

The Search for Truth  
A History of the Restoration Movement  
“Between the Wars”  
February 18, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

We have spent a little over three months examining the history of a movement aimed at getting back to NT Christianity. This was not new to North America and it is not new just to those who claim to be churches of Christ. I’m not suggesting that everyone who tries to get back to the Scriptures are right with God; what I am suggesting is that it is *admirable* to get back to the Scriptures and the pattern for Christianity revealed in the New Testament, both in personal conduct and in, what we might call, corporate conduct - how the church of Christ is to worship, work, and the plan of salvation we ought to teach and to practice.

We are wrapping up our studies of this history. We could have gone much more in-depth on some topics; perhaps we went too far in-depth on others. But, the history continues. We will leave off, next week, in the 1950s but there have been 60 years of history in the churches of Christ since then. That history is within the lifetime of many in our class; we will look to you for enlightenment on what has happened within the past 60 years.

Suffice it to say that the brotherhood has entered a new “crossroads” period in our history. Churches of Christ are again dividing, but they are dividing along the same lines as we have in the past: fundamentally, how do you understand and accept biblical authority and, more specifically, how do you understand biblical silence? Today, the two major issues that are forcing churches to line up on opposing sides are instrumental music in worship (again) and the role of women in worship. In fact, there is a website dedicated to the promotion of a broader role for women in worship and leadership positions in churches of Christ and there are four churches of Christ in Michigan who are advertising their positions.

“The churches listed below have all become more inclusive to participation by women in the worship, leadership, ministries, and teaching. Each congregation has decided through much study how inclusive they would like to be. Some congregations are inclusive only in the worship and teaching ministries while others have removed all barriers to women being able to use the gifts they have received from God...”

So, the search for Truth still goes on and we still need to understand how important it is to respect the authority of Jesus Christ and how the authority of the apostles plays into this discussion. Every issue has to be discussed; nearly every issue has to be studied on its own merits and the authority of Jesus Christ and the apostles has to be respected, in every single generation.

Two weeks ago when I was with you, we ended the class by discussing the restoration effort among the black community and that’s where we’ll pick up today...

RESTORATION EFFORTS AMONG THE BLACK COMMUNITY:

The most famous of the black preachers was Marshall Keeble. Keeble’s parents were slaves in a community outside of Murfreesboro, TN. Keeble only finished the 7th grade and early on, he worked in a soap factory. He met Minnie Womack, the daughter of a preacher whom we introduced last time, S. W. Womack. Marshall and his wife opened a grocery store in Nashville but began preaching in 1897, at the age of 19. By his mid-thirties, Keeble was traveling all over the country preaching while his wife took care of the grocery store. Eventually, Keeble would be credited with baptizing 30,000 people into Jesus Christ. If he baptized his first person the year he started preaching, to have baptized 30,000 people by the time he died in

1968, at the age of 90, he would have baptized, on average, 428 people *each year*, up until the year of his death! That's obviously, one each day for his whole preaching career!

I mentioned this last time, but the millionaire life insurance company owner, A. M. Burton, financed much of Keeble's travels. In 1942, Keeble was president of the Nashville Christian Institute, a school predominantly for blacks in which he trained many young black men to be preachers. From 1939 to 1950, Keeble edited *Christian Counselor*, for the black brotherhood. It was published by the *Gospel Advocate*. NCI closed in 1967 when the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation made the school unnecessary. As many as 1,500 had studied at the institute before it closed. It would be hard to imagine what Keeble went through during that period of time in preaching, in the south, to black audiences, white audiences, and mixed audiences.

Keeble had a way with words... When he taught on baptism, he emphasized the need for immersion, as opposed to "dry cleaning." He would tell his audience that the devil wants them dry because then they'll burn better. Keeble was married twice and all five of his children preceded him in death. One of Keeble's "preacher boys" is Fred Gray who went on to become an attorney. He was, perhaps still is, an elder in the church where he worships. Fred Gray would defend Rosa Parks, Martin Luther, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the Civil Rights movement.

An illustration of Keeble's success is that in a Gospel meeting in Valdosta, GA in 1930, he baptized 59 people before he ever came up out of the water. When he did, the church sang an invitation song and he baptized 29 more people!

There have been other preachers highly influential among the black Christians - G. P. Holt, R. N. Hogan, and others. Richard Nathaniel Hogan was born in Monroe County, AR in 1902. Hogan was heavily influenced by G. P. Bowser in a school Bowser started in Silver Point, TN for blacks, called the Silver Point Christian Institute. In 1920, Hogan and his wife, Maggie, moved to Detroit where he preached and worked in the auto and plumbing industries. In 1930, he moved to Chicago but a few years later, he started full-time evangelistic work. In 1937, Hogan moved to LA and established a congregation which grew to be, at one time, the largest church of Christ west of the Rocky Mountains.

Hogan helped establish the Southwestern Christian College which continues to serve the black brotherhood even today. SCC is located in Terrell, TX. They bought facilities that had belonged to the Texas Military College and SCC was born in 1950.

According to the 2015 edition of *Churches of Christ in the United States*, there are 1,181 congregations in the US that are predominately black, with a population of 212,547. That is 9.6% and 14% respectively. One hundred fifty-five identify as racially diverse, a matter I much prefer to see. The editor of the directory states that this number is almost double what it was five years previously, suggesting we have some desegregating going on in the brotherhood, another thing I like to see. There are 27 congregations of the churches of Christ, out of 183 in Michigan, that identify as predominantly black. I estimated that they have about 4,400 members. Elmwood Park has 350 members, Wyoming Ave. has 500, North Broadway in Mt Clemens has 380, East Side in Pontiac has 350, and Annapolis Park in Westland has 350.

#### MORE IN EDUCATION:

In 1914, Harper College opened in Harper, KS. In 1919, J. N. Armstrong arrived to serve as president. Yet, the school was known for being against the Sunday school. Harper College would not survive to 2018.

In Arkansas, a Christian college was born in the heart of Jenny Hill, the wife of a mine operator from Conway, AR. Her husband, W. A. Hill, had been a student at the NBS. The school opened in Morrilton, AR in September, 1922. The folks connected to Harper College realized that their town was too small to support a college and efforts were made to combine the resources of the two schools. A. S. Croom led the way in fund-raising for the school; \$22,000 was quickly raised and the suggestion was made to name the school after J. N. Armstrong's father-in-law, James A. Harding and so the board of trustees agreed and "Harding College" was born. The great depression of 1929 brought the closing of Harper College.

Harding College had, as a dean, one of the earliest men to earn his PhD but not reject his faith in the process, Lloyd Cline Sears. It was rare in those days to have a man with his PhD on staff; Sears earned his at the infamous University of Chicago. He began at Harper College but moved over to Harding College. During the depression, Armstrong suggested that Christians plan two acres in their garden for Harding College, giving Harding the proceeds of the sales. He called it the "Harding College Crop."

In 1933, Harding had financial troubles but the opportunity was opened for them to assume the facilities of Galloway College, a Methodist's women's college, in Searcy, AR. So, in December of 1933, Armstrong and Sears led the way in moving the campus of Harding College from Morrilton to Searcy where it still stands today. Their first semester in Searcy was in the fall of 1934, with 400+ enrolled.

A famous missionary to China (11 years), George Benson, accepted the presidency of Harding College in 1936. George Benson was born in 1898 and baptized in 1918. He attended Harper College in 1921 where mission work was strongly encouraged. When Benson decided to go to China, he discovered that only twelve families were being supported by churches of Christ in the mission field. Only one was in China, at that time. Benson would be president until 1965 when Clifton Ganus would assume the presidency.

Benson was also active in politics - he used Harding as a center to preach and teach against communism, socialism, and for the American Free-enterprise system. Benson's fund-raising prowess would also be utilized to stabilize OCUSA and Faulkner University.

The old facilities of Harding College in Morrilton, AR were turned over to the Arkansas Children's Home, in 1926.

George Pepperdine was born in 1886 in Kansas. He and his brother attended Parsons Business College for a year in Parsons, KS when George took a job with a gas company. As an adult, he moved to Checotah, OK to work as a stenographer but homesickness took him back to KS to work as a shopkeeper and bill collector for a plumber. He moved to Kansas City, to do the same work for a real estate office. Pepperdine saw his first automobile in 1905 and was fascinated by it. He decided that if he could open a store that sold parts or equipment for the automobile, he could make a living. So, he opened a mail order business in Kansas City in March of 1909. He got permission to display his stock at the Sterling Auto Agency and he gave the name of his business - Western Auto Supply Agency.

In 1915, he moved to Denver for health reasons and opened his first branch office of Western Auto. The west pulled him further so in 1916, he moved to LA and opened a store there. His business grew and he created the Western Auto Tire company and opened another branch. Pepperdine had a heart for missions and for education and he established the George Pepperdine Foundation into which he put large sums of money. He gave generously to the Pacific Lodge Boys' Home and would establish the Helen Louise Girls' Home (the name of his second wife), and the Casa Colina Convalescent Home for Crippled Children.

But in 1935, influenced by a Hugh Tiner, Pepperdine decided to establish a college in southern California. Pepperdine had been influenced by the anti-Christian college element in the brotherhood for many years but Hugh Tiner and Batsell Baxter, then president of DLC, helped him understand the good that could be done and Pepperdine College was opened in 1937. Early on, Pepperdine had some of the best known and most scholarly men in the brotherhood on their faculty, including Batsell Baxter and W. B. West, Jr.

Oklahoma Christian College began as Mid-States Christian College in 1946 in Pryor, OK. The school would open in Oklahoma City in May of 1947.

Florida Christian College would open in Temple Terrace, FL near Tampa in 1945 with L. R. Wilson as president. The school would change its name to Florida College in 1963. Florida College would have a well-known scholar on its faculty, Homer Hailey. When the issue of "institutionalism" came up in the 1950s, which we'll discuss next week, Florida College went with the "non-institutional" viewpoint. There is also a Florida *Christian* College which is associated with the instrumental Christian Church.

Columbia Christian College was established in the northwest, to serve the brotherhood there, in Portland, OR in 1947. The brotherhood is considerably weaker there and the school struggled financially for most of its existence.

Lubbock Christian College grew out of a Bible college that was operating in Lubbock, TX during WWII.

Montgomery Bible College began as an idea in 1942 when two preachers in Montgomery, Rex Turner and Leonard Johnson decided to start a Bible college in the heart of the south. As MBC grew, it changed its name to Alabama Christian College in 1953, eventually becoming Faulkner University in 1986 (I enrolled in 1989), being named after an Alabama state representative who had helped Alabama Christian College over the years - James (Jimmy) Faulkner. The school moved to its present location in 1965, just off Atlanta Highway, the by-pass around Montgomery.

In 1973, Rex Turner spun off a school for graduate studies which he named the Alabama Christian School of Religion which changed its name to Southern Christian University and then to Amridge University. In 1983, ACC bought the Jones School of Law, which had been started in 1928.

Rochester College here in Michigan is probably better known to most of you. The Hamilton and Tuxedo Church of Christ in Detroit began having classes at the church in 1949. The idea was suggested that a more formal institute of higher learning be established to serve MI and northern OH so a board of trustees was established in 1954 and property was purchased in Rochester. The school opened in 1959 as North Central Christian College with famous missionary Otis Gatewood as the first president. The name was changed to MCC in 1961; the school was integrated from the beginning.

The name of the school was changed to Rochester College in 1997.

#### RADIO PREACHING:

In September, 1920, the *Gospel Advocate* announced the first message had been sent around the world, to Bordeaux, France, across radio waves. Two years later, Fred Little announced in the *Gospel Advocate* that he delivered his first (the first?) short sermon over radio waves. It went for a radius of 1,000 miles. Eventually, radio work in the church would spawn *World Radio* and *The International Gospel Hour*. Preachers who would effectively use radio will include James A. Harding, Calhoun, Hardeman, and Freed.

Due to troubles at the College of the Bible in Lexington, KY, Calhoun would go, in 1925, to FHC to serve as co-president with Hardeman but the next year, he would leave to teach at DLC and serve as minister of the Waverly-Belmont church of Christ.

By 1922, there were 50 congregations of the church of Christ in the Nashville area and 40 of them went together to sponsor the Tabernacle Sermons with Hardeman. The Nashville *Tennessean* had a circulation of 40,000+ and the *Banner* had a circulation a little less and both carried the manuscripts of Hardeman's sermons. Some 200 baptisms and 25 restorations followed the Tabernacle Sermons.

The first radio station appeared in Nashville in 1922, seven months before the first Tabernacle meeting. In March of 1924, the First Baptist Church in Nashville began a radio station. Not to be outdone, with the financial backing of A. M. Burton of the insurance company, the Central Church of Christ would be established in the heart of Nashville, meeting in October of 1925 for the first time. Hardeman held a meeting for them which was broadcast over the radio station WDAD.

Central church and A. M. Burton went together and bought the radio station in 1927. Beginning in 1928, a Sunday evening devotional was conducted over the newly renamed WLAC, named after the insurance company, "Life and Casualty."

Central church began a radio ministry in March of 1927, preaching daily at noon. Hall L. Calhoun became the full time minister for the Central radio ministry until he passed away seven years later.

By the time Hardeman conducted a meeting at Central in 1928, WLAC had grown to a powerful 5,000 watt station which could be heard all over the nation and into Canada and Mexico. When he preached, upwards of 1 million people had access to his messages. Hardeman conducted the fifth Tabernacle Sermons in 1942, November, at the War Memorial Building in Nashville and those lessons were broadcast over the radio.

In October of 1951, a Texas preacher named James Nichols wrote in the *Gospel Advocate* about a new effort under the oversight of the elders of the Highland church of Christ in Abilene, TX known as the *Herald of Truth*. Within seven months, the Bible program would be broadcast over 180 stations. Within a year, the program was reaching 3 million weekly listeners and was ranked #3 in religious broadcasts by the Nielson company in 1953. In May of 1954, a TV broadcast was added with a potential viewership of 37 million people. With such a large undertaking, one congregation could not handle the expenses and the responses. One hundred twenty congregations were supporting the program. Within 15 years, the program was appearing on 490 radio stations and 148 TV stations around the country.

The church of Christ in Jasper, AL has had a continuously-running radio program since Gus Nichols started it in 1946.

Next week, we'll discuss briefly the impact of World War II on the brotherhood and the most recent controversy to split the church, in the 1950s, over the orphan home issue and supporting programs like *Herald of Truth* and next week will be our last study of our history...