 11 A. M.  
AT TENT. ALSO FOX'S HALL SAME TIME.  
AT TENT.  
SEPTEMBER 1st - - - 4 P. M.  
" " - - - 7:30 P. M.

During week following, preaching  
at tent every morning at 11:00, and  
every evening at 7:30.

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**All are Cordially Invited. Come let us  
Reason Together.**

ca. 1907



*Mars Hill ca. 1880*



*J. Petty Ezell, W.T. "Tip" Grider & Cled Wallace - 1937*

*Photo taken by John T. Lewis*

## THE “CASE” JUDGE JOHNSON LOST

Earl Kimbrough

The legendary Federal Judge Frank Minis Johnson, Jr. was one of the most important leaders during the 1960s and

1970s struggle for Civil Rights in Alabama. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks are properly credited with bringing about social changes in race relations in the South, but without Judge Johnson the movement would not have succeeded as it did. He was a man of great courage and justly received much honor for making landmark decisions in the areas of desegregation,



**Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr.** voting rights, and civil liberties that, as someone said, “transformed our understanding of the Constitution.” Because of his stand for Constitutional law, Johnson was called “the most hated man in Alabama” by the Ku Klux Klan. His legal actions incurred the wrath of Gov. George C. Wallace, his former friend and classmate at the University of Alabama, who attacked his character in embittered language. Judge Johnson received so many death threats that he and his family were under constant federal protection from 1961 to 1975.

Judge Johnson’s “unrelenting devotion to the rule of law,” as former Alabama Senator Howell Heflin expressed it, and the acrimonious opposition it provoked from much of the state’s citizenry, might very well provide an analogy with those stalwart Christians in the Northwest Alabama region, where Johnson came from, in suffering persecution for their devotion to the rule of *divine* law in the New Testament. But our particular interest here in Judge Johnson springs from a little episode involving a conflict between the noble jurist and a humble Christian over a bit of history involving Johnson’s own family.

Johnson was born and reared near Haleyville in Winston County, Alabama. Winston County had the distinction during the Civil War of producing more men who fought for the Union than it did those who fought for the Confederacy. Indeed, the whole hill country of Northwest Alabama had a strong constituency with Union sentiments. It is within this historical context that the Christian, Larry E. Whitehead of Pinson, Alabama, crossed swords with the renowned judge. This is the story as Larry relates it.

“Several years ago I was given a copy of Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr.’s biography [*Taming the Storm*, by Jack Bass]. Judge Johnson was arguably the most distinguished Jurist to ever come from the State of Alabama. Certainly he was the most famous...

Judge Johnson was quoted in his biography stating that he had several great uncles that fought in the Confederate Army in the War Between the States and that they were buried at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church Cemetery in Fayette

County, Alabama. I knew, having done some research on the Johnson family and being a student of Civil War history that this statement was not accurate. I thought about his statement for several weeks and finally ‘screwed up’ enough courage to write him a letter and challenge him on his erroneous statement. I pointed out to him that these Uncles that he referred to actually fought under the Union Flag with the 1st Alabama Cavalry-USA.”

“He wrote back and told me I didn’t know what I was talking about and that their service was memorialized on their tombstones with the letters CSA after their names. I responded that the families were either ignorant of the fact that they served in the Yankee Army or were ashamed of same or were afraid to show the truth for fear of reprisals for doing so. He again informed me that I was the ignorant one and that he knew they had served under the Rebel banner. I responded that I would send him copies of their war records if that would convince him. I proceeded to do so and sent the information to him. After several weeks I received a sincere letter of apology. He said in the letter that his family had always believed these men served in the CSA and he was following family tradition. He thanked me for ‘straightening him out’ on the matter and invited me to visit him at his office in Montgomery to further discuss ‘my case.’ Unfortunately his untimely death prevented that meeting from taking place. I was looking forward to it.”

“Judge Johnson was appointed to the federal Bench by President Eisenhower. He was called on to make several controversial rulings on several precedent setting civil rights cases in the South during the dark days for our part of the country in the 60’s and early 70’s. Whether you agreed with his decisions or not, he was a courageous man. He also knew how to admit it when he was wrong. From my standpoint, to win an argument with this great jurist was very satisfying to say the least.” (Larry E. Whitehead, *The Hollingsworth-McCaleb Journal*, February 2004, 8.)

Judge Johnson’s uncles who fought for the Union— Alex J. Johnson, Reuben Johnson, and Moses Johnson—are memorialized by Don Umphrey for their Union service in *Southerners in Blue*.

If there is a moral in this story for Christians it is that even men of high rank and nobility should prefer facts to tradition, in religion as well as in secular history.

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### **Rock Creek Philosophy**

The notes of truth always sound cracked to a man in error, but the discord is caused by his error and not by the truth. (*Gospel Advocate*, Sept. 29, 1927.)

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### **Burnett’s Truism**

A religion that will not stay with you in life will not stay with you in death nor save you in eternity. *T.R. Burnett 1915*

## The Final Say

### The Modern Gospel

In our day it has become quite fashionable to believe as little as possible. Phrases like “we love Jesus in our church, not doctrine” are common. It is now seen as judgmental to correct anyone for error. H. Richard Niebuhr once described the modern gospel as consisting of a “**God without wrath bringing people without sin into a kingdom without judgment through a Christ without a cross.**” As David Wells has so aptly entitled his book, in our day there is *No Place for Truth*.

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#### Tom Sawyer

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) was a play mate with two of Barton W. Stone’s grandsons, Sam and Will Bowen in Hannibal, MO. Sam and Will's parents were of B. W. Stone's eldest daughter, Amanda Warren Stone Bowen, wife of Captain Samuel S. Bowen. They lived two blocks from the Clemens' home in Hannibal.

Twain writes about Sam Bowen in his Autobiography on pages 90-91. It is rumored that Twain got his inspiration for his figure of Tom Sawyer from Sam Bowen.

B. W. Stone died at his daughter's home in Hannibal in 1844 as did Celia Stone later, wife of B. W. Stone. Celia is buried in Hannibal, in the Baptist Cemetery north of town. This is the cemetery that Twain associates with "Indian Joe."..... *Paul E. Garrett*

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### Success or Failure

It was inevitable that these thousands of searchers for New Testament Christianity should unite, even though they came from different denominations and for different reasons. They had a common goal, the restoration of Christ's church exactly as it had existed in the apostolic age; to achieve this goal, they united. Their success or failure cannot be reckoned in terms of popularity; for the charge, "You're nothing but a Campbellite," rang out often, hurled in scorn by those confronted with principles which they could not answer and would not accept. Neither is it to be reckoned in terms of numerical strength; for God has never determined standards of right by majority vote. Their success depends rather upon the truth of the following proposition: the church of Christ today is the New Testament church, existing today in the same matchless perfection it radiated more than nineteen centuries ago. It is the kingdom which cannot be shaken!  
*Bill J. Humble (The Preceptor, Jan. 1952)*

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### What Went Wrong?

‘Churches of Christ enjoyed phenomenal growth in the twentieth century. From 1906 to 1916 there was a growth of more than 100% in only one decade. By 1926 there had been a growth of 50% over the previous decade. In 1967 Louis Cassels of UPI called the churches of Christ the “fastest growing major religious body in the United States”. It is interesting to consider why churches of Christ had grown so consistently during this period. It was not because of an “educated ministry”, because most preachers of the time were not men of high academic attainments. It was not because of ornate buildings. James DeForest Murch of the Christian Church in his book, “Christians Only”, listed one reason: “It’s people had stood like the Rock of Gibraltar for the ‘faith which was once delivered unto the saints’, amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a “peculiar” people teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life.” Numerous studies in recent years have shown that mainline denominations have declined in membership while conservative churches with a strong doctrinal emphasis have increased. It is strange that some today are urging churches of Christ to forsake a strong doctrinal emphasis, contending that this is no longer what is needed in our generation.’ (*The Spiritual Sword. ‘The Winds of Change’, Alan E. Highers, Volume 25, October 1993, p. 3*)

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#### David Lipscomb On The Civil War

Before the contest between the North and the South ended all concluded it was a war of the politicians and leaders for their personal and ambitious ends and aims, but it was not for the good of those who bore the brunt and sufferings of the war . . . the rich will use it to make money out of the blood of the poor. The poor will kill and be killed. Christians have no part nor lot in such affairs." (*Lipscomb, "The Monroe Doctrine," Gospel Advocate 38 [Jan 16, 1896], 36-37*)

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#### Ya Don't Say

Campellites are in a constant fuss about the best way to get the world to unite on "our plea." It is so everlasting funny we can shake our sides laughing. -- *Baptist Commoner*

Nevertheless, six thousand Baptists per annum lay down their unscriptural name and unite with the people you nickname Campbellites. Is that so everlasting funny? But you are in error to say they ask you to unite on “our plea.” They ask you to obey the Lord’s plea, and be Christians only.  
*T.R. Burnett --Burnett’s Budget 1915*

\*\*\*\*\*

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