

## THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT IN MEMPHIS

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When the apostle Paul preached the gospel in Corinth “many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8b). A congregation of the Lord’s people was established on the same fundamental principles of Divine truth as the Jerusalem church. Although it began at a different time, in a different place, and in a different culture than the original, God designed it to be the same church. Paul taught the Corinthians, “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:9-11).

In every subsequent age of man the foundation, Jesus Christ, does not change nor does the manner of building, teaching the doctrine of Christ. In answer to the question, “What Is the Restoration Plea?” Alan E. Highers has said, “The restoration plea is the call to examine the New Testament church and to restore all of its essential elements in the present age. It is the plea to return to the authority of the scriptures. It is an effort to duplicate the church established by Christ so that we have the same organization, the same worship, the same teaching, the same practice, and the same way of salvation as existed in God’s original plan before it was corrupted by the doctrines and commandments of men” (*The Spiritual Sword*, 33:2, p. 1).

In a small volume titled *Collection of Sermons* by W. S. Long published by the Gospel Advocate Company in 1954, brother Long gave a very brief biography of his life. Christians living in Memphis or with ties to Memphis will find his statements of interest. William S. Long was born in Union City, Tennessee in 1875. His grandparents were from Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Alexander Campbell in Hopkinsville baptized both his grandfather and his grandmother. Then brother Long told about early beginnings in Memphis. He wrote, “On November 10, 1905, I was called to the Harbert Avenue Church which was the only congregation in Memphis. It had a membership of thirty-five and rapidly grew to a total of one hundred fifty-one. While connected with the Harbert Avenue Church I held sixteen meetings in and around Memphis. Many people were baptized and about ten new congregations were started in Memphis and Jackson, Tennessee, and some in Arkansas” (p. 8).

It is hard to think of Memphis as a mission field, but in 1905 it was. Brother Long wrote, "I spent much of my time in work in mission fields. My first six years were given to work in Memphis and surrounding territory" (p. 9). In 1905, the city limits likely extended no further than the loop formed by the Parkways, South Parkway, East Parkway, and North Parkway. Later his work took him to many large cities like Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Detroit, and Chicago. Later in 1945, he was called back to Memphis to work again with the Harbert Avenue congregation but by then it was called Union Avenue (p. 10).

In the intervening years G.C. Brewer preached for the Union Avenue Church which was the largest congregation in the brotherhood. He began January 1, 1929. In a year the congregation grew to 1,100 members. He preached at Union Avenue for six years. Earl West tells more about the congregation back then, "It was an active congregation, supporting George Benson in China, often helping with Marshall Keeble's evangelistic work, and involved, too, in orphan home work" (*The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. IV, p. 147).

One sermon in brother Long's book is "What Is the Church of Christ?" He asked, "You would like to know what the Church of Christ all over the world teaches today. My answer is: 'We teach and practice just what Peter, John, Philip, Paul, James, and all the members taught while they were here on earth'" (p. 22). Here is a sampling of the way he taught: "...Most church members can tell a man what to do to be saved in ten minutes. Here is the way to do it: Just say, The New Testament is our guide today. It is the Gospel that will save all men. Every command that was found in the Old Testament that God wants us to obey is also found in the New Testament. Then say the first four books Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give the life of Jesus and gives us faith in Him as our Saviour. The Book of Acts was written to tell us what to do to be saved. Examples of thousands of conversions are put down in that book and we find every time a man wanted to be saved, he was told to believe in Jesus, repent of his sins, [confess Christ, *gm*] and be baptized for the remission of sins. This book gives us the name of the true church and the name of the members of the church. Now the rest of the Bible is given to tell us how to live every day so as to be admitted into everlasting joy after death. The last book is called Revelation and describes the beauties of Heaven.

"Now, I want all of you to meet me in Heaven, and I am certain if you follow Christ's instructions and obey him you are certain to go to Heaven when you die. If you refuse Christ, that will put you in the Broad way and you will certainly go to Hell" (pp. 30-31).

W. S. Long, an early Memphis preacher, made a statement appropriate for the concluding thoughts of this article. He wrote, “Now friends, can we find in the world today that same Church? Yes, Luke 8:11 says, ‘The word or Bible is the Seed.’ The word of God when preached made Christians, and only Christians. So today if we will preach the Word of God it will make Christians. The inspired apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, produced Christians and from A. D. 33, for hundreds of years there was no denomination. If we will teach only what the Apostles taught we will have the product, Christians, and only Christians. So if we go back to the teaching of the twelve apostles and follow that we can have nothing but Christians” (p. 23).

(Note: The Union Avenue congregation now meets in Cordova, a suburb of Memphis, and is known as the Woodland Hills Church of Christ, 10011 Woodland Hills Drive, Cordova, TN 38018. (901-755-7709). Mike Mayes serves as the preacher. The congregation meeting in the building on Union Avenue is known as the Midtown Church of Christ, 1930 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104. (901-726-4612). Harold Redd is the preacher.)