

**THE DIVISION AT HENDERSON, TENNESSEE**  
**JANUARY 1903**

The years following 1849 gave rise to many significant developments within the Restoration Movement. Not only did the Movement enjoy a spectacular growth, but it also began to exert a considerable influence upon the rest of the nation. This influence was not entirely limited to the realm of religion; it spilled over into the field of politics, resulting in the election of a prominent Disciple, James A. Garfield, as President. Nevertheless, there were also many factors arising that would eventually result in open division between the Disciples of Christ and the churches of Christ. It is because of these parallel trends, a tremendous rate of growth on one hand and a continual splintering before the outright break on the other, that some historians refer to these years as the Age of Storm and Stress.<sup>1</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, the division between these two mainstreams of the Movement was apparent to all. Although the division would not be officially recognized until the Federal Religious census of 1906, this only "made a matter of public record the division which had existed in fact for many years...The separation in 1906 was therefore only a statistical event."<sup>2</sup>

It would be an oversimplification to assume that there was only one basic disagreement that triggered the schism between the Disciples and the Christians. In reality, there were many factors that constituted the wedge that drove the two groups apart. The two leading Disciple

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<sup>1</sup> Class Notes, "The Restoration Movement," Cecil N. Wright, Instructor, Spring, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1958), pp. 405-406.

historians, Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, believe that the missionary society issue (which began in 1849 with the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society) was the fundamental reason for the division. Others point to the sectional bitterness that resulted from the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, fresh fuel was thrown into the fire when Isaac Errett organized the Foreign Missionary Society in 1875. The leading periodicals of the day, the *Gospel Advocate*, the *Christian Standard*, the *American Christian Review* and others were filled with an endless discussion of these and other explosive issues.

While all of these issues were divisive in nature, they were but manifestations of the fundamental difference between the Disciples and the Christians. Garrison and DeGroot insist that this basic difference was the determination of the conservative brethren to teach "the New Testament gives a precise pattern of the organizations procedures and worship of the church."<sup>4</sup> It is in this light that the issue of instrumental music in Christian worship can best be understood.

The use or non-use of the instrument was  
symptomatic of an attitude toward the Scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

The organ issue was the question that excited the greatest controversy and did more to bring on the division than any other issue. There is some question as to which congregation was the first in the brotherhood to use the instrument. As early as 1851 there was an unsuccessful effort to introduce a melodeon into the church at

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Norton, *Tennessee Christians* (Nashville: Reed and Company, 1971), p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Garrison and DeGroot, *Disciples*, p. 404.

<sup>5</sup> Earl Irvin West, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1950), p. 73.

Millersburg, Kentucky.<sup>6</sup> However, the church at Midway, Kentucky, under the leadership of L. L. Pinkerton, has "the distinction – if it is a distinction – of being the first of the congregations on record to adopt the use of the instrument,"<sup>7</sup> which occurred in about the year 1860. It was not until well after the war, however, that the use of the instrument began to be widespread. In 1869 Ben Franklin estimated that of the ten thousand congregations in the brotherhood, only fifty or so used the instrument in worship.<sup>8</sup>

During 1868 and 1870, there were several critical controversies to arise that included the use of the organ. The church in St. Louis, as well as those in Akron, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois, began to suffer discord and bitterness as the organ was brought into the worship. The churches in Tennessee soon joined the controversy, which was, for them, "far more relevant than the 'Society' question."<sup>9</sup> The issue assumed dramatic proportions in the state when the organ was installed in the summer of 1869 at the Linden and Mulberry Street congregation in Memphis; the minister, David Walk, had put on a "concerted and successful drive to raise the to necessary funds" to purchase an organ.<sup>10</sup> At this time, there was only one other church in Tennessee worshiping with instrumental music – the Second Christian Church (Negro), in Nashville.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Earl Irvin West, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1949), p. 310.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 312.

<sup>8</sup> West, *Search*, Vol. 2, pp. 80-82.

<sup>9</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161.

The first congregation in the state to divide over the issue was in 1887 at the Walnut Street congregation in Chattanooga; it was the only congregation in the city.

The congregation during its early years had no building of its own and met at different places until a lot was purchased and an edifice constructed on Walnut Street. Dedicated on November 10, 1886, the building represented an investment of \$10,000 and contained an organ. The membership of the church was 188.<sup>12</sup>

Almost at once there began a bitter struggle to remove the innovation, led by Dr. D. E. Nelson, a physician. When Dr. Nelson and those associated with him in this task realized that the organ would not be removed, they withdrew from the Walnut Street congregation and established a new one two miles away in South Chattanooga. It is significant to note that E. A. Elam was engaged to be the regular minister for the new, anti-organ congregation.<sup>13</sup>

Following this disturbing incident, the controversy began to spread across the state. However, by 1890, the organ was limited to the following congregations: Clarksville, Knoxville, Henderson, Memphis, and Nashville (Woodland Street and Second Church). Herman Norton, a historian of the Disciples in Tennessee, admits, "in each instance, it was introduced amid some controversy."<sup>14</sup>

By the time the official break came in 1906, the eastern part of the state was as solidly "Progressive" as Middle Tennessee was conservative

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

(anti-organ). In West Tennessee there was a more even division, although the churches of Christ held a two-to-one majority.<sup>15</sup>

With this background in mind, we turn our attention to the small, rural town of Henderson, Tennessee, located in Chester County. Subsequent events have proven that the division that occurred here in January of 1903 was a crucial and critical struggle; the outcome has played an important role within the church not only in West Tennessee and the rest of the Volunteer State, but in the South and the rest of the nation as well.

For those who have not been aware of the events which transpired at Henderson in the opening years of this century, it might be somewhat difficult to understand why, of all places, Henderson has become a focal point of the nationwide division. After all, while there was a considerable amount of attention given to the matter in the leading periodical of the day in Tennessee, the *Gospel Advocate*, there was much more publicity attached to the schism that occurred at Newbern, Tennessee late in 1902, which resulted in a lawsuit that dragged on for over two years. Furthermore, the eyes of the brotherhood were riveted upon the Broadway church in Lexington, Kentucky where, on November 23, 1902, the instrument was voted in, marking the end of J. W. McGarvey's long association with that congregation.<sup>16</sup> Why has the division at Henderson had such widespread repercussion? There was no civil litigation arising from the struggle, and although A. G. Freed, N. B. Hardeman, and R. P. Meeks enjoyed the confidence of the churches in West Tennessee, their reputation certainly did not rival that of the scholarly J. W. McGarvey.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> *West, Search*, Vol. 2, p. 442.

The question, therefore, received an added impetus: What was so important about the Henderson division?

It is our contention that this division was noteworthy for the following reasons:

[1] It was *typical* in many respects of the schism that was engulfing not only Tennessee, but the entire brotherhood. As one reads the various articles in the religious periodicals following the division, he cannot help but be sickened by the bitterness expressed in them. The brethren in Henderson hurled charges and countercharges against one another; the bitterness reached its zenith in the J. Carroll Stark - Joe S. Warlick debate held in November of 1903. It is indeed tragic when those who have formerly worshiped and worked together in a framework of peace fall out of harmony and go their separate ways, whatever the reason may be; the tragedy even greater when the division arises from the presence of an innovation in Christian worship, especially when even its most zealous supporters argue that it is not even a *necessity*, but an aid or an expedient.

[2] While the schism was typical in this respect, it was also *atypical* in others. While the majority of the congregations divided because there was a group who insisted on bringing the instrument *in*, the Henderson congregation divided over the efforts of some to put the instrument *out*. The Henderson situation was unique in the sense that the congregation had been using the instrument for a number of years with a reasonable amount of peace. It was because of this situation that the struggle was unusually intense and bitter; in the Stark-Warlick debate, J. Carroll Stark affirmed that, in Henderson...

For twenty-one years they praised God with  
instrumental strains without discord, till Brother

Elam, of the sect of the "antis," went down, divided the church, led off part, and built a new sect upon the human dogma: "Thou shalt have no organ for praise in the church of the Master."<sup>17</sup>

This statement is somewhat indicative of the claim that the Christian Church has made in the decades since the division of 1906. Notice the sentiment expressed in the following statement of Herman Norton:

The division at Henderson confirmed a pattern; those who opposed innovation took the initiative that led to separation. The very first split, at Chattanooga, was initiated by those who, in opposition to the organ, left the main body to form another congregation. At Woodland Street (Nashville), opposition to the Missionary Society led to the withdrawal of those who organized a new congregation at Tenth Street. At Newbern and Henderson, the division was initiated by those who opposed both the Missionary Society and the musical instrument.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, we are exposed to the old, old question, "Who caused the division?" It would seem that Mr. Norton, and others who favor the innovations, have ignored the simple fact that *there would have been no division over the organ if the organ had not been introduced to begin with*. Seeing, however, that it was introduced in spite of the sincere protests of many Christians, the only possible course open unto one who wished to honor his convictions was to withdraw. Norton acknowledges the truthfulness of this when he declares "when a feeling existed that 'innovations' were sinful, there was nothing else to do but withdraw."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> J. Carroll Stark and Joe S. Warlick, *A Debate* (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1904), p. 175.

<sup>18</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 215.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

[3] Another factor which has caused the division to assume added importance is the effect that it had on several men present who were destined to play a leading role in the affairs of the brotherhood in the coming years, most notably N. B. Hardeman. A. G. Freed was sure where his convictions lay before he moved to Henderson in 1895; Hardeman, however, upon his arrival in Henderson in 1890 to attend the West Tennessee Christian College, immediately began to worship and to work with the Henderson congregation, which used the instrument in their worship and worked through the state missionary society; apparently, he had not been exposed to any teaching along this line. Under the guidance of Freed, however, he soon began to contend "for 'the old Book' without addition or subtraction."<sup>20</sup> It would be useless to speculate as to whether Hardeman would have changed his position on the issue without the aid of Freed or of seeing first-hand the divisive results of the issue. At any rate, it cannot be denied that these events had a great and permanent effect upon his life.

N. B. Hardeman was by no means the only young man affected by the division at Henderson and the controversy surrounding it. In the January 29, 1903 issue of the *Gospel Advocate* A. G. Freed defended himself course of action was pursuing when he called attention to such men as L. L. Brigance, W. S. Long, G. D. Smith, Robert Smith, A. B. Barrett, Len Williams and James Lowrey.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> G. Dallas Hayes, "A Statement Concerning Brother Freed," *Gospel Advocate* (March 12, 1903).

<sup>21</sup> A. G. Freed, "A. G. Freed Answers the Question Propounded to Him," *Gospel Advocate* (January 29, 1903).



HENDERSON, TENNESSEE

The city of Henderson was originally known as Dayton when it was founded in 1860 upon the newly-laid tracks of the Gulf and Ohio Railroad. At that time there was no Chester County; Dayton was a part of McNairy County. The settlement enjoyed a moderate growth until the outbreak of the Civil War the following year.

During the war the depot was burned and, for a while, a box car served as the railroad station. Following the war the station was rebuilt by the M & O Railroad Company, and the name of the village was changed from Dayton to Henderson Station, and finally to Henderson.<sup>22</sup> A building boom soon commended and by 1870 the town could claim about a half-dozen stores.

Chester County, named after Colonel R. I. Chester, was organized in 1879 from parts of McNairy, Hardeman, Madison, and Henderson Counties. The first county officials were elected in 1882. By 1900, Henderson could boast of three banks (Farmers and Merchants; Chester County Bank; Peoples Savings Bank), a light plant (1898), and a telephone service (October 1, 1898). In accordance with its growth the town was incorporated by an act of the Tennessee legislature on March 11, 1901.<sup>23</sup>

In the *Chester County Independent* of January 29, 1943, Walter Emmons described Henderson at the turn of the century.

There were no automobiles or trucks and roads, as we know them now, did not exist in Chester county at that time. Even Main Street of Henderson was mud and more mud in winter and inches deep in dust during the summer. There was no fire department and no water works or sewers. So far as I now

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<sup>22</sup> *From Indiana to Industry: Henderson Centennial Celebration*, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

recall there was no first class bath room in Henderson and lavatories were institutions for the back yard or garden. Around the Court House there was a brick walk. Also similar walks in front of the business houses. Near the business district there were three plank walks on one side of the streets. These plank walks extended to the end of most of the streets and while three planks in width the middle plank was missing...Even then Henderson, with its beautiful natural shade, was a pretty little town of about 1,000 people.

. . . . .

There was no bridge across the railroad then and the Woodward Hotel had not been built, but instead there was a frame building on that spot, used as a boarding house. Front Row was vacant. The four house block, one of which is now the home of the *Chester County Independent*, was an ugly hole in the ground, once the basement of a business house that had burned. The appearance of this block has been changed by the elevation of the street, which now slants upward toward the bridge instead of downward toward the railroad as then.

. . . . .

There was no Freed-Hardeman College and its beautiful dormitories then. Upon that spot stood the home of Captain Carroll. The present fine High School building was then the G. R. C. College, which had no dormitories. The out of town students boarded in private homes about town.<sup>24</sup>

Although farming has always been the number one economy of the area, Henderson's greatest contribution has been the training of young minds for one-hundred and seven years, beginning with the establishment of the Henderson Masonic and Female Institution in 1869 by A. S. Sayle and Helen Post. Located in a small frame dwelling where Freed-Hardeman's Hall-Roland Hall now stands,<sup>25</sup> the school continued for sixteen years and

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Emmons, "Church Split 40 Years Ago Effected City," *The Chester County Independent* (May 7, 1943).

<sup>25</sup> *Henderson Centennial*.

achieved an enviable reputation. In 1885, however, the Board of Trustees declared it impossible to continue operation. At this point several members of the Christian Church in Henderson, led by I. J. Galbraith, bought the property, changed the name of the school to the West Tennessee Christian College, and appointed J. B. Inman president.<sup>26</sup>

The following notice appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* of September 16, 1885:

West Tennessee Christian College

We would call the attention of our brethren to this school. We would not be understood to advocate many church schools, but there does seem to be a necessity among our brethren in some localities. West Tennessee and Mississippi constitute just such a locality as this. Our brethren will educate their children. Then the question arises, what shall be the character of the influence under which I shall place them? Who shall teach my sons and daughters? Who shall make the religious impressions upon their minds? Shall I give my money and influence to build up institutions whose course I do not fully endorse, and where the Bible is not the *only* standard of faith and practice? These, with many others of like import, present themselves for our consideration.

Henderson is a beautiful town of about one thousand inhabitants, situated on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. It is very healthy. It is a live business place. There is no saloon in it; not a drunkard made here since whiskey was removed (six years ago). Splendid churches and Sunday schools, good congregations of brethren, who have a fine Sunday school. Rent cheap, board cheap, provisions cheap, altogether make Henderson a desirable place to educate the young people of our country. We know of no better place for our brethren to move to or send their children, where they have three or four children to educate.

Some of the teachers have been connected with the school here for several years. We are not yet

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<sup>26</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 181.

prepared to teach Hebrew, but will make arrangements for that department as soon as we can.

We ask a careful consideration of the advantages offered here, before sending elsewhere.

For further information address

J. B. Inman  
Henderson, Tenn.,  
Box 141<sup>27</sup>

The following year, B. W. Lauderdale sent in this commendation of the school.

I desire to say a word in behalf of this college...This is an old institution. This is the sixteenth year of its existence. It has no reason to be ashamed of its record. Last year it was captured by the enterprising brotherhood of Henderson, and placed under the management of those now controlling it.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1889 was a significant date in the history of the Christian colleges in Henderson, for in that year J. B. Inman, the president of the West Tennessee Christian College, died and was succeeded by G. A. Lewellen (Master of Arts, University of Kentucky); this year also marks the date that A. G. Freed came to Tennessee to devote his efforts to Christian education.

Arvy Glenn Freed was born August 3, 1863 to Joseph and Eliza Hayes Freed at Saltillo, Indiana. He received his basic education in the public schools of Indiana before graduating with honors from Valparaiso University. After graduating, and while laboring in Mitchell, Indiana, he read a notice in the *Gospel Advocate* by David Nelms of Essary Springs,

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<sup>27</sup> J. B. Inman, "West Tennessee Christian College," *Gospel Advocate* (September 16, 1885).

<sup>28</sup> B. W. Lauderdale, "West Tennessee Christian College," *Gospel Advocate* (July 14, 1886).

Tennessee, who was advertising for a teacher;<sup>29</sup> Freed answered the advertisement and began the 1889 school year as president of the Southern Tennessee Normal and Business Institute.

The school catalogue for the 1909-1910 session gives this brief history of the origin of the school:

In 1887 D. S. Nelms determined to put in operation a scheme held in mind for ten years; namely, to establish a school of high grade at Essary Springs, Tennessee, which place is near the scene of his birth.

At this time there was no Normal School of any note west of the Tennessee River. It was, indeed, a Herculean task, to found a school amid so many difficulties, such as a sparsely settled neighborhood, no school building, an almost unbroken forest, and the people in the vicinity at a low ebb of interest both spiritually and mentally. However imbued with the spirit of education, and not being prepared to carry out his plan alone, Mr. Nelms went to work to get the cooperation of the citizens - in which he was successful.

In 1888 a stock company was organized, a large, commodious school building erected, the services of a Normal teacher was secured and on July 8th, 1889, the first session of the Southern Tennessee Normal College was opened, A. G. Freed, of Saltilloville, Ind., as president and D. S. Nelms assistant.

Eighty-three pupils were enrolled the first session; seventeen of them were boarders. The patron age increased rapidly and the prosperity of the school went beyond the expectation of all.<sup>30</sup>

At Henderson, meanwhile, the West Tennessee Christian College suffered a serious setback in 1893 when G. A. Lewellan resigned as

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<sup>29</sup> James Marvin Powell and Mary Nelle Hardeman Powers, *N.B.H.: A Biography of Nicholas Brodie Hardeman* (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1964), p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> *Catalogue, Southern Tennessee Normal and Business Institute, 1909-1910.*

president, along with H. G. Thomas, vice-president, and R. P. Meeks, head of the Bible department.<sup>31</sup> The school continued its operation, however, and in 1895 it secured A. G. Freed to be its president.

Freed had been serving as president for two years when, in 1897, the name of the college was changed to the Georgie Robertson Christian College, to honor the late daughter of J. F. Robertson, of Crockett Mills, Tennessee. Robertson, who was a member of the Advisory Board of the college since the 1891-1892 session (at least)<sup>32</sup> donated \$5,000 to the college to enable it to build a new building, with the understanding that the name of the school would be changed to honor his daughter. This building still stands today, and is known as the Milan-Sitka Building on the campus of Freed-Hardeman College.<sup>33</sup>

The Georgie Robertson Christian College continued to grow and prosper. A major addition was made to the faculty for the 1902-1903 session when Ernest C. McDougale was appointed co-president with Freed.<sup>34</sup> The school was under the administration of these two men when the schism at Henderson occurred; as we shall see, both of them played a major role in it.

It is also interesting to note, as a historical sidelight, that there was still *another* college in Henderson during this era that belonged to the Methodist denomination. Ephraim Newton Tabler, the father of N. B.

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<sup>31</sup> West, *Search*, Vol. 2, p. 361.

<sup>32</sup> Powell, *N.B.H.*, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup> Years later, N. B. Hardeman, who was serving his first year as an instructor in the college, would recall that "in the summer of 1897, the bricks for the building were locally made, and the edifice completed, without a drop of rain having fallen on the project." *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Catalogue*, Georgie Robertson Christian College, 1902-1903.

Hardeman's first wife and a respected citizen of Henderson, kept a journal during the years 1893-1896. He made the following entry under the date of September 3, 1894.

Both schools - Methodist and Christian - commenced today, with 70 students at Christian College and about 35 or 40 at Methodist College. There will be 6 months free school.<sup>35</sup>

There is also a casual reference made to a Methodist college in an article written by Walter Emmons, which appeared in the *Chester County Independent* of May 7, 1943. There he states that "when we arrived in Henderson in 1902, and for some years to follow, there was no Publicly owned school building and the city school was taught alternately in the Methodist College on North Church Street and the G. R. C. building."<sup>36</sup>

These references to a Methodist college are somewhat of a puzzle, for the histories of the period are silent concerning the presence of this school in Henderson. The answer may be that the college was not really a college, but rather a preparatory school for non-boarding students. There is also, however, an alternate explanation. We do know that there was a Methodist college in nearby Montezuma, known as the Montezuma Male and Female Academy; this school operated before the Civil War, at the time when there was not a Henderson or even a Chester County. When the Gulf and Ohio Railroad laid their tracks through Dayton, however, and still later when Henderson was made the county seat of Chester County, the hamlet of Montezuma began to ebb. Seeing this, the Methodist Conference

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<sup>35</sup> Powell, *N.B.H.*, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Emmons, "Church Split," *Independent* (May 7, 1943). This article is reproduced in Appendix A.

ceased the operation of the school.<sup>37</sup> Some speculate that a part of this school moved to Henderson and continued for several years before ceasing its operation entirely.<sup>38</sup>

#### EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DIVISION

The schools in Henderson have maintained a very close relationship with the church since 1885, when several members of the Christian Church took over the operation of the Henderson Masonic and Female Institution. As we research the controversy that shrouds the division, it is imperative that we keep this close relationship in mind.

As we have previously observed, the digressive element of the brotherhood had been in control of *both* the schools and the church in Henderson for many years prior to the schism; however, at least in regard to the church, this was not always the case.

The church at Henderson actually began in the relatively obscure village of Jacks Creek, Tennessee, which is located about seven miles east of Henderson. In the year 1871, an evangelist, R. B. Trimble of Mayfield, Kentucky, held a gospel meeting there and succeeded in converting an undetermined number of citizens; one of them was I. J. Galbraith, who was later instrumental in founding the West Tennessee Christian College.<sup>39</sup>

Several years later, in 1883, the congregation moved to Henderson; there, they built a nice, white-framed building on a knoll near the center

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<sup>37</sup> S. E. Reid, *A Brief History of Chester County, Tennessee* (Jackson, TN: Long-Johnson Publishing Company, n.d.).

<sup>38</sup> Interview with C. P. Roland, April 25, 1975.

<sup>39</sup> Powell, *N. B. H.*, p. 130.



of town at a cost of \$1500.<sup>40</sup> Over the doorway was painted the date 1871, the year in which the congregation had its beginning. J. B. Inman was chosen to be the first minister of the congregation.<sup>41</sup>

As the congregation grew and prospered, there was a drastic change in its worship.

Knowles Shaw, eminent evangelist and musician, came for a meeting and brought with him that innovation – an organ in the worship. The organ left with him – and he went on to an appointment in Texas. On his way to that engagement, the train he was riding had a wreck at McKinney, Texas, and Shaw was killed – the only casualty. Perhaps that tragic circumstance mellowed the hearts of the Henderson congregation toward him, for the organ was brought back in, though stoutly resisted and hotly debated for years. One leading woman of the congregation announced that "When that organ goes out, I'll go a straddle of it." So an uneasy quiet prevailed for several years.<sup>42</sup>

The date of these developments cannot be ascertained precisely. J. M. Powell, in his biography of N. B. Hardeman, states that the date was either 1874 or 1875; however, this is either a typographical error or he is mistaken, for Knowles Shaw did not die until 1878. It is probable that his meeting with the Henderson congregation occurred in this year.<sup>43</sup>

The organ was not the only innovation that had been brought into the Henderson congregation; they also worked through the state missionary society. As one reads the journal of E. N. Tabler –recorded in Powell's

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<sup>40</sup> This building stood where the Student Services Building of Freed-Hardeman College now stands. It was torn down in the middle 1960s.

<sup>41</sup> Powell, *N.B.H.*, p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131-132.

<sup>43</sup> H. Leo Boles, *Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers* (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1932), p. 265.

biography, *N. B. H.* – he also notices several other questionable actions of the church, namely:

[1] On December 25, 1893, the "Christian Church was decorated, the words 'Peace on earth good will to men' being done in evergreens over the pulpit."<sup>44</sup>

[2] A second indication of the perspective of the church is seen in its relationship with A. I. Myhr, the State Evangelist for the Tennessee Missionary Society. Myhr preached at the Henderson congregation on at least two occasions – January 31, 1894 and February 1, 1894. By the time that A. G. Freed arrived in Henderson (1895), the congregation was unquestionably in the hands of the digressives, and had been so for several years.<sup>45</sup>

Since there was such a close relationship between the church and the schools, it should not be surprising to find that the schools also belonged in the digressive camp.

One of the very first indications of these digressive tendencies involves the resignation of G. A. Llewellyn from the presidency of the West Tennessee Christian College in 1893. E. N. Tabler gives this insight into the reason behind the resignation:

August 27, 1893. Went to hear Bro. G. A. Llewellyn preach his farewell sermon to Henderson. He has been President of W. T. Christian College 3 or 4 years and goes now to Collierville, near Memphis, to be pastor (whatever that may mean) for the church in that town.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Powell, *N. B. H.*, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

Llewellyn, however, was not the first digressive president of the Christian college. His predecessor, J. B. Inman, was one of the first four life members of the Tennessee state missionary society.<sup>47</sup> It should also be remembered that Inman was minister of the congregation when it moved to Henderson in 1883 from Jacks Creek.

There are many other indications that point out the digressive tendencies of the West Tennessee Christian College and the Georgie Robertson Christian College. Both of these schools had a close association with A. I. Myhr, the State Evangelist for the society; in fact, Myhr preached the commencement exercise for the West Tennessee Christian College in 1893.<sup>48</sup> Also in 1893 the W.T.C.C. sponsored a lectureship; although David Lipscomb, the conservative (some would contend that, if anything, he was ultra-conservative) editor of the *Gospel Advocate* was on the program, the other featured speakers were all zealous supporters of the instrument and of the society: J. B. Briney, R. Lin Cave, J. H. Garrison, A. I. Myhr, and S. B. Moore.<sup>49</sup>

J. F. Robertson, the wealthy donor of Crockett Mills who was instrumental in changing the name of the college to honor his late daughter, was on the college advisory board in 1891. By 1902 he was President of the Board of Trustees.<sup>50</sup> It is significant to note that in 1911 he pledged \$600 a month to the state missionary society to support an evangelist.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 175.

<sup>48</sup> Powell, *N. B. H.*, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 116.

<sup>50</sup> *Catalogue*, G.R.C.C., 1902-1903.

<sup>51</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 229.

There can be no better indication where the college in Henderson stood on the issues than the fact that in 1905, after Freed had resigned as president, the property was deeded to the Tennessee Christian Missionary Convention.<sup>52</sup>

Because of these and other practices by 1903 the conservative segment of the Restoration Movement had lost their confidence in the Georgie Robertson Christian College. The following statement by J. D. Tant makes this sentiment clear.

At one time we had at Henderson, Tenn., a Christian school that sent its students into all parts of this country, filling their mission and teaching the gospel of Christ. But innovators captured this school and turned it into sectarian channels...<sup>53</sup>

In truth, the brotherhood had no reason to have any confidence in the G.R.C.C. By 1903, the school even advertised itself as being nonsectarian and undenominational. The following statement is taken from the 1902-1903 catalogue:

Our students are from all denominations and those of no religious profession. All students are left perfectly free to attend Sunday school and church where they please. They are free to think, choose, and act religiously as they wish. Moral restraints are thrown around all, religious intolerance around none.

Our methods could not be *Normal* and *Sectarian* at the same time.<sup>54</sup>

Even while the church and the schools were being controlled by the digressives, however, there was a growing opposition to these unscriptural

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 216.

<sup>53</sup> J. D. Tant, "Freed and Hardeman," *The Gospel Advocate* (April 9, 1908).

<sup>54</sup> *Catalogue*, G.R.C.C., 1902-1903.

practices. So far as we know, E. N. Tabler was the first, and perhaps for a while, the only one to register his disapproval of the innovations in Henderson. Notice his statement in his journal under the date of February 1, 1894: "Bro. Myhr [A. I. Myhr, the State Evangelist for the Tennessee Missionary Convention] preached at Christian Church, I suppose by appointment. *I did not go.*"<sup>55</sup> [Emphasis His]

Tabler soon received welcomed support upon the arrival of A. G. Freed in 1895. Freed was then a young man of thirty-four, and had already established for himself an enviable reputation both as an educator and as a preacher of the gospel. It was the opinion of several of his contemporaries that he was unsurpassed in the field of polemics. G. A. Dunn, who heard him debate I. N. Penick, declared:

I have heard many of our very best debaters, and I think that Brother Freed is not to be placed anywhere but with the very best. He is earnest, strong, polite, and keeps himself under control.<sup>56</sup>

Years later, Freed debated Ben M. Bogard in Nashville during the winter of 1926-1927.<sup>57</sup> Following this debate, Bogard remarked to E. R. Harper that Freed was the "most contrary white man I know."<sup>58</sup>

Although Freed was known to oppose all innovations in worship, it disturbed many of his brethren because he worked and worshiped with the Digressive congregation in, what appeared to be, complete harmony.

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<sup>55</sup> Powell, *N. B. H.*, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> G. A. Dunn, "Freed-Pennick Debate," *The Gospel Advocate* (April 9, 1908).

<sup>57</sup> Yater Tant, *J. D. Tant: Texas Preacher* (Athens, AL: The C.E.I. Publishing Company, 1958), p. 239.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with E. R. Harper, February 6, 1975.

Because of this, it was not long before he was called upon to defend himself against a charge of inconsistency.

In the January 1, 1903 issue of the *Gospel Advocate*, "A Brother" proposed the following questions to A. G. Freed, E. C. McDougale, John R. Williams, and others:

Will Brother Freed please answer this question: Is it right for a preacher to go among the churches over the country, known to oppose societies, etc. and make the impression that he is wholly opposed to the use of the organ and all other things in the church not authorized by the word of God, and also assist in sending out other preachers to do the same, and then go back home and meet regularly with a church that uses these things, and not raise his voice against them?<sup>59</sup>

This charge, evidently written by a Brother Derryberry,<sup>60</sup> was obviously written to pressure A. G. Freed into making a firm stand either with the digressive church, or against it.

It is our contention that A. G. Freed and E. C. McDougale, co-president with Freed of the G.R.C.C., should not be considered in the same light. Freed had deep convictions that would not allow him to accept the innovations; McDougale had no such convictions. When the break finally came, Freed took his stand with those who were opposed to the organ and to the missionary society; McDougale not only remained behind with the digressive congregation, but was employed by them to preach once a month.

Brother Ernest McDougale, co-principal of the school with Brother Freed, stood firm for instrumental music and missionary societies, using the usual subterfuge that they are only expedients and helps, and as such are in the same category with railroads, houses of worship, hymn books, religious literature, etc. He talks about

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<sup>59</sup> A Brother, "Questions for Brother E. C. McDougale, Brother A. G. Freed, and Others," *The Gospel Advocate* (January 1, 1903).

<sup>60</sup> A. G. Freed, "Question," *The Gospel Advocate* (January 29, 1903).

interpreting the Bible in the light of our present civilization. He rejoices in 'broadness' and 'our liberty in Christ.' He has been employed to preach monthly for the digressive church.<sup>61</sup>

In the weeks that followed the charge against Freed by Derryberry there was a rush of articles sent in to defend him. In the issue of January 29, 1903, John R. Williams stated:

As to Brother Freed, one of the presidents of the college, and Brother N. B. Hardeman, one of the teachers, I am personally acquainted with both of them, have heard them express themselves publicly and privately, and know they are opposed to these things, notwithstanding the fact that they have not removed them from the congregation at Henderson nor withdrawn from it. Brother Freed has laid his plans before me and convinced me of the course he would follow; and right here I will state that in a very short time it may be seen what that course was to be."<sup>62</sup>

A. G. Freed's problem was a dilemma that has plagued other great men in our brotherhood, such as David Lipscomb, Tolbert Fanning, and J. W. McGarvey. When one is associated with an institution, whether it be a college, church, or whatever, which has fallen into error and apostasy, does one immediately voice his disapproval and withdraw from it, or does he remain with it and try to lead it back to a solid foundation? It is a problem that has no easy solution.

It seems certain that Freed chose to remain with the Henderson congregation only to lead it out of her error. It also appears certain that when he finally realized that the church was not going to expel the instrument or the society machinery, he did not hesitate to withdraw himself from it. This is the conviction expressed by G. Dallas Smith:

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<sup>61</sup> E. A. Elam, "A Meeting At Henderson, Tenn.", *The Gospel Advocate* (February 5, 1903).

<sup>62</sup> John R. Williams, "Notes From West Tennessee," *The Gospel Advocate* (January 29, 1903).

During the past few years there has been a good deal of complaint against Brother A. G. Freed by well-meaning brethren who did not understand the man or the circumstances under which he labored. Many knew that the organ was in the church at Henderson Tenn., and, without knowing Brother Freed's attitude toward it, condemned him as being unsound in the faith. I do not propose to say that the course that Brother Freed has pursued at Henderson is the wisest. It remains for the future to reveal the proper course to be pursued when the organ is thrust in, though most of us think we know just how to handle it. I have often doubted the propriety of Brother Freed's course and have so expressed myself to him and others, but I have never for a moment doubted his soundness in the faith. Brother Freed's idea was to educate them out of it, and his influence in that direction has been wonderful, as is shown in the number who have taken their stand with him recently. Whether this was the wiser course or not, I am sure that none of us know; but there is no doubt in my mind that Brother Freed thought it was.

It has been my pleasure to hear Brother Freed preach many sermons at different places, including the church at Henderson, and from first to last I have never heard a word fall from his lips which could be construed in any way to favor the organ or other innovations. In private conversation, also, his speech is sound. At Bardwell, Ky., last April, during the Freed-Hall debate, Brother Freed was dining at the table of a "progressive" sister, who asked him, if the organ should be put in the church where he worshiped, whether he would go on and say nothing about it which would cause a disturbance. He answered: "No, not for my head."

But this is not all. "By their fruits ye shall know them." When Brother Freed went to Henderson, if I am not mistaken, Brother N. B. Hardeman, who is now one of the very best preachers in West Tennessee, was working and worshiping in full fellowship with the progressive for he had never known anything else. Now he is a great power in contending for "the old Book," without addition or subtraction. Why did he change? Brother Freed simply taught him out of it. Brother L. L. Brigrance, another one of our splendid preachers, told me that he was not opposed to the organ in the worship when he entered the Georgie Robertson Christian College, about eighteen months ago. Now he is earnestly contending for the faith unmixed



with any sort of human inventions. Brother L. C. Austin, who has been Musical Director in this college for the past two years, told me that he was not opposed to the organ when he entered the school. He soon learned that it was wrong and refused to lead the songs when the organ was being played. When we take into consideration the fact that the organ was in the church all the time and that these brethren were under the influence of those who favored the organ, we are forced to the conclusion that they have been subjected to some mighty counteracting influence. This influence came through the teaching of Brother Freed in the Bible class and in the pulpit.

This communication is submitted in the interest of the truth.<sup>63</sup>

Several years ago in Rialto (Tipton County), Tennessee, lived a former student of Freed's at the old G.R.C.C. He often went by Freed's lovely home to court the girls that were boarding there. On one occasion he asked Freed why he stayed with "that bunch that uses the organ." Freed replied, in words that J. B. Scott would never forget and would tell many times in the passing years, "I'll worship with a billy goat if I can teach him out of his error."<sup>64</sup>

It appears that by 1903, however, Freed had recognized the futility of restoring the Henderson congregation to its purity. In a letter to E. A. Elam, in November of 1902, he declared that the approaching gospel meeting would be "our final effort to teach the brethren the necessity of taking the Bible alone."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> G. Dallas Smith, "A Statement Concerning Brother Freed," *The Gospel Advocate* (March 12, 1903).

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Max R. Miller, April 18, 1975. Miller was the minister of the Covington, Tennessee church where J. B. Scott attended in the 1960s.

<sup>65</sup> Elam, "A Meeting," *The Gospel Advocate* (February 5, 1903).

Tabler and Freed were assisted in their reforming actions by A. M. St. John, a businessman who moved to Henderson from Viola, Tennessee (near McMinnville), in about the year 1902. It was St. John who wrote a letter to E. A. Elam, requesting him to hold a gospel meeting.<sup>66</sup> Elam came, held the meeting, and, as a result, the division occurred.

#### THE DIVISION

Upon receiving the letter from St. John, Elam advised him to meet with the elders and other leading members of the church to plan the details of the meeting; he sent word by return mail that "I can begin the meeting on the second Sunday in December, the Lord willing."<sup>67</sup>

E. A. Elam was born at Fosterville, Tennessee, on March 7, 1885.<sup>68</sup> A man of deep piety and filled with fervor in the Lord's kingdom, he was the front-page editor of the *Gospel Advocate* in 1903. Elam was certainly no stranger to Henderson, for he had visited here as early as 1886. In the *Advocate* of July 14, 1886, he stated:

I had the pleasure of visiting the congregation, and also Bro. Inman's school at this place. This is one of the best congregations in that section. Bro. Inman is principal of West Tennessee Christian College and has encouraging prospects to establish a good school. One very interesting necessary feature of this college is, the Bible is daily taught the pupils. Professors Hayes and Denton, for six or eight years teachers in Burritt College, will be in the faculty with Bro. Inman for the next fall term. West Tennessee Christian College should be congratulated on the accession of these gentlemen to her faculty. We were schoolmates and classmates in Burritt, and "the

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> F. D. Srygley, *Biographies And Sermons* (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1961), p. 338.

boys" were good students, and we know their records as teachers since. The brethren in West Tennessee should patronize this college.<sup>69</sup>

Upon his arrival in Henderson and on his way to the building to begin the meeting, Elam was met by a committee of five men, led by R. P. Meeks. Meeks was an influential figure in Henderson around the turn of the century; he often preached for the Henderson congregation, had baptized N. B. Hardeman, and was listed in the W.T.C.C. catalogue of 1891-1892 as the principal of the Bible Department and a member of the executive board of the college.<sup>70</sup>

The committee asked Elam if he had received a letter from the "officers" of the church, requesting that he not come to hold the meeting; Elam replied that he had not received this letter. The committee promptly informed Elam that there would be no meeting, due to the inclement weather and the fact that the Henderson congregation had just concluded a highly successful meeting. However, when Elam asked them if the real reason was because they were afraid that he might preach against the innovations, they replied that this was correct.

Brother Meeks stated that he had never heard me preach, had often wished to have the privilege of hearing me through a series of sermons, but, judging from some of my articles in the Gospel Advocate, he was afraid that I would stir us strife.<sup>71</sup>

Meeks and the others asked Elam to speak that morning and for the night services, if he would refrain from condemning the innovations. Elam replied, however, "I cannot agree to go into the pulpit for a moment with

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<sup>69</sup> E. A. Elam, "West Tennessee Notes," *The Gospel Advocate* (July 14, 1886).

<sup>70</sup> Powell, *N. B. H.*, p. 104.

<sup>71</sup> Elam, "A Meeting," *The Gospel Advocate* (February 5, 1903).

my mouth closed against anything that I believe the Bible forbids."<sup>72</sup> Upon this note of disagreement, the conference ended.

A point which came in for much discussion in the subsequent issues of the *Gospel Advocate* was the fact that only one of the committee who met Elam was an elder; after the conference adjourned, he went home.<sup>73</sup> The events that happened next were not overseen by the elders of the church, but by a few of the members, led by R. P. Meeks.<sup>74</sup>

E. A. Elam was refused the use of the Henderson meetinghouse for the revival. Nevertheless, due to the insistence of several members of the congregation who desired to hear the issues discussed, the Baptist meeting house was made available to them (located only a few yards down the street, where Patterson's Food Market now stands). From this bitter beginning, a congregation of about seventy-five members was established.<sup>75</sup> In about a year, however, they doubled their number.<sup>76</sup>

Although there were several attempts made to reconcile the differences, the congregations remained separate and independent (See Appendix A); they have remained this way until the present date.

#### RESULTS OF THE DIVISION

The division immediately gave rise to other events which were designed to reconcile the differences but which, instead, caused the two bodies to drift farther apart. The first of these was a

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>75</sup> Elam, "A Meeting," *The Gospel Advocate* (February 5, 1903).

<sup>76</sup> Norton, *Tennessee Christians*, p. 215.

"Bible Institute," sponsored by the digressive church.

The Christian Church, seeking to prevent an unnecessary loss of members, and, at the same time, hoping to check the opposition, invited Myhr to hold a 'Bible Institute,' which was essentially a series of lectures defending both missionary enterprises and the use of music in worship. R. M. Giddens, then minister of Paris, and W. J. Shelburne, minister of Union City, assisted Myhr in conducting the Institute.<sup>77</sup>

The second event which followed the division was the bitter Stark-Warlick debate, which was held in November of 1903. The debate had little effect, if any, toward encouraging reconciliation.

The division, in a very real sense, also spelled the doom for the Georgie Robertson Christian College. As we have seen previously, Freed and McDougale, the co-presidents of the college, fell out of fellowship over the use of the organ and the missionary society; it would be only natural for them to have a strained relationship as they sought to guide the school, which was firmly in the camp of the digressives.

The two men shared uneasily administrative responsibilities. Freed, and N. B. Hardeman, a faculty member, traveled extensively throughout West Tennessee, and at every opportunity made addresses setting forth their theological views. McDougale traveled just as widely advancing his own religious ideas. The men caused agitation both on and off campus.<sup>78</sup>

The break finally came in 1905. A. G. Freed resigned and left for Texas. N. B. Hardeman also resigned and became superintendent of the Chester County schools. McDougale, and the other digressives, ecstatic over the fact that they were in sole possession of the school, soon realized, to their embarrassment, that they could not operate it! The

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215.

school died in 1907, only one year before Freed and Hardeman returned to build their National Teacher's Normal and Business College.

The Christian Church in Henderson remains to this day weak and anemic; they have no college in the town they once controlled. It is our conviction that this outcome is a true picture of all individuals and institutions that digress and fall into apostasy. We do not grow and prosper when we leave the law of God behind, but when we keep it ever within us.

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## APPENDIX A

CHURCH SPLIT 40 YEARS AGO EFFECTED CITY

Walter Emmons

City Acquired Modern High School

And Larger College As Result, Says Emmons

[Opinions expressed by writer are his own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this paper.]

When we arrived in Henderson, December, 1902 there were but three churches: Methodist, Baptist, and Christian. The Christian Church split in January, 1903.

It is not my purpose herein to accuse or defend either side in this controversy, but to state some facts, as I remember them, and to point out the far-reaching effects this affair had upon the subsequent history of Henderson.

It had been a known fact for a long time that there were a large number of the members of this church who were opposed to instrumental music in church worship, however, the common interest in the success of the G. R. C. College had held friction to a minimum. In December, 1902, some of the members invited Elder E. A. Elam of Nashville to hold a meeting. He accepted and came to Henderson in January, 1903, to start the meeting. Two of the church elders asked Elder Elam to refrain from mentioning instrumental music in the worship or from discussing missionary methods. These were the subjects about which there were differences in opinion.

The elders of the local church explained to Elder Elam that their request was made for the sake of harmony and for the interest of the college.



Elder Elam's answer was that he could not conscientiously occupy a pulpit with his tongue clothed with respect to any subject or matter which he considered a Bible question or Christian function. It was the match that "touched off the keg."

Sunday came, and following the usual Sunday School, with Elder Elam present, Elder A. G. Freed arose, explained what had happened and announced that Elder Elam would hold a series of meetings at the Baptist Church, beginning that evening. Thus the church split to begin a series of events that were to lead to revolutionary changes in the school situation in Henderson and Chester County.

Elder Elam preached for two or three weeks with no more than casual mention of the subjects of difference, but notwithstanding this and regrettably, as in most such cases, associations were broken, charges and counter charges were made, bitterness engendered, and friendships sacrificed.

A new congregation was organized as also was a Sunday School, which met and worshipped at the Court House until a new church edifice was erected on Crook Avenue.

Many thought that with the departure of Elder Elam a reunion would be affected because of the interest of the college. Some even called the move a bluff. I am sure that there were several who desired a reunion.

One of these, to my knowledge, was W. H. (Bud) Pratt, of the old congregation. His efforts for a reunion were principally among his own brethren. He argued for a reunion upon any basis satisfactory to the offended brethren.

I shall not forget some other things he said to me, and I quote him in substance as follows: "I see no harm in music in the church, but I can worship just as well without it, but at least some of those other fellows are conscientiously against it and if I believed as they do, I would not worship in a church with it either."

The churches remained separate but the college, from all outside appearances, seemed to progress and prosper admirably.

Finally, a break in the faculty came. President Freed went to Texas and Prof. Hardeman took charge of the Henderson City School. The G. R. C. continued under the leadership of Prof. E. C. McDougal as president, and Prof. C. B. Ijams as vice president.

After two or three years, Prof. Freed returned to Henderson and the new college building was erected and it was named the National Teachers Normal and Business College (changed to Freed-Hardeman College in 1919).

When we arrived in Henderson in 1902, and for some years to follow, there was no publicly owned school building and the city school was taught alternately in the Methodist College on North Church Street and the G. R. C. building.

This was unsatisfactory and resulted in continuous friction and dissention. Finally, the Methodist Conference deeded its building to the city (I do not remember the consideration, if any.)

As time came for the National Teachers Normal to open the G. R. C. decided to suspend operation and the city and county acquired its splendid building and campus and established the present Chester County High School.

Thus from regrettable and lamentable religious turmoil and yet through a creditable public spiritedness, Henderson and Chester County has a public and high school second to none and a college, both of which deserves and I am sure has the support, of the town and county and begrudged by no one on the outside.

I also most sincerely hope that the bitterness and unpleasantness connected with the events here related has forever subsided.

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*Chester County Independent*  
Friday, May 7, 1943

## APPENDIX B

In the months following the division at Henderson, there was an unusual number of articles published in the *Gospel Advocate* concerning the split. No doubt this was because the brotherhood recognized Henderson as being the focal point in West Tennessee, and because E. A. Elam, who held the gospel meeting which resulted in the division, was the front-page editor of the *Advocate*.

The following article, which appeared in the February 5, 1903 issue of the *Advocate*, is reproduced here because of its historical importance as a first-hand view, and because of its copious coverage of the events leading up to and following the division.

### A MEETING AT HENDERSON, TENN.

E. A. Elam

The Invitation. — In November of last year Brother A. M. St. John, of Henderson, Tenn. wrote to know if I could hold a meeting at that place in the near future, stating that the church there had recently had a fine meeting in the way of gathering members, and many now thought it advisable to follow up that meeting with another, whose principal purpose should be to emphasize the importance and beauty of Christian living; and that, while the church used instrumental music in worship, and worked through the missionary conventions, he thought the time had come when the members desired a full and dispassionate investigation of these questions in the light of the Bible. To that letter I replied as follows:

I just received your kind letter today, and hasten to reply. I appreciate all you say as well as hearing from you. I would suggest, if you have not done so, that you get the elders especially and other leading members of the

church and tell them that you have written to know if I could hold your meeting, and that the elders and church extend the invitation. If the church desires it, then I can begin the meeting on the second Sunday in December, the Lord willing. Let the church or elders know that I will contend for nothing but the gospel and New Testament worship.

Hurriedly and fraternally  
E. A. Elam

P.S. If the church will not agree for some man to go and present these questions, then you can see still more clearly what course to pursue. Please let me know at once.

In reply to this I received letters from Brethren Freed and St. John. Not thinking these letters of any further use, I made no effort to preserve them. However, I happen to find the one from Brother Freed. It is as follows:

Brother St. John handed me your reply to his letter. We had a meeting of a few of the brethren interested. It was the opinion of most of them that after the holidays would be the best time for our meeting. I am sure of this. We do not want to make a mistake in this, as we intend to make it our final effort to teach the brethren the necessity of taking the Bible alone.

Faithfully,  
A. G. Freed

Besides, Brother Freed makes the following statement:

In a meeting of several of the good members of the church here the propriety of a series of meetings was discussed, the principal object to be to teach Christians their duty. As the use of the organ in worship and the work of societies have been preached and practiced here, all thought it just and fair that the other side be heard. Brother Elam was selected as a suitable man to conduct the teaching. Many of the students of the college and all of our Bible class expressed an earnest desire to hear him in just such a series. I heartily concurred, and gave Brother Elam a cordial invitation to come among us. To our surprise,

the church house was refused him. It was demonstrated forcibly to honest, earnest hearts that the advocates of instrumental music in worship and man-made societies for spreading the gospel realized the weakness of their position, and feared the light of the word of God. The Baptists were kind, and opened their house. No wonder sectarian brethren can pass "church federation" resolutions and cry, "The day of debates is over!" and say: "Let us alone!" I give this simple statement that the public may know that Brother Elam came into our town through an earnest solicitation of the brethren here.

A. G. Freed

Brother Freed says that he has held four or five meetings for the church, and the last meeting was held by Brother McDougale; but in none of these meetings was this "red-tape" business resorted to, but the brethren most interested in the church went to work and had a meeting; also, when the corresponding secretary of the convention deems best, he drops around, without a "red-tape" invitation or when none or but a few are expecting him, and preaches, "none daring to molest or make him afraid." The church once had three elders. One removed to some other town; one is old, lives five or six miles in the country, and gets to church only once or twice during the year; and the other lives two or three miles in the country and attends church very irregularly, averaging once or twice in about three months. With the above facts before him, and knowing Brother St. John as an earnest, Christian gentleman, and Brother Freed as the principal teacher who built up the school there to its present condition of four hundred or five hundred pupils enrolled, and his standing as a faithful preacher of the gospel, would not any ordinary preacher think that this was a sufficient invitation to hold a meeting for any ordinary congregation? In the Nashville Bible School and before the church there pertaining to the

work of the church and the worship of God have been discussed – such as “Ordination,” by Brethren Brents, Butler, and Harding, on the one side, and by Brethren Lipscomb, Sewell, and Kurfees, on the other side: “The Right of Christians to Vote and to Hold Office,” by Brethren G. G. Taylor and D. Lipscomb; and Brother Minton was requested by Brother Harding and others to discuss there “The Scripturalness of Missionary Societies.” So I thought the church at Henderson desired to hear discussed, among other things, “The Scriptural Work and Worship of the Church;” and I anticipated a pleasant and profitable meeting (and we had it).

A Committee. – The second Sunday in January was set for the time to begin the meeting; and when it arrived, I was on the ground. On my way to church on Sunday morning, I was met by a committee of five gentlemen – led by one good brother, R. P. Meeks – who turned me aside into the college building for a conference, the developments of which were as follows: (1) The first question asked me was as to who invited me to hold a meeting at Henderson. My answer was the explanation above. (2) I was asked if I did not receive a letter from the officers of the church stating that the church did not need a meeting at this time, since it had lately had a good meeting, to which I responded: “No.” (3) It was thought strange that I had not received the letter; I insisted, however, that I had not. (4) I was asked what I would have done if I had received the letter. I said that I would not have come, but, for an explanation, would have referred the letter to those who invited me. (5) I then asked who wrote the letter. A brother said that he wrote it. “But,” I said, “I meant who are the authors of it?” The reply to this question was that the “officers” of the church

(mentioning several) were the authors. (6) I was then told that, whether I got the letter or not, the weather was bad, the roads were muddy, and the church had just enjoyed a good meeting which had not yet been "arranged for," and the "officers" had conferred and decided to have no further meeting now. (7) I said: "Now brethren, honest, do you not object to the meeting because you know that an effort will be made to show that instrumental music and missionary societies are not authorized by the word of God, and not for the reasons you have mentioned?" To this it was replied that it was for both reasons. Brother Meeks stated that he had never heard me preach, had often wished to have the privilege of hearing me through a series of sermons, but judging from some of my articles in the *Gospel Advocate*, he was afraid that I would stir up strife (the introduction of societies and instrumental music never stirs up strife; it is the opposition which always does such unchristian things!). (8) It was asked: "What about preaching on Sunday morning and at night, since he is here?" To this it was replied that if I intended to accentuate "these things" and thereby to "stir up strife," I would as well preach a month as one time. I then said: "While it was not my intention to refer to instrumental music and missionary societies today, yet since these have been made the test and the matter has assumed this shape, I cannot agree to remain silent, and most certainly shall have to refer to them. I cannot agree to go into the pulpit for a moment with my mouth closed against anything that I believe the Bible forbids. Now, brethren, I do not blame you for this action any more than I would blame any other denomination which does not want its denominational machinery and practice disturbed for shutting out Brother Meeks here or myself. I am



not shut out because I do not preach the gospel or because I preach more or less than the gospel, but because I refuse to remain silent about some things as all admit are neither part of the worship of God nor essential to the work of the church, and which, therefore, are not embraced in the gospel. 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' I most certainly oppose any man's disturbing a congregation by preaching more or less than the gospel, but not his preaching the gospel." (9) The conference adjourned *sine die*.

Preach, Anyhow, - Only one of the five who waited upon me is an elder; and when our conference had ended, "they say" he went home, not remaining for worship. Brother Meeks is not an "officer" at all, and the other three are deacons. There are other deacons, some of whom were in favor of the meeting, and all of whom were in favor of my preaching in the house. Some said, "Preach anyhow;" but I declined, for I do not preach where I am not wanted. Turned out of the synagogues, Paul went elsewhere.

The Letter. - The letter finally reached me. It was nameless, and as follows:

Henderson, Tenn., January 59 1903. - Elder E. A. Elam, Nashville, Tenn. - Dear Brother Elam. It is reported that you are to begin a protracted meeting at this place on next Lord's day. The church here has just closed a successful meeting, with about forty additions, and it is not the wish or the desire of the church to have another protracted meeting following so soon after our meeting which has recently closed.

Yours fraternally,  
OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH  
OF CHRIST. Henderson, Tn.

This letter is dated six days before the meeting was to begin. Then why did not these "officers" and Brother Meeks ascertain if this "report" was correct and who invited me, oppose the meeting to them, and write me accordingly, all signing their names? If I had received this letter before reaching Henderson. I could not have known who wrote it; however, I should not have gone before asking those who invited me for an explanation.

A Contrast. - As said in a preceding paragraph, Brother Meeks is not an "officer" at all, but came along with the committee because he had met me and had been "requested" to do so, and because he did not want to see any "strife stirred up" in the church. (The question of organ or no organ has long been a cause of strife in this church. - *Gazette-New Era*, Henderson, Tenn. Eh?) Brother Meeks believes in being "sweet spirited" in everything and hated very much indeed to have to do this, and he would not have done it under any consideration if it had not been his conscientious, Christian duty; for he remembers the kind treatment he received at my house, and hopes to return the hospitality, and I dined with him twice during the meeting. But this was necessary to keep down strife. He is the author of a book of good sermons published by the McQuiddy Printing Company and commended by different ones through the *Gospel Advocate*. Now, demonstrating how much he is opposed to "stirring up strife," he has traveled over the western portion, and most of the middle portion, of this State selling his book among the very churches which oppose instrumental music in the worship and the societies, for the very reason that these things do stir up strife and produce other troubles, and without mentioning the fact that he works through the society, has no objection to

instrumental music in the worship, and would not allow a man to preach in his own home congregation against these things. Of course, he would express his "private" opinion around the fireside if asked to do so (all these preachers who do not believe in "stirring up strife" by opposing these things express their private opinions at times.) He is "indifferent;" he can preach, enjoy the hospitality of good brethren, and sell his book as well where they have none of these things as where they are used. While I lived at Franklin, Tenn., last year; he wrote me a very kind letter, stating that he would like to become better acquainted with me and that he thought it would be a great pleasure and privilege to be with me in my own home, and desired me to make an appointment (he sent this appointment without an invitation) for him to preach there in the near future, on Sunday, and perhaps through the week, while he should work up an interest in his book; and he was so kind as to make me a present of a copy of his book in advance. While I knew of his previous connection with the missionary society, the appointment was made, a good word was spoken for the book, and he was written to come along. An appointment called me away; but he was entertained in my home, and the church received him kindly and heard him gladly. Now, I prefer that Brother Meeks and all others who favor these divisive things preach them from the stand, open and aboveboard, that the church may know who they are and what they are. I have never yet been asked to preach for a church using these things without first telling them what I understand the Bible to teach regarding them, and that I shall most certainly preach against them. This is just and fair; then no one is deceived in me or by me. Then if I am not wanted, I can go elsewhere. If, however, I can persuade the church to quit

such practices, good; if I cannot, then it can go on as usual. "But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." When Brother Meeks wants to go among churches opposed to the above mentioned things to preach or to sell his book, let him frankly and freely tell them that he works through the society, that he has no objection to instrumental music in the worship, and that when asked he will express his opinion "privately" if not publicly; and from this on let him state, also, that he helped to close the doors against a brother because that brother would not agree to remain silent concerning these things. This is fair and honorable. Then if the churches want him, let him go.

The Result. — Our Baptist friends kindly granted the use of their house, and preaching was announced for 2:30 P.M. and 6:30 P.M. on that Lord's day and services every evening during the week; and there were three services on the next Lord's day and services every evening during the week; and there were three services on the next Lord's day, when the meeting closed. The audiences were good and the attention was fine throughout. One person was baptized and a congregation of seventy-five or more members came together determined to study the Bible regularly, live godly lives, and worship God in the pure and simple way revealed in His will. Brother Freed, Prof. N. B. Hardeman (a preacher and a teacher in the school), and every young preacher in the school are included in this congregation. Brother Freed and Hardeman will preach and look after the instruction and edification of the church — assisted of course, by others. Meetings will be held for the present in the courthouse, but a lot has been secured and arrangements are being made for building a house of worship. Brother Ernest McDougale, coprincipal of the school with Brother Freed, stood firm for instrumental music and

missionary societies, using the usual subterfuge that they are only expedients and helps, and, as such, are in the same category with railroads, houses of worship, hymn books, religious literature, printing companies, etc. He talks about interpreting the Bible in the light of present civilization, and says if we art to go literally by "the Book," we must greet each other with a holy kiss. He rejoices in "broadness" and "our liberty in Christ," and prays to God that he will save us from disunion, narrowness, and cant. He has been employed to preach twice a month for those who prefer instrumental music in the worship and missionary societies to the fellowship of good brethren. On Saturday before the meeting closed an effort was made to have a conference looking to the adjustments of this matter; but I was informed that such was unnecessary, since these objectionable things would not be given up.