

FROM SALVATION TO SEMINARY

This is Chapter Four of my Autobiography. It passes from my salvation, in Russellville, to my teaching in Bardstown, to my ordination in Murray, and my pastorate in Arlington, whence I came to the Seminary studies in Fort Worth, going on from them to the mission field, in Brazil.

My Savior was laid in a manger, right after birth. I was born again in a manger. I never missed a Sunday School, prayer meeting or church service in my whole childhood, so far as I recall. I went, by my mother's instructions, to one prayer meeting in knee deep snow. She could not manage it, in the long skirts women wore then. Brother Hodgen, Brother Cheek, the pastor, another man and I were there. I believe the other man was my neighbor, Brother Tom Clark. Sometimes he would be awfully tired Wed. nights and his wife said to him once: "Now, Mr. Clark, you don't need to go to prayer meeting tonight. You are too tired." He replied firmly: "Now, Debbie, don't you talk like that! When I was a sinner I was never too tired to dance all night." That was one of the most wonderful hours I ever lived, though I was not a Christian.

His wife was so good to me! We sold them milk and butter. I came some times when she was baking a cake. And she would cut it while it was hot and give me a slice. Women liked for it to get cold before they cut into it. But she thought more of a boy than of a cake. I went to the mourners bench in every protracted meeting in our church and some in the Methodist Church. We sat bent over, or kneeling, and a row of people came and whispered all sorts of things in our ears about how to be saved. This Sunday afternoon it was a children's meeting, so I did not answer the appeal to come to the mourners bench. Suddenly I felt a soft, warm arm around my shoulder and heard Mrs. Clark whisper in my ear: "Oh! Boy, you are going to grow harder and harder, past feeling. And then you will be forever lost." And she pleaded for me to go and seek to be saved. All broken up, I went. The service was soon over, but I was so deeply moved I went home the back way, avoiding people, and slipped in the side gate and up to the barn without going in the

house. There I threw myself on the hay in the manger and prayed, as I beat my hands on the hay: "Oh! God, save me, save me, save me! I've tried to save myself so hard. I've done everything I could do. But it is no good. I just cast myself on thy mercy." I wanted a great emotional conversion, like the Apostle Paul's. But it never came. If such had been the symptoms, I would have trusted in **them**, rather than the crucified Savior. I got up and went away, with a strange calm in my soul. That I distrusted, as the loss of feeling. But the concern never returned. And I gradually came to know that God answered my prayer and saved me then and there.

Soon the Ham meeting struck Russellville. He preached in the college chapel, where I was a junior. As we came in one day they urged all to go close to the front, leaving the back seats for late comers and visitors, who crowded the chapel. As I sat there listening eagerly to the preached Word, Brother Ham looked down at me and said: "Young man, have YOU nothing to say for your Savior?" That opened my lips and I poured forth a torrent of words. I know not how or what. But I came home walking on air and soon joined the church with joy. Brother Cheek invited my brother to baptize me, so I waited till Christmas, when he would come home.

When I was baptized, Christmas week of 1903, there were three preachers and three candidates. Mrs. W. S. Ryland had long wanted to be baptized—"re-baptized," some phrased it—because she just went up with a group of girls when she was a child and there was nothing to it. She was saved long after that. So Dr. W. S. Ryland, venerable, grey-haired Ex-Pres. of Bethel College, baptized his wife. Brother Cheek baptized a youth who had been sick at the time of the regular baptizing. And my brother Boyce baptized me. It was a happy hour, enjoyed by a large audience. For four months now I had been free from the doubts that formerly tormented me. They never returned.

We went as a united family to the Southern Baptist Convention, in Nashville, in 1904. It was my first time in a city. When I got on the crowded street-

car, I didn't know to hold on, so I fell the full length of the car before I finally landed against something or somebody! I felt like all Nashville knew how green I was. I went again to the Convention, alone, in 1906. There I heard the greatest sermon of my life, by E. M. Poteat. It was on the scars of the heavenly Savior. Why was he in heaven, "a Lamb as it had been slain," Rev. 5:6? Poteat simply, movingly said: "1. Those scars identify the continuing personality of the Savior. 2. They are the receipt of our redemption. 3. They proclaim the central law of the universe." Oh! How this great educator preached!

In 1905 I graduated. For two years I had taught Prep. Greek and two years of Latin, under the learned Farrar, the nephew of Broadus. Now I went to teach Latin and Greek in Bardstown Baptist Institute. Nobody wanted the Greek, so I taught geography instead. I had one pupil in the Latin class. I married the Latin Class seven years later. I told her when I left: "I don't believe in long engagements. If you meet some one you feel you should marry, feel free to do so. I think I will be five years or more in this pastorate, and then must get my seminary education. I won't change. If you are still free, I'll be back." So I came back and she met me in Louisville and, to make it doubly "lucky" and in contempt for superstition, we married Nov. 13, 1913 and sped away to Fort Worth, thence to go to Brazil, though we little dreamed of that then.

A year in Bardstown, in the aura of "My Old Kentucky Home," is a part in education every student might well covet. H. G. Brownell put the faculty together and directed the school from his busy life in the Louisville educational setup. Prof. R. F. Gaither, with the aid of his gentle wife, ran the school, as Principal. Mrs. Dowling was the dignified and efficient matron, at whose table I ate hot biscuit and sorghum molasses. I had charge of the boys dormitory, and a few boys. Miss Frayser, young sister of the brilliant and witty Nannie Lee Frayser, whose name adorns one of Louisville's most impressive school buildings, directed our primary department. Miss Fleming, soon to marry a brilliant Presbyterian preacher, taught music. Learned and most efficient Miss Downer, later to marry my successor, taught English as I never knew it taught elsewhere. Miss Estelle Sisco taught art, coming from her home. That was the home of Mayor John W. Sisco, deacon and head of our trustees, under the guidance of Pastor Charles Anderson. It is clear that Prof. Brownell did not seek for an exclusively Baptist faculty. We all lived in an old building, in a historic setting; and the school functioned in it down stairs and we all had rooms in divided parts of the upstairs. I have not one unpleasant memory of the year. To complete the setup, there was a

tall, slender, neat and efficient Negro youth whom we called "Judge."

I do not remember any time in my student days when I did not know I was called to preach. But I wanted to teach, not to preach. I finally managed to thrust the matter aside by this device. I was sure I absolutely could not preach, so I wrote in my Bible, in English words spelt with Greek letters so no one else could read it, this solemn pledge: "Oh! God, if you will convince other people that I ought to preach, without my telling them I am called, then I will go." I felt at ease. It is not proper to make bargains with God, but I did not know that, and the Lord overlooked my ignorance. To my utter amazement, the Arlington Baptist Church, without ever having seen me or even known of my existence, inquired if my father did not have another preacher son besides the one in Murray. Discovering my existence, they called me to their pastorate, sight unseen. I had never heard of Arlington, any more than Arlington had heard of me.

In my last year at Russellville, a great preacher had been our pastor, Dr. W. C. James. He had taught on till about forty years of age in Baylor University, in the chair of history. His wonderful preaching, so full of history, charmed all Logan County. I wrote him of my call to the church. He said: "If God calls you, go now." I went, my Bardstown pastor giving the same lead. As it was agreed my brother was to preach the sermon, I took my letter from Bardstown Church to Murray and, on July 29, 1906, my brother preached my ordination sermon, from Jer. 45:5, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." It was soul searching. So far as I know I have never disobeyed it, to this day, in life decisions. I was ordained with a friend of college days, E. H. Garrott. I answered no questions at all. He was very quick-spoken and had them all answered before I spoke. I just agreed. That was that. I was with him briefly on one furlough, in Florida, where he spent much of his ministry. I went on to my pastorate, in eager dread.

Arlington was a dear town of country people and those who served them. It is seven miles from the Mississippi River. The railroad cut it in two parts. Our church and many lovely homes were on the level part, west of the I.C. Railroad main line from Chicago to New Orleans. The upper half was irregular, with one small hill where the Negro church was and its population living around it. I saw in its door one time, and the whole town attended their annual baptizings in the mill creek. Then we heard a great witness given on the New Testament doctrine of baptism, and rejoiced with them.

There are no stones in Arlington or that part of Kentucky. The "Jackson Purchase" was once under the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, in pre-historic geological eras. And the surface of the land is brown dirt, with a few pebbles, but no stones anywhere. The result is, where the town is sloping, great gullies have been washed in the streets. Wooden sidewalks go everywhere, some of them from six to ten feet above those gullies on either side of the street. On Feb. 11, 1908, I bought a little home there, for \$245.00, the only piece of property I ever owned, and my mother moved down there and kept house for me. What a blessing! It was right across from the hotel, in the center of town.

I still have my "Pastor's Record" for those years. In the five years pastorate, I did not know 68 of the original 225 members, 90 of whom were non-resident. These lived in Bardwell, the county seat, in Cairo, Ill., in Hornbeak, Tenn., in Shreveport, La., in Sikeston, Mo., in Clinton, Ky., Crossno, Mo., Columbus, Ky., Fulton, Ky., Viola, Ky., neighboring Milburn, Chicago, Ill., Caruthersville, Mo., Nashville, Tenn., in Beaumont, Texas, Phoenix, Ariz., neighboring Paducah, Benton, Cunningham, Berkeley, Hopkinsville, Fancy Farm, Sedalia, Beelerton, Bulah, Hailwell, Wickliffe, in Mounds, Ill., Grenada, Miss., Pickett, Ark., Brighton, Ark., Union City, Tenn., Dyersburg, Tenn., Baton Rouge, La., Oklahoma (city unknown), Manilla, Ark., Vincennes, Ind., St. Louis, Mo., Mounds, La., Beckley, W.Va., Paragould, Ark., Chaffee, Mo., Rutherford, Tenn., Benton, Mo., and Sikeston, Mo. We got rid of most of them. That is the exact picture of your own church, gentle reader, if you have not done something about it.

I was literally a member of the families of my church till my mother came, and often afterwards, with her also some times. I would walk out from one to three miles and "spend the night." We played games ("Blind Man's Buff," "I Spy" — or is it "High Spy" or "Hi! Spy!" I never knew which). I took up their pastorate at the age of 19 still. I loved the whole body of their youth as if we were in one family. And they generously loved me in turn. It is amazing how an experienced church will overlook the faults of a boy preacher and cling to him through thick and thin. While pastor in Arlington, I preached in 17 protracted meetings in Kentucky and one in Tennessee, often two years in one place. There were many saved and revived.

In one of these meetings I nearly lost my life. There is an island in the Mississippi River seven miles long and a mile wide in some places, called Wolfe Island. Much of it was owned by a lady in our church, and she wanted her farm hands to be evangelized. So a colporter and I went over for that

purpose. There was not much to do during the day, so in the afternoons we went rowing. I can't swim and had never rowed before, but we enjoyed it. The first days we went up stream. That was safe. But I saw some chalk cliffs, or walls of very white sandstone, down the river and suggested we go and see them. Down the river was the danger. The island bulged out and made the stream narrow and swift, and that gave the current terrible force. We tried to row across that current and could not. Already my hands were full of blood! In the midst of the stream, we decided to return—AND COULD NOT! We were pulled irresistibly down stream. Finally I said, while we were still trying to row across: "We can't go against this current, Will. We shall have to pull with it, but to one side and thus escape." And so we went with the current, but to one side and jumped out in water near the island and pulled the boat back up stream. I have followed that principle many a time in church problems since then. We came in the church in our wet clothes and I hid mine behind the pulpit as I stood and preached in them.

In those five years I preached 841 times in Arlington, Wolfe Island, Fulton, Hartford, Beaver Dam, Blandville, Princeton, Murray, Lowes, Clinton, Moscow, Spring Hill, Mt. Sterling, Paducah (First, East, and Second), Clinton College, Fish Lake, Columbus, White Stone Quarry, Cunningham, Kirbyton, Mayfield, a number of country churches in Ky. and Mount Moriah, Tenn. and Martin. I held protracted meetings in the same church two years in succession, in many cases. Besides this, I preached in twenty or thirty funerals, in one of which I had the saddest hour of my whole life.

I walked over a radius of two or three miles in most of my pastoral visiting. But I had a contract to borrow a horse and buggy to go to distant funerals. Once I was hitching my horse, when a lady all done up in black found out I was the preacher and came to me. She said: "The young man whose funeral you are to preach in the church was my son. He was a very wicked boy and I know he is in hell. I want you to tell the people so and warn his friends, who are here in large numbers." I was stunned! My favorite text for funerals is II Kings 4:26, "It is well." I was unable, in my youth and inexperience, to think of another text to change to. So I

went ahead with what I had prepared, as our general outlook on death, as Christians. Then, as gently as I could, I told what she had said for me to, and showed how, even in the presence of the problem of hell, we know God has done the best possible thing for the creatures of his hands. A sinner would be more miserable in heaven than in hell. Preaching funerals is no fun!

I was consulted about taking various other pastorates, in more than one State, the five years I was in Arlington, but refused all but one. I was invited to Mt. Sterling and liked the town and the people very much—"the last town in the Bluegrass and the first town in the Mountains." I accepted. Then the Arlington Church begged me to cancel my acceptance and various ministers counselled me to stay. Finally I said: "I have given my word. I will not go back on it. I will stay only if the Mt. Sterling Church gives its consent." With reluctance, and some rather hard words from one or two members, they gave their consent. God kept me in Arlington for the main purpose he had in my pastorate there, destined to be my training for my life work.

For there I came upon the problems of THE CO-OPERATION OF THE CHURCHES in ways, and to degrees, that educated my spirit for my primary life work, here and on the mission field. God prepared me for what I was to go up against. Dr. Maddox, of the Ky. Ministers Aid Society, spoke at my church, during a Bible Institute or Association, in one of my darkest hours, and said: "Boy, I don't know what the Lord has in store for you. But it must be something tremendous, judging by the training he is giving you."

Arlington was THE HOME CHURCH of J. N. Hall whom I heard J.B. Gambrell call the most eloquent preacher in the Southern Baptist Convention. At nearby Fulton, Hall published and edited THE BAPTIST FLAG, a paper with a Southwide circulation, yes, national and international in its scope. It promoted Gospel Missions AND the mission work of our Southern Baptist Convention. My brother edited a section of the "Flag", in promotion of the mission work of our Convention, and defended our Boards from misrepresentation. Sometime he even responded to criticisms of Hall himself. He was allowed that liberty. Of course, Hall had followed the same system in his own home church and pastorate that

he most believed in, namely, Gospel Missions, direct giving to individual missionaries. So I found the church supporting Yohannon and Jureidini in Syria and Persia, and joined with them in their support, as did many churches in West Kentucky and elsewhere. I said to the church however: "I believe in the Southern Baptist Convention and shall designate some of my giving to its Boards." As that was Brother Hall's doctrine, they made no objection to that. And so things went on for some years.

About the middle of my pastorate, however, the Gospel Missioners from Arkansas saw that the Gospel Mission system was inefficient, hopeless and had no future, so they determined to abandon it and create an organization that would have the efficiency, but not the name, of a Convention. By invitation, our church sent messengers to Memphis to help organize the **General Association**. But when its founders drew up the plan, we saw it was merely a convention under another name and was really the abandonment of Gospel Missions. As that was the goal of church action, formally voted, under the teaching of Brother Hall, the church voted to go ahead with its previous system. And so it did.

But that did not please these founders of the Association that was a Convention in disguise. The Arlington Church simply refused to enter or approve the new Convention under the guise of an Association. This made it the object of attack and seduction by a host of preachers, covetous of its name and fame for the work they aimed to do, of division in Kentucky and neighboring States, such as they had already accomplished in Arkansas and Texas. Suddenly I found myself the object of a southwide attack and opposition. They determined to get me out of the way, so that they could make Arlington, Brother Hall's old church, their base of Anti-Conventionism on this side of the Mississippi River.

There was already an element in my church which was unsympathetic with the plans and progress of the church. They still wanted the Saturday business meetings and freedom to visit all about, on Sundays. We turned some of them out for going fishing on Sunday. It so happened that from their neighborhood the Grand Jury of the county was chosen at that time. The deacon who headed that Grand Jury got them to indict me FOR DISTURBING PUBLIC WORSHIP. He claimed my preaching

disturbed his worship. Of course that case was never meant to be tried. The judge instantly threw it out of court, when it came up later on. But, meanwhile, it had been spread all over West Kentucky, and beyond, that the pastor of the Arlington Church had been indicted by the Grand Jury. That was enough. When some one would say: "Listen! Had you heard that the Arlington pastor was indicted by the Grand Jury?", then the surmises would multiply as to what my crime had been and every kind of rumor got started.

At this dark hour, the founders of the new Convention-type General Association determined to put me out of the Arlington Church and take over, for their own ends. Men from half a dozen states invaded our town and made every effort to control my church, or organize a new church of their own. They drew off a small faction, but it never succeeded in assuming proportions beyond those of a rival Sunday School, and not long that. J. N. Hall had never sought to divide the State forces of Kentucky. He had stood by T. T. Eaton and Secretary J. G. Bow, in their fight for sound doctrine and for evangelizing Kentucky without any of the methods justly or unjustly criticized in some of the States. Our church, and most other churches all about, stood their ground.

Here is the issue. The new anti-Convention scheme gave its adherence to the false doctrine that our cooperative organizations, associations and similar bodies, ARE COMPOSED OF CHURCHES. That is a lie. They are composed of MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCHES. That is the biblical doctrine of cooperation. But if an association is composed of churches, then a small set of bosses can impose their schemes at any meeting of the messengers of the churches, and say that what they got voted was THE DECISION OF THE CHURCHES, FOR THE ASSOCIATION ITSELF IS THE COMPONENT CHURCHES. This hellish deceit was spread all over the South, to wreck our missionary and cooperative life and work.

This very fight was then going on fiercely in Texas, and the Haydenites had forced arrest and trial in the civil courts of B. H. Carroll, J. B. Gambrell, Burleson, Cranfill and others, and the fires of the contention blazed hotly. Cranfill had shot at Hayden on the way to Nashville to the first Con-

vention I ever attended. I was a subscriber to the "Missionary Messenger", I believe was the name of it, the monthly paper of the State Board of Texas, edited by Dr. Gambrell. He was going constantly into the doctrine that our general cooperative bodies are composed of MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCHES. They are not the sum of the churches themselves. The autonomy and very nature of New Testament churches is at stake. If this big faction-bossed body, meeting once a year, IS THE CHURCHES, then what the faction gets voted becomes the voice of the churches themselves and is the law that governs their cooperative plans and life. The fact is that nothing an association ever votes is in any way binding on any church. The Association is one thing: the churches are free and independent, cooperative in association plans or not, voluntarily and as their consciences, under the New Testament, guide them. I poured that doctrine into the ears and minds of all concerned, as it had to be decided if Arlington was to be the basis of the division of Kentucky and Tennessee in a vast anti-Convention fracas. A dozen leaders poured into our town and country homes and did their level best to seduce my church to their schemes. They failed. West Kentucky did not give them a home base for division East of the River, in J. N. Hall's home church.

Many years later, a missionary in Brazil turned against his brethren in the North Brazil Mission, lined up with the anti-Convention forces of Texas, had all the missionaries in North Brazil and many fine Brazilians turned out of their churches and sought to impose this same scheme on our regional convention. We seemed to have lost every thing. I founded a paper, a book store, a colportage work and a printing establishment. Once again I spread abroad, all over Brazil, the doctrine that our general bodies are composed of individuals, not of churches, and that churches are autonomous in their decisions. Then I saw what Dr. Maddox had meant when he said: "Oh, Boy! I don't know what the Lord is preparing you for. But it must be something tremendous if he has to put you through all this testing." I thank him for getting me ready, on a small scale, to know the principles that should guide our Baptist cooperative life everywhere.

Much else that was meaningful entered into my five years in Arlington, to prepare me for Seminary days and the mission field. I helped a lot of men in

meetings and persuaded them to go see the Southern Baptist Convention for themselves. Some went with me and saw and were convinced. To my amazement, things had so changed in the years that followed, that Henry Payne, a deacon I received into the church, became the head of the Seventy-five Million Campaign, for that whole Association. And now Convention churches are no longer confined to the

larger towns. In 1911 I felt it was time to go study the Bible for my life work. So I went to study with Carroll, Conner and Williams. And before that study ended, we were suddenly called to Brazil and went gladly out in late 1915. Blessed days were those of my first pastorate.

W. C. TAYLOR

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