

The Search for Truth
A History of the Restoration Movement
“As the Century Turns”
January 28, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

Honest and godly men have long sought to honor Christ by being faithful to His word. They have recognized that there can be no true “faith” if there is not “obedience” to make that faith complete. This study has been focusing on a large effort that continues to this day, to walk the line between being relevant to our modern culture and honoring the authority of Jesus Christ by respecting His word: “The Search for Truth.”

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIVISION AS IT IMPACTED FHU:

There was a school in Henderson, TN as early as 1869 named the Henderson Masonic Institute. J. B. Inman was influential in getting the school under the influence of the brotherhood and the name was changed to the West Tennessee Christian College. Inman was its first president but he died in 1889 and, after an interim, A. G. Freed was named president in 1893. Freed had opened his own school at Essary Springs, TN.

Three years later, a brother named J. F. Robertson of Crockett Mills, TN offered to give \$5,000 to the school if they would rename it after his daughter. Subsequently, the school was renamed the “Georgia Robertson Christian College in 1897. In that same year, N. B. Hardeman joined the faculty to teach Bible.

N. B. Hardeman - Nicholas Brodie Hardeman has been called the “Prince of Preachers.” Hardeman received his Bachelor’s degree from West TN Christian College in 1895 and his M. A. four years later. He joined A. G. Freed at Georgia Robertson Christian College in 1897. Hardeman conducted a series of gospel meetings by a joint effort of the churches of Christ in Nashville, beginning in 1922. The meetings were held at the Ryman Auditorium and they were called the “Tabernacle Sermons.” For five years, they held these meetings and upwards of 8,000 people gathered to hear Hardeman. Those sermons have been published in book format and memorized by many, many young preachers. At that time, the *Nashville Tennessean* published Hardeman’s sermons in the newspaper where thousands more read them and were influenced by the Gospel of Christ.

Up until that point, the school and the churches in Henderson were more aligned with the “progressives” in the brotherhood. R. P. Meeks was the head of the Bible department and was known for favoring the use of the instrument and the missionary society. Freed believed he could educate the brethren out of the digressive mindset. He called on E. A. Elam of the *Gospel Advocate* to come to Henderson and conduct a Gospel meeting. This was in 1902. On the way into town, Elam was met by Meeks and some others, who disagreed with his position, and told him he could not hold a meeting in town because the roads were too bad.

So, somehow or another, the conservatives talked a Baptist church into allowing them the use of their building for this Gospel meeting. That began a serious push back against the innovations in the worship and work of the church. There was also a debate held between J. Carroll Stark and Joe Warlick. The debate was held in 1903.

The school closed because the progressive brethren left. But, A. G. Freed and N. B. Hardeman began another school in Henderson and called it the National Teachers’ Normal and Business College. “Norms” had to do with what was “normal” for educational purposes. When that school opened in the fall of 1908, they had 400 students. Because of Freed & Hardeman’s

influence in the school, it would be renamed in their honor FHC in 1919 with Hardeman serving as president from 1925 to 1950.

JAMES W. MCGARVEY:

McGarvey had been in Lexington, KY for decades. He had weathered a number of storms at the College of the Bible and against German higher criticism. Much of that time, he had worshipped with the Broadway Christian Church and had served 32 years as an elder. But, two months after he celebrated 50 years of preaching the Gospel, the church announced in November of 1902 that they were going to vote on whether to have instrumental music in worship. Later that month, the vote was taken - 361 voted for the instrument; 202 voted against the instrument. McGarvey immediately resigned and left and joined the Chestnut Street Christian Church.

OTHER ISSUES:

Just to recap, there were other issues being debated as brethren came to terms with what the “search for truth” entailed. Some brethren were against Sunday schools, separate Bible classes in which children and/or women would be taught separately. A key proponent of the “anti-Sunday school” position was N. L. Clark who was met in debate by R. L. Whiteside of ACU. Clark’s arguments were:

1. There was no divine authority for it.
2. It was the same issue as the missionary society.
3. There is only one religious assembly authorized and that was one under the leadership of the elders and deacons.
4. The denominations had started it!

We have already mentioned that some brethren were against using pre-written and published Sunday school literature, which were called “lesson leaves” at that time. We’ve also mentioned that some brethren believed it was wrong to have a full-time preacher. They called them “located preachers.”

Yet, our history is not entirely consumed with debates and arguments. I’ve mentioned that when I teach a class on missions in the church next year, I will spend some time on reviewing missions in the church then. But, suffice it to say that brethren were intensely interested in sharing the Gospel, the pure Gospel without adulteration by the creeds of men, with those who needed to hear it.

J. J. Trott went to the Cherokee Indians in Arkansas. R. W. Officer was a missionary to the Indians in TX. By 1888, among the 56,000 Indians among the Choctaws, Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Seminole tribes, there were about 900 Christians, largely through the work of R. W. Officer.

Julies DeLaunay worked in Paris, France during this time. At the time of his death, he had a group of 400 people worshiping according to the NT pattern. In 1889, Azariah Paul went to Armenia. In 1892, W. K. Azbill from Indianapolis went to Japan. Azbill influenced a young student from the College of the Bible to also go to Japan, a young man named J. M. McCaleb.

AS THE CENTURY TURNS:

In the early 1900s, a new issue came to the forefront, led by the women suffrage movement. Many people began looking at the Bible, with its emphasis on men, as opposed to women, as being chauvinistic. Some brethren thought that since the woman’s place was in the home, then there was no need for women to be able to vote. Others, of course, saw that voting was not a biblical matter to begin with.

There is also the problem of racial tensions. During this time, leading up to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, there was considerable animosity between the races with some arguing that blacks were inferior to whites if they even had a soul. The *Gospel Advocate* promoted racial solidarity: "...while men differed in color and habits, God's spirit would so unify us that we would become spiritually alike; that we would believe the same thing, hope the same thing..." (1915; West, III: 12).

In 1898, J. D. Tant visited Kansas, from TX, and recognized that blacks were viewed as equal with whites. Tant, being racist, was glad that wasn't going on in TX. There were also preachers who recognized our equality. E. A. Elam with the *Gospel Advocate* and the Nashville Bible School, was fostering a black teenage girl whom they took to worship with them. One of the elders asked Elam to take her to a black congregation in Nashville. Elam responded that the trouble was not the presence of a black girl but the low spiritual condition of the congregation.

David Lipscomb - you may remember that he stayed in Nashville during a cholera outbreak so that he could minister to the affected poor, primarily blacks - was skeptical about establishing separate black and white congregations. But with all the troubles in the country, the Christians were still sharing the Gospel and evangelizing.

According to a chart in West (III: 25):

Congregations				
	1906	1916	1926	1936
Michigan	8	17	21	27

Members				
	1906	1916	1926	1936
Michigan	838	1,398	2,156	2,831

After J. W. McGarvey's death in 1911, the digressives would get ahold of the College of the Bible. The (independent) Christian Church would withdraw their support and establish the Cincinnati Bible Seminary which still exists today while the president of the College of the Bible at that time, Hall L. Calhoun, who had earned his PhD at Harvard but stayed faithful to the biblical teachings, would leave and teach first at FHU and then at David Lipscomb.

To further illustrate the signs of the times, and what happens when each generation does not study afresh the word of God... P. Y. Pendleton, Alexander Campbell's grandson, preached a sermon at the Vine Street Christian Church in Nashville and supported infant sprinkling as well as suggesting that all so-called Christians were all brethren in Christ. A grandson of Barton W. Stone, Samuel Hardin, whose wife was a great-grand-daughter of Alexander Campbell, preached a sermon at one of their conventions, in which he attacked all the "old-time" beliefs of the prior generations of reformers, even attacking the Virgin birth of Christ suggesting that men had added that doctrine to the Scriptures. He further suggested that immersion should be left aside and all denominations should be accepted without it.

In the state of Texas, Austin McGary would begin a magazine, *Firm Foundation*, which would be and do for Texas Christians what the *Gospel Advocate* had done for Christians in TN and the southeast.

I wanted to briefly mention L. S. White, a preacher in TN because his best friend was Cordell Hull, who was named Secretary of State under President FDR. White was well known

for several debates he held, most notably two, one of the Seventh-Day Adventists - E. J. Hubbard and Charles Russell, a leader among the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Not only were debates still popular during this period of time but tent meetings were used widely as well as "Bible readings," that could last 6-8 weeks. The plea to return to NT Christianity would spread out west during this period of time: CO, CA - Christians tried to start a "Christian colony" in CA but it did not survive, OK and west TX, south into LA and east into GA.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH IN MICHIGAN:

I have spoken some, already, about the restoration movement in Michigan but let us summarize it here. In 1841, Thomas Hawley moved to Detroit and began worshipping according to NT principles. Hawley was born in England, to a family of Scotch Baptists, and came to America in 1815. He arrived in Boston, MA but began emigrating west, landing in Cleveland, OH in 1835. It was there that he came under the influence of Christians preaching in the western reserve, notably Alexander Campbell. He was converted then, in 1835, and moved to Detroit in 1840 and began to establish NT Christianity there.

Early on, as with nearly all mission efforts, the church met in the Hawley's home. Then they moved to a small school building and then to Firemen's Hall, then to the Detroit Institute, the Court House and finally they settled into a building and were known as the Miami Avenue church of Christ. The Howard Street church of Christ was established in 1863 and the Plum Street church of Christ was formed in 1868. Plum Street would become, for that time, a fairly influential congregation in this part of the country under good leadership. One member was John S. Gray who was president of the Ford company. Because of his spiritual leadership skills, the Plum Street church grew spiritually and numerically.

In 1914, the Fairview congregation was established and in 1915, the Warren Avenue congregation was established. It was the Warren Avenue congregation that took the lead in establishing the Lord's work in Flint. They also did much work among the black population and in 1917, started the church in Pontiac.

James Allen Jackson, a Christian from TN, had moved to Detroit in 1919. It took him a while to find a church of Christ but he eventually found the Plum Street congregation. But, in 1920, he moved to Flint to work for GM and started looking for Christians worshipping according to the NT pattern (This information comes from *Little Wicker Basket* by Cheryl Cole, 2003). When he was not working, he would go door to door looking for a church of Christ. When people told him they had never heard of the church of Christ, he proceeded to explain to them what the church was about. For a while, Jackson would travel back to Detroit on the weekends so he could worship.

Eventually, a small group of Christians began meeting in the home of a family named Carpenter. That small group grew large enough to have their own building, called the Murray Hill church of Christ. With GM growing, more southerners moved to Flint and more congregations started sprouting up. The Claude Parish family with their children Willadean, Earl and Donald moved up from the Florence, AL area. In 1925, the Murray Hill congregation merged with a church and they became the Mabel Avenue congregation. In twenty years, the Mabel Avenue congregation would move and become the Court Street church of Christ. There were also other churches of Christ: Lewis St., Zimmerman St., and Carpenter Road.

Eventually, in 1928, it was decided that James Allen Jackson, Claude Parish, and W. T. Parish would form the nucleus of a new congregation. They met in the Jackson home at first but in time, they would form the Bristol Road congregation. Of course, most of us know that

eventually, the Bristol Road congregation would establish the church of Christ in Swartz Creek. Claude Parish's son, Earl, would help in that effort. It is time for the Swartz Creek congregation ourselves to take the lead in establishing a church of Christ. Churches planting churches. That's God's missionary society.

About the same time NT Christianity came to Detroit, around the early 1840s, James Crane moved from NY to western MI and found some Christians who were meeting. He helped organize them into a congregation in 1843, in Paw Paw, MI. Other churches were being planted in other places as well.

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES:

Let us return to the subject of Christian colleges because they have been at the forefront of spreading the truth through their graduates who have been educated to make a living and educated to follow the Gospel. In 1904, there were five colleges associated with churches of Christ that would open their doors - five in the U. S. One in Canada, one in the near east, and one in Japan.

J. N. Armstrong began the Southwestern Bible and Literary College in Paragould, AR. The school would be plagued by financial problems from the start. Armstrong would resign from the school and move to NM for his health but when Cordell Christian College was started in OK in September of 1907, Armstrong accepted the invitation to move there and be president in the fall of 1908. This was now the third educational institution Armstrong would serve, beginning with the NBS. When WWI started, and with Armstrong holding to strong pacifist views as did Lipscomb, the reputation of Cordell Christian College took a hit.

The first college established in TX, Texas Christian University, was established in 1873. In 1894, was the Lockney College and Bible School in Lockney, TX. In 1903, brethren started the Gunter Biblical and Literary College named after Colonel Jot Gunter who donated the land. The one-time president of Gunter, N. L. Clark, is the one who debated R. L. Whiteside on the Sunday school question. Since Clark held an extreme position on that subject, as well as quarterlies, it hurt the influence of Gunter. When TCU went with the "digressives," Jesse Sewell helped begin Thorp Spring Christian College in 1910 in TX. Thorp Spring was southwest of Fort Worth.

Tolbert Fanning had started Franklin College in 1842. It closed because of the Civil War and he reopened it in October of 1865. In 1866, Fanning opened a school for girls, called Hope Institute but in 1884, it became the Fanning Orphan School. As we have already mentioned, in 1889, James A. Harding was in Nashville and helped influence David Lipscomb to begin a Bible school in Nashville, called the Nashville Bible School in 1891. In 1903, the school moved to its present location on Granny White Pike. As I have previously mentioned, just as soon as Lipscomb passed away in 1917, the board of trustees met and renamed the school in his honor, David Lipscomb College. In 1913, H. Leo Boles would assume the presidency of Lipscomb and guide it through WWI.

Other brethren in TX wanted to have their own "Bethany College" or "College of the Bible" or "Nashville Bible School" in TX, so they went together and, with the financial backing of an elder of the church in Abilene named Colonel W. J. Childers, they established the "Childers Classical Institute." They opened in 1906 with 25 students. Two years later, R. L. Whiteside would come to teach. He had been educated at the West TN Christian College and then NBS. Jesse Sewell would become the president in time.

I have talked already some about Potter Bible College in Bowling Green, KY with the financial backing of C. C. and Mollie Potter. It began in October of 1901. One graduate of Potter Bible College was H. H. Hawley of Ludington, MI. James A. Harding had been president

but resigned in 1912 and the school closed its doors in 1913. The next year, however, Potter Orphan Home and School would be established.

Based on a study done in 1977, there were 195 schools of higher education started within the restoration movement. Out of those 160 closed their doors. By 1957, the churches of Christ had as many members as the Disciples of Christ and (independent) Christian Churches combined but only have 24% of the schools that have been established.

WWI and the great depression would cause many schools to close. In two weeks, we'll discuss further efforts at doing benevolent work among America's orphans as well as take a look at the impact WWI and then, WWII, had on churches of Christ.