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SUPPLEMENT

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Outlook



Some Montreat Memories

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FROM 1910 TO 1924 I was chairman of the program committee and platform manager of the summer conferences at Montreat. During those fifteen years I had the privilege of knowing and working with many of the Christian leaders of America, England and Scotland. There are many incidents connected with them and the conferences that I like to remember. I am recording a few of these incidents with the thought that some readers may find them interesting and helpful.

1. Let me begin with Mr. S. D. Gordon, the quiet talker. He wrote helpful books entitled, "Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on Prayer," and so forth. We had him on the Montreat program a number of summers while the conferences were still being held in the old auditorium, located just below the lake. It was a low frame building with a metal roof. When the rain poured down upon that roof, you could hardly hear yourself think. One day while Mr. Gordon was making one of his quiet talks there came a downpour. The people could not hear a word that he said. As I was sitting on the platform near him, I could hear. Without changing his voice or closing his eyes he said: "Jesus, when you were here on earth you stilled the storm on the sea of Galilee, and I know you can still this one. I think I have a message. If you think so, too, won't you please still this tempest?" Then he turned to the pianist and said, "Let us sing two stanzas of a hymn while it stops raining." The rain stopped. Again without changing his voice Mr. Gordon said: "Thank you, Jesus. I thought you would do it. It was just like you." Then he went on with his talk.

2. I remember a similar and yet a very different incident in which the Rev. Thomas H. McCallie, of Chattanooga, and the Rev. A. B. Curry, of Memphis, were leading spirits. Dr. Curry was preaching the annual sermon at the Foreign Mission Conference in the old auditorium. About the time he took his text there came a great downpour of rain. Only those on the front seats could hear a word. The venerable Dr. McCallie, father of Dr. J. P. McCallie, was sitting near the front. He looked, I imagined, like one of the ancient patriarchs or prophets must have looked. He stood it as long as he could. Then he mounted the platform, asked Dr. Curry to pause for a moment, and then began to pray. In his prayer he seemed to argue with the Lord. As he argued he told the Lord that the Foreign Mission Conference was tremendously in earnest about preaching the gospel to every creature, that it was really the Lord's work. Dr. Curry had been brought all the way from Memphis to preach that sermon. He felt sure that Dr. Curry had a message. He also felt

sure that it would bring glory to the name of the Lord if he would still the tempest as he did in the days of old. It was a thrilling moment. It would have been presumptuous for anyone except a venerable patriarch to argue with the Lord as he did. It was all done with the greatest reverence and a sublime faith. The rain ceased, and Dr. Curry proceeded with his sermon.

3. Speaking of rain, back in those days it really rained at Montreat. In 1916 there was a great flood in the mountains of North Carolina. The railroads were so cut to pieces that there were no trains into Black Mountain from the east for six weeks. As the floods poured down the mountains the dam at Montreat gave way, and added to the destruction. Below the Montreat gate, near the stream, the home of a Negro woman, who was a widow with several children, was picked up and carried down the stream several hundred feet. Feeling that we ought to do something about it, I got a contractor to estimate how much it would cost to roll that house back to the lot where it belonged. His estimate was about \$150.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, the noted evangelist, was preaching in the auditorium that night. Before the sermon I told the audience about the Negro woman's house, and asked them to hand me contributions for its restoration. Then Dr. Chapman took his text, Acts 1:9-11, and preached a great sermon on the return of our Lord from the Premillennial point of view. After the service two missionaries handed me a dollar each for the restoration of the Negro woman's house, and that was all I received.

The next morning before Dr. Chapman began I reported the fact that I had received only two dollars. Then I said there was one sentence in the text the night before that Dr. Chapman had not mentioned: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" We had become so absorbed in gazing that we had forgotten the plight of that poor woman and her children. Surely we would like to see that house restored before the return of our Lord. After the services I received a few dollars more than was actually needed to restore the house.

4. Dr. John McNeill, a Scotsman who had not lost his accent, spoke frequently at Montreat. He had a great deal of common sense, and an irrepressible sense of humor, and was always interesting and helpful. His use of adjectives was unusual. He spoke of a certain brother as being ferociously orthodox. There is such a thing. But the thing I remember best about Dr. McNeill is a little story he told me out of his personal life.

He said his childhood home in Scotland was very humble, but was Christian through and through. His father was a stonemason, and had to walk to his work two miles and back every day. In the winter when the nights were long, his father had to start to his work in the morning while it was still dark. The children of the home were supposed to be asleep, but sometimes while he was still a lad he would be awake when his father started, and he observed that his father always paused at the door for a moment, and said in low tones, "I go out today in the name of the Lord." Then he would go out into the dark, to cut stone all day in the name of the Lord. No wonder a great preacher came out of a home like that.

5. In his autobiography the Honorable William Jennings Bryan says that many of the major events in his life hinged upon some apparently minor incident. That has been true in many of our lives. It is illustrated by the life of a young minister who came to Montreat in the summer of 1914. In the early part, I think, of that summer I had a letter from the Rev. Andrew W. Blackwood, then the young pastor of the Sixth United Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. Frankly, I had never heard of him before. In the letter he said he would like to come to Montreat some time when there was a vacancy, and teach a course in the Bible. Then at some length he told about his education and experience. At the close of the letter he made a remark like this: "Now if you can think of any other way in which I could trouble you, please let me know." That sentence appealed to my imagination.

Sure enough, there was a vacancy that summer caused by the illness of a speaker. Mr. Blackwood seemed to be our best guess, so we wired him to come. He came and made a deep impression. A committee from the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina, was at Montreat looking for a pastor. That fine old church called Dr. Blackwood, he accepted, and remained pastor there for seven years. The Chair of English Bible in Columbia Theological Seminary, then in Columbia, became vacant, and Dr. Blackwood was asked to fill the chair temporarily along with his pastoral work. He did this with distinction. A well-known minister in our church told me that he learned more in three months under Dr. Blackwood than he learned in the rest of his seminary course. A few years later the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary called him to the Chair of English Bible. In 1930 he was called to Princeton Theological Seminary. There, through his teaching, preaching, and his books, he has become one of the best known and one of the most useful Presbyterian ministers in America. It all started with a

letter, especially the last sentence of a letter. But we must not forget that back of the letter was a life that had been made meet for the Master's use.

6. And there was Dr. George R. Stuart, a golden-hearted Methodist minister, lecturer, and author, who had filled large churches in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Birmingham. He never lacked for an audience. I shall never forget his lecture to a large group of ministers in the old auditorium on the time element in a church service. He began by asking us to take out our watches and watch a minute go by. Then he asked whether it seemed like

a long or a short minute. We all agreed that it seemed long. Then he said that time always seems long when we are thinking about it and watching it go by. That being true, the minister should never say or do anything that would keep people conscious of the time element. There should be no clock in the church where the people can see it. The minister should not keep looking at his watch, or fumbling with his watch chain. Nor should the minister say that his sermon had three or four heads, and then speak twenty minutes on the first head. Most people can multiply. The minister should not say "lastly,"

and then last on. As for the minister himself, he should not overlook the time element, but try to bring the whole sermon into reasonable limits, giving to each part of the service its proper proportion of time.

Dr. John A. Hutton, editor of *The British Weekly*, who was present, was deeply impressed by Dr. Stuart's lecture, and devoted a whole chapter to it in a book which he published upon his return to England.

There is something a great deal worse than a long sermon; and that is a short one that seems long.

If It's Presbyterian History

AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION long before its twenty-first birthday is the unusual achievement of one of Montreat's unique institutions, the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. Seven years ago the general secretary of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System, wrote from Edinburgh, referring to the Foundation as known and honored far beyond the bounds of the United States.

The Historical Foundation is a religious and educational organization, established by the General Assembly of 1926 to collect, preserve, and promote the use of materials pertaining to the entire Presbyterian family of churches. Inaugurated upon the basis of a valuable Presbyterian collection made by Dr. S. M. Tenney, who was to serve as curator from 1926 until his death at the close of 1939, it was located for somewhat more than one year at Texarkana, Texas, and settled in its present location on the ground floor of Assembly Inn, at Montreat, in the fall of 1927.

The Foundation in Use

Twenty-three graduate schools have directed their students to Montreat for study in the Foundation, with Yale sending a larger number than any other university. The latest visitor from that center confessed that his trip to the Foundation was occasioned by an inability to locate an essential volume somewhere. Within a three-week period in 1946 students from the Universities of North Carolina, Northwestern, Pennsylvania, and Yale carried on research at Montreat. Four candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh have utilized the Foundation's holdings in resident study.

But the institution is primarily designed for the benefit of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and its chief service is rendered to con-

*Curator of the Historical Foundation.

By THOMAS H. SPENCE*

stituents of that body. The strategic location at Montreat enables large numbers of Southern Presbyterians to combine study or browsing with summer visits to this ecclesiastical capital. Hundreds of ministers have consulted the collections of the Foundation, as is true of laymen and members of the Woman's Auxilliary.

Within the last year each of four representatives of our church, including the stated clerk of the General Assembly, devoted more than one hundred hours to research in the Foundation.

There Is a Museum

The museum is probably the chief center of attraction for the several thousand visitors who call each year. A pulpit built in 1777 for the Bethany Church, near Statesville, N. C., a communion table and benches from the Salem (Black River) Church near Sumter, S. C., a large number of communion services and tokens, a fine model of the Tabernacle, lighting fixtures from various Presbyterian churches, and other articles of ecclesiastical association are among the interesting things to be seen.

In 1889 a Bible was presented to the Castanea Grove Church of Gaston County, N. C., by the widow of General Stonewall Jackson. This volume, bearing the autograph of its donor, is among the treasures of the Foundation. A copy of the King James Version of the Bible, printed in 1611, the first year of publication, finds an honored place among the exhibits, along with a first edition of the Genevan (Breeches) Bible of 1560.

Later purchases include the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes* to be published at Geneva (1550), and the earliest printing of that classic in English (London, 1561). The *Shorter and Larger Catechisms* and the *Confession of Faith* appear in printings antedating their adoption by the British Parliament in 1648. Above 130 different printings of the Westminster Confes-

sion may be consulted as well as 39 of the Cumberland Presbyterian Constitution.

Educational efforts of Presbyterians are represented by more than 4,500 catalogues of colleges and seminaries, various diplomas, some of them in manuscript, and an erroneously dated one issued by Davidson College in 1841. These materials have served a variety of purposes from enabling a woman living on Fifth Avenue in New York City to obtain an annuity policy to providing a prospective student at a Midwestern university with advanced credits.

Twenty thousand printed books, 10,000 volumes of periodicals, 32,000 pamphlets, 50,000 manuscripts, and 11,000 photographs are included in the holdings of the Foundation. Two hundred and two volumes of these periodicals represent the ancestry of THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK.

362 Volume History

An extensive composite church history is being compiled under the direction of the Foundation. Already embracing 362 large volumes, it is expanding all the while, and now contains manuscripts relating to more than 2,750 different local congregations. This *History of Churches and Woman's Work in the Presbyterian Church in the United States* was prepared by some 7,000 historians of the Woman's Auxilliary and has attracted the interest and attention of individuals and scholarly societies outside the church. It is believed that more than 90 per cent of all Southern Presbyterians visiting the Foundation will find materials from their home church in this history.

Plans for a building for the exclusive use of the Foundation have been drawn by one of the world's leading library architects. An excellent lot on Assembly Drive has been secured, and more than \$66,000 of the \$75,000 judged necessary for the provision of an adequate structure has been raised. For, while rooted in the past and ministering to the present, the Historical Foundation is not unmindful of the future.