

A Short Story on the Life of

J.W. Shepherd

By: Ray L. Miller

INTRODUCTION

The author can vividly remember the time when he was about the age of five years, a very aged and distinguished looking gentleman attended services at the Strathmoor Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan. The man's hair was as pure white as the driven snow and some of the older children were saying something about his being a great preacher. His name was J.W. Shepherd.

That man had made several very real contributions to the cause of Christ in his lifetime, yet no one had ever written of his life and, as a matter of fact, very little recognition has been given to Brother Shepherd for the great work he did in his life as a gospel preacher. The purpose of this effort, then, has been to pay tribute, even in this small way, to a faithful soldier of the cross.

This paper is tenderly dedicated to the daughter of that man—Sister Mary Shepherd French. For all her godly influence over this writer in my early years, and for the desire she helped instill in me to walk in righteous paths, I shall be eternally grateful.

Ray L. Miller

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Chapter One

EARLY YEARS

The nation was aflame with hate and bloodshed. Only a little more than three weeks had elapsed since the first battle of Bull Run was fought, and now this young country was fully aware of the awfulness of war. The smoke of many once beautiful plantations drifted lazily toward the sky, and the sound of shovels could be heard as the earth was opened to receive the dead. In many cases, brother battled against brother, and there were fathers that looked upon their own sons as enemies.

Life continues even in times like these, however, and children continue to be born. One such young infant was James Walton Shepherd, and it was into such a world scene as this that he entered this life on the eighteenth day of August, 1861. Born to J.J. and Emily Bush Shepherd in the gently rolling hills of Estill County (near Irvine) Kentucky, J.W. was to become a great worker for the Prince of Peace.

J.J. Shepherd was a stocky man with brown eyes and a short beard. He and Emily, a tall, slender, dark haired woman, were yet young, Emily having been thirteen or fourteen when they married. The small farm that they called home was typical of the time and ample for their needs. In the house, the huge old-fashioned living room was the scene of many happy moments. Here, the children (J.W. was the eldest of twelve) would sit on the homemade rag carpet and roast potatoes and eggs in the cheery fireplace.

Emily Shepherd was kindness, humility and hospitality personified. While very young in life, Jimmie became extremely devoted to her. In a sermon he preached when almost eighty years of age, Brother Shepherd said, "From the very earliest period of my existence, so far as my knowledge goes back, I have been busy; I was busy when I was a child. Sometimes it is a little amusing to people when I tell them that I had a hobby. My hobby from the age of five years was to cut stove wood for my mother. I loved her; I desired to see her abundantly supplied with it." Thus, early in life, young Shepherd learned the importance of being of service to others.

J.W. received his early education in the small, one room school houses of Kentucky. When he was not in school, he worked on the farm. Being the eldest of the children, he had a good many chores to keep him occupied. It is significant that he very

early acquired a thirst for Bible knowledge. When plowing with the “ole mule”, he would stop at the end of each row to rest the animal and, while leaning on the plow handles, would read from a small New Testament that he carried in his pocket. This was done until the little book was worn out.

In the summer of 1876, when he was fourteen, Jimmie and his mother left the little farm for several days and traveled on horseback about fifteen miles to Emily Shepherd’s sister’s place. Shortly after reaching their destination, Shepherd learned that James A. Harding and C. A. Moore were to preach at a certain meeting house on the following day, and he determined to go. He had previously attended many meetings of various kinds but, as yet, he had not been personally moved. Usually Shepherd could remember what had been said, and he often repeated the message when he arrived back home.

At this particular meeting, Brother Moore preached on the life of Elijah. The sermon followed Elijah’s life beginning with his prophecy of no rain down to the time that God directed him to the Jordan River. Moore told of how the ravens fed Elijah, and how God cared for him. The discourse went on, telling how he made his way till he came to the place where the poor widow lived whose son he raised from the dead. Moore next told that under God’s direction, Elijah challenged the people to try their gods on a certain mount. The great contest that then took place was related, and the victory of God concluded the lesson. Among the much-moved audience sat young Jimmie Shepherd.

In that day, people were not too concerned about what hour they concluded their meetings and so, on the same occasion, Brother Harding arose to speak. Harding was a magnetic, powerful speaker. As he spoke, people were drawn to him and he frequently held whole audiences in “the palm of his hand”. Often, as he spoke, his eyes would fill with tears. He was a born orator, possessing a sterling character and a wonderful memory. Physically, he was of stout build weighing nearly two hundred pounds. He had blue eyes and a large, bushy beard.

On this particular occasion, Harding spoke on the theme, “All things work together for good to them that love God, and to those who are called according to his purpose.” Shepherd listened with earnestness as Harding told of the providence of God, and he combined the thoughts of Brother Harding’s message with the story of Elijah.

Many years later when reminiscing of this day, Shepherd said, “I put the two together, and they came together to me and caused me to think over them—if God had such an interest in men back in those days, it seems that the very course that God intends that men and women shall walk today is to prepare themselves in the midst of life with its trials, its afflictions, its sorrows, and the opposition that may come upon them—looking forward to a grand and glorious entrance at last into the eternal Kingdom.”

Several months later, in January of 1877, Harding went to Irvine to hold a protracted meeting. The winter had been severe, and the snow by now was very deep. Then it slowly warmed up a little and the ground was covered with slush. The Shepherd family attended the meeting day after day until finally, on the first day of February, James Walton confessed Christ and was baptized by Brother Harding the same hour of the day. Later, Shepherd said, “From that moment, I desired as fully as I possibly could, to follow the instructions that God gave, that I might attain unto that standard to be acceptable in his sight.” The meeting continued a little while longer, but Jimmie was the only one to respond to the invitation. After the meeting, some of the brethren chided Harding about having such little response to his preaching—just one small country lad. None of them had any idea of what a wonderful amount of good would be done by that “country lad” in the years that were ahead.

From the time of his baptism, Jimmie looked forward to the day that he could preach. This was now his main desire, and to that end he began immediately to make preparation. His mother knew the hard lot of the average preacher and, for a time, she was rather opposed to his becoming one. Indeed, the preacher did have a hard life in those days: riding horseback (or walking) through wild and untamed country to reach appointments; many weeks, often months away from home; and the very pitiable, undependable salary. Young Shepherd thought of the Lord’s command to go and preach and, in spite of the trials that would naturally come, this he knew he must do.

Having chosen to preach, the desire to attend college soon followed. Immediately a new problem arose—that of finances. Shepherd’s education had been a little scanty up to this point, and the very thought of attending college was a thrill in itself. But, where would the money come from? J.W.’s father was certainly not able to put him through school, but when news of the plight reached J.W.’s grandmother, she offered to meet his

expenses. She had one stipulation, however, and that was that she have the privilege to choose the school he should attend. Unfortunately for Shepherd, her choice was a Methodist college. James had heard of the professors at the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky; men such as J.W. McGarvey, I.B. Grubbs, and Robert Graham, and it was to that school that he strongly desired to go. The decision was made—he would just have to work his way through college as his grandmother refused to send him to Lexington.

The summer dragged slowly by with usual work, aside from some time that J.W. spent with a gospel preacher by the name of Elliot. When the long awaited time finally arrived for him to go to Lexington, James bade his family good-bye and, with five dollars in his pocket, he headed for the train station. His ticket to Lexington cost him exactly three dollars, leaving him two dollars “to get established on.” Very little is actually known about his four years at the College of the Bible, except that he built fires in the dormitories to pay his expenses, and that he wasn’t an excellent student. He became a very close friend of J.W. McGarvey, as well as some of the other teachers, and graduated with high honors.

In the summer of 1882, as school had recessed for the summer, Professor I.B. Grubbs, who had been Shepherd’s Exegesis teacher, invited James to accompany him on a preaching tour of the Cumberland Gap area of Kentucky. Of course, the trip was to be made on horseback and would take the greater part of the summer. Shepherd had just made his first attempt at preaching on the eighteenth of June of this same year, and saw in this invitation a wonderful opportunity to further his experience. Needless to say, he readily accepted the kind invitation.

While the two jogged along on horseback, the one a polished speaker, the other a green youth, they talked of the meetings that were to be held. One day, as they were making their way through the rugged Kentucky terrain, Grubbs asked Shepherd, “How many sermons to you have?” to which Shepherd replied, “Only one.” Professor Grubbs then asked the young student how he expected to hold a protracted meeting with only one sermon. Shepherd explained that his plans were to use some of the sermons that Grubbs would preach in the first meeting that they held. Finally, they arrived at the place where

the meetings were to begin and, with Grubbs in the pulpit and young Shepherd busily taking notes, the summer's work began.

The first meeting created so much interest in the small community that it was necessary for Professor Grubbs to continue preaching past the time that the second meeting was to begin. Fearing to spoil the first meeting by closing too soon, it was decided by the elder preacher to send young Shepherd ahead to the next town to preach until he himself could arrive later. Thus it was done. Later, however, when Brother Grubbs did arrive, J.W. had the meeting so well in hand that the members of the congregation requested Grubbs let him preach for the remainder of the meeting as well. This is amazing considering the fact that Brother Shepherd had but one sermon when they started out, and had only a short while to prepare any other.

After this meeting, several others were held, and thus the summer rapidly passed. In late summer the two returned to Lexington to resume school work.

During the summer of 1883, Brother Shepherd left Kentucky and journeyed to Alabama. He preached for some time in Huntsville and, in August, he established a congregation of the Lord's people at Berea in Madison County, Alabama. He remained there until the opening of school in the fall.

On the last Friday in May, 1884, J.W. Shepherd was graduated from the College of the Bible. The four years that he had spent there under the guidance of McGarvey and the other teachers had prepared him to enter the field which was "white unto harvest." He rested until the middle of July, "preaching only on Saturdays and Sundays," then he began to hold protracted meetings. One such meeting began on September 21, in Calhoun County, Alabama. The meeting was held in a grove near a place called Ragan's Chapel. The first one or two nights were rained out, so Shepherd attended a Baptist meeting being held in the community. The Baptist preacher was a man by the name of D.D. Warlick. Warlick invited Shepherd to preach but forbade him to use the subject of baptism. To this he consented and chose as his text 2 Peter 1:5-11. At the conclusion of the lesson, Brother Shepherd passed out copies of tracts entitled, "Errors of the Anxious Seat," which exposed the mourners bench system. As a result, Shepherd found "I had created a spirit of vengeance in Warlick's heart. Warlick prayed for God to make the people know that the Bible was a dead letter, and began to preach on being saved by grace alone." He

pointed his finger at Brother Shepherd and said, “Now let me warn you against this Cambellite...preaching that men must obey the Bible or they can’t be saved, for I tell you that this doctrine is leading thousands of souls to hell. The devil is in our midst tonight (pointing at Brother Shepherd)”. Brother Shepherd continued, “I rose (Bible in hand) and asked if I might say a word. ‘No you shan’t’ said he, ‘Sit down.’ I sat down, but I had no sooner touched the seat than I rose again and asked permission to announce my appointment. In answer to which he said, ‘You shall not speak a word in my house, if you do, I will kick you out.’ As I sat down, I said to him, ‘You have shown us that you have the Spirit of Christ.’” This concluded the meeting. Shortly after, the rain let up and Shepherd’s meeting continued two weeks, with five baptisms the result.

For the next year and a half, Brother Shepherd traveled about in the South, touring Alabama, Georgia and Florida, also making a brief visit to his home in Irvine, Kentucky in the summer of 1885.

In the latter part of February, J.W. Shepherd began his first real “located” work in Shelbyville, Tennessee. After so much travel, he looked forward to settling down. Shortly after Shepherd arrived in Shelbyville, he met a young lady by the name of Julia Neely. In a letter to his mother he says of Miss Neely, “...She is as pure and good as most anyone that I have ever met.”

Brother Shepherd and Julia Neely were married at 3:35 p.m. on January 13, 1887. In the January 19th issue of the Gospel Advocate, the following announcement was published: “Married. Brother J.W. Shepherd, Sister Julia Neely, Jan. 13th, both of Shelbyville, Tenn. Bro. McQuiddy sealed their marriage vow. We wish them a bright, happy, useful and prosperous future. Bro. Shepherd will continue his work in Shelbyville, giving a considerable portion of his time to evangelizing. While we have expected much of him before, we will look for still greater usefulness now.”

Following a brief trip immediately after their marriage, Brother and Sister Shepherd returned to the work at Shelbyville. A great deal of 1887 was spent in protracted meetings, most of which were very successful. For example, in August, Shepherd held a meeting in Ruckersville, Kentucky, which resulted in thirty baptisms. He also found time to attend one or two debates. This was to have a great influence on him in the future.

Chapter Two

WORK AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Rather than continue in the strict chronological order through out the paper, we will deviate through this section covering the middle part of Brother Shepherd's life and simply discuss the various fields of endeavor in which he found himself. There are four major areas which will be discussed in this section. They are: his work abroad, his work as an author, his work as a debate moderator, and finally, his work as a gospel preacher. Naturally, it is impossible to make a complete distinction between these fields as they often correspond and intermingle chronologically and otherwise.

Shepherd as a Missionary

As early as September of 1887, Brother Shepherd had given some consideration to doing mission work abroad. Writing to his parents on September 13th of that year, Shepherd said concerning a letter he had received, "It was from Brother C.A. Moore pressing upon me to go the Island of New Zealand to preach." By the end of that year, the decision to answer that call was reached. On February 28, 1888, the Shepherds embarked on the long journey from Shelbyville to San Francisco. With them was baby Mary, just three months old. On March 9th, they boarded the steamship *Alameda*. This was the vessel that would carry them over six thousand miles to the small group of brethren at Christ Church, New Zealand.

On the first day of April, the ship docked at the port of Lyttelton, New Zealand. Here the Shepherds were greeted by some of the brethren and were taken to Christ Church where they were to labor for the next several months.

Of his work in this city, Shepherd said, "I preached in the church house, public halls, on the streets and from house to house. The preaching on the streets was done on Saturday nights when great crowds gathered to hear the word."

In many respects, the work at Christ Church was very hard and discouraging. Brother Shepherd received very little support from the brethren in the public meetings mentioned above. Often, there would be only a handful of brethren in attendance and

occasionally, none. It seemed to him that the chief interest of the majority of the citizens of that city was worldliness, and this in itself is enough to thrust the darts of discouragement through a preacher. One brother especially, who, like Diotrephes of old “loved to have the preeminence,” proved to be a real thorn in the flesh to young Shepherd and, by his influence, some of the brethren were turned against him. A note in his diary dated January 11, 1889 says, “I feel like leaving here, but O, Lord, is it right? I pray for guidance.”

By the middle of March, the decision was prayerfully reached to leave Christ Church and, on the night of Sunday, May 26, 1889, Shepherd closed his work in this city. In early June, the Shepherds settled in Oamam, New Zealand, where they remained until the early part of 1890. The work in this city proved to be very encouraging to Brother and Sister Shepherd. Great crowds came to hear the preaching of the gospel. In one place, mention is made of a gathering of over seven hundred. There were a good number of responses to the invitation, and the congregation in this city prospered during these months.

Brother and Sister Shepherd labored in the country of Australia for nearly two full years. Although the work was encouraging, it sometimes seemed to be slow. Brother Shepherd often stated that the majority of the people here were difficult to convert. In spite of this, several were added to the body of Christ during those two years in that land.

Brother and Sister Shepherd greatly enjoyed living and working in Australia, not only from the stand point of success in the Lord’s work, but also in regard to the country itself. There were many sights to see that were indeed strange and wonderful to those reared in the United States. Watching the kangaroo and koala bear in their natural surroundings was an amusing sight to the Shepherd family. Brother Shepherd, when time permitted, often went bear hunting in the wild country not far from Sydney.

In June of 1892, J.W. Shepherd and family sailed from Australia, bound for the United States, on a journey that would take them to several countries and would be nearly four months in duration. In a lengthy series of articles which appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* entitled, “A Tour Around the Globe,” Brother Shepherd records many interesting facts and impressions concerning the sights on this voyage.

One of the highlights of the trip occurred on August 15, 1892. On that day, their ship passed out of the Red Sea and into the Gulf of Suez. While here, the Shepherds beheld the majestic grandeur of Mount Sinai, where the Lord, “with the thunderings and the lightnings,” and a thick cloud which made the people tremble as he gave the Law to Moses.

As the days went by, the Shepherds passed within one hundred fifty miles of Jerusalem, sad that they were unable to visit “the holy city.” On the 24th day of August, they sailed past the great and grand Rock of Gibraltar and, some four days later, they arrived at the “city of cities” – London, England. Of it Shepherd said, “London is the greatest and most wonderful city that has ever been on this earth. It is without parallel. I have seen no other city which has so impressed me.” In this marvelous place, Shepherd saw many impressive sights, including Westminster Abbey and the resting places of many of the world’s greatest authors. From London, they traveled to Scotland and, after a brief stay, headed out into the Atlantic for the shores of home.

The tour around the globe ended when the Shepherds arrived in Shelbyville, Tennessee on October 15, 1892. Now we turn our attention to:

Shepherd as an Author

Many men have written more than J.W, Shepherd, but few of our brotherhood in recent generations have written books of more value than those from Shepherd’s pen. Not only are the books of his authorship of great value but, as an editor, he has left for us some of the outstanding thoughts of another soldier of the cross: David Lipscomb.

If one were required to seek out one work to stand as a symbol of the works of Brother Shepherd, that word could well be “scholarship.” Perhaps few in our generation fully realize what a true scholar Shepherd really was. The late H. Leo Boles, himself a highly respected scholar and author, paid tribute to this quality of Shepherd in a letter. He said, “May I say here that which I often feel, but seldom say to you. I regard you as one of the best scholars in the brotherhood. I have confidence in your scholarship. You have been very kind to me in helping me to a fuller knowledge of many important things, and I want you to know that I am very grateful to you.”

It was this great gift of scholarship and thoroughness that enabled Shepherd to give birth to his first published book that is entitled, *Handbook on Baptism*. This volume culminated nearly three years of research in many of the world's greatest libraries. Included in the number were several in New Zealand, Australia, Scotland, England and the United States.

Of this volume, James A Harding said in the introduction to the book, "He (Shepherd) has given us by far the fullest, the best arranged, and most valuable collection of learned testimonies on the action, subjects and design of baptism ever published in a single volume." The book was first published in 1894.

Brother Shepherd is also the author of *The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration*. Shepherd seemed especially interested in works of an historical nature. A review of this book, which appeared in the *Apostolic Review* stated, "There is no writer among us recognized as higher authority on historical subjects than Brother J.W. Shepherd." This particular book was first published in 1929.

As we are now giving consideration to the efforts of Brother Shepherd as an author, it might be well just here to notice his association and work with the *Gospel Advocate*. We mentioned earlier that a series of articles by Shepherd has appeared in the *Advocate*; actually, this is but a very small portion of his work with that paper over the years.

In December of 1886, J.W. saw his first article appear in the *Advocate*. Indeed, it was the beginning of a great work. Many such articles and reports followed through the years and, as time marched on, Shepherd drew closer and closer in association with the *Advocate* editors. Finally, in 1905, he was doing much of the work of Office Editor and, the next year, he was officially assigned to that task, replacing Brother J.C. McQuiddy.

He labored hard and long in this capacity, writing articles, gathering news items, and often writing book reviews. Included also in the *Advocate* for a number of years were several editorials of great quality and value.

In the spring of 1912, David Lipscomb and E. G. Sewell, who had served as co-editors of the *Gospel Advocate* for forty-two years, decided to sell the paper. They were well on up in years and felt it was time to step down. At that time then, the *Advocate* was sold to Brethren, M.C. Kurfees, E. A. Elam, and A. B. Lipscomb. At this time, with the

regrets of the new owners, but due to the financial condition of the paper, Shepherd's work was terminated as Office Editor, and A.B. Lipscomb took over. In later years, Brother Shepherd contributed to other publications as well as the *Advocate*. *The Way* and *The Christian Leader* were two such publications.

In the beginning of this section we mentioned that Shepherd served as an editor for much of David Lipscomb's writings. It is to be noted that the majority of Lipscomb's work now in book form was actually gathered and edited by J. W. Shepherd. Lipscomb and Shepherd had a great deal of respect for one another and were, in fact, great friends. James D. Groves has remarked of this association, "David Lipscomb, a leading scholar of the last years of the nineteenth century, was closely associated with him (Shepherd) and it may well be said that as Socrates had his Plato, Lipscomb had his Shepherd, for he has interpreted and edited the master teacher's work."

The writings of David Lipscomb were to be found in every home that subscribed to the *Advocate* while he was living. Today, however, anyone not possessing bound volumes of the *Advocates* of those years would have access to very little, if any, of his writings were it not for J.W. Shepherd. In 1910, Shepherd published a work entitled, "Queries and Answers." For years, Lipscomb had been printing in the *Advocate* answers to questions that had been sent in to him by the reading public. Shepherd saw the value of these questions and answers and thus published the most helpful ones in book form. M.C. Kurfees considered the effort, "one of the most valuable books printed in recent years."

In the year 1913, another volume came from the press as a result of Shepherd's efforts. This book is entitled *Salvation From Sin* and is considered by many to be the very cream of Lipscomb's writings. Lipscomb himself, commenting on the editorial labors of Shepherd in this volume said, "Were I to go over these writings today...I would scarcely know how or which sentence to change."

Possibly the greatest contribution that Shepherd made concerning the writings of David Lipscomb is the set of commentaries on the New Testament epistles. This group encompasses the books of Romans through Philemon in five volumes. We will conclude this section with a statement by Brother T.Q. Martin as found in the preface to the second edition of the commentary on Romans.

“Brother Shepherd is better equipped than any other man living to edit the writings of Brother Lipscomb. He knew him intimately in life, serving for years as office editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. And he has come to know his writings more intimately through years of patient compilation and research. Brother Lipscomb considered him the one best suited for this very work and presented him with all his unpublished notes and manuscripts. Few men would have taken the days, weeks and months necessary to catalogue and collate all his writings. With this material culled from the honored editor, and with his own added comments, Brother Shepherd has produced a commentary which, I verily believe, will be as popular one hundred years from now as the day it leaves the press.”

With these thoughts as more or less a summation of this consideration of J.W. Shepherd as an author, we now turn our attention to:

Shepherd as a Debate Moderator

Many men have concentrated upon becoming great debaters; few men have devoted themselves to being great debate moderators. Actually, the code of true debating is a strict one, and law and order in a debate depends almost entirely upon the men referred to as the “moderators.” Today, it would almost seem that the primary function of a moderator is to busy himself helping the debater deliver his arguments, keep his notes in order, and prepare a defense for his position. J. W. Shepherd was a moderator in the very truest sense of the term.

What early impression were made on Shepherd to influence him in this regard are not clear, other than the fact that he attended the occasional debate as a young preacher. His work as a moderator seems to have occurred almost exclusively between the years 1910 and 1915. In spite of this limited span of time, however, his reputation grew and became widespread not only among his own brethren, but among the denominations as well!

Shepherd was a man in whom the debater had complete confidence. In January of 1914, Shepherd had moderated for Brother C. S. Austin in his debate with a denominational preacher by the name of Dean. When asked many years later why he

selected Shepherd to be his moderator, Austin replied simply, "I wanted someone that would keep things going right." Concerning Shepherd's reputation, Austin stated that he had found Shepherd "to be all we had heard of him."

In all, records are available to show that Brother Shepherd participated in a total of fourteen debates. Perhaps the most interesting of these debates, at least from the standpoint of this present study, would be the Winkler-Pigue debate held in Hilham, Tennessee in July of 1915. Incidentally, this is the final debate Shepherd moderated for, so far as information now available reveals. The diary kept by Brother Shepherd at that time notes many interesting facts about that occasion. On opening day, July 24, the crowd exceeded eight hundred but, as the debate progressed, the numbers grew to slightly above one thousand.

Perhaps the best way to reveal Brother Shepherd as a debate moderator would be to let Brother Herbert E. Winkler speak of the debate mentioned above, with special emphasis placed upon the work of Shepherd at that time. The following sentences are taken from an article written by Winkler in 1945 entitled "James W. Shepherd as a Moderator."

"To all the rules, Brother Shepherd held his man in debate with delight. And I feel that he pioneered in his efforts to establish discussion on a plane that caused even his religious enemies often to respect him. Many of our brethren now living attest the fact that he often called on his fellow moderator to correct and even restrain his man. And upon his failure to do so, Brother Shepherd would rise to a point of order and often correct and severely condemn the opposition for failure to conduct his part of the debate after an honorable manner. And when his ruling was resented, he deported himself in a commendable fashion and met the resentment calmly and spoke with authority and intelligence upon Parliamentary regulations that would cause the victim to stand abashed and speechless. And this was not provoked by bias on Brother Shepherd's part, for he did not hesitate in correcting his own brethren in such disregard for the rules to which they had pledged themselves.

"The writer thinks there is no one better able to appreciate Brother Shepherd as a moderator than himself. When I was challenged to appear in a six days public oral debate with Mr. Richard Pigue, who proved in debate to be all that his name implies, many of

the brethren tried to prevail upon me not to go into the discussion with such an experienced debater, and even tried to prevail upon Brother Shepherd to persuade me. To this he answered, 'If Herbert Winkler ever needed me it is now, and I am going to his assistance.' May the Lord be gracious unto him for the stay he was to me in that debate. The effect of that debate at Hilham, Tennessee in July 1915 has lived through the years to hamper and retard the progress of Methodism in that community.

"May it be understood that I have never thought ill toward the brethren who tried to prevent my going into that debate, for many times I feared the cause would suffer in the hands of young and inexperienced men in debates and have sorrowed more than once while seeing the truth suffer in the hands of those who possessed more zeal than knowledge.

"Appreciating the great responsibility that was mine, I prepared for that debate to the limit of my ability and, being encouraged by the very presence and protection of Brother Shepherd, I met the ridicule, sarcasm and arguments (?) of Mr. Pigue in a way that brought relief to the mind of the hero at my side.

"Brother Shepherd, knowing full well the danger in allowing oneself to be drawn away from the subject of debate, had warned me not to allow myself to be thus influenced and had told me that he would condemn undue violation on the rules on my part as quickly as on the part of the opposition. And thus, it was almost literally a case of a father standing by to protect his son and yet would not condone wrong doing by him.

"In this debate, Brother Shepherd, whom I had known for years, really came into my life and touched every fiber of my being in a way that has caused me to appreciate him more than I have ever been able to manifest, and I hold it as one of the greatest honors ever conferred upon me to be asked to make this contribution to the memory of our dearly beloved, and aged, brother.

"While we were making ready for the debate referred to above, even Mr. Pigue unwittingly paid Brother Shepherd a compliment. Mr. Pigue wrote to one of his members at Hilham and asked him who I had engaged for my moderator. The man answered Mr. Pigue that he did not know and asked him why. Mr. Pigue wrote this word back: 'Winkler has only one man in his entire brotherhood of whom I am afraid as a moderator, and he is J.W. Shepherd of Detroit, Michigan.'

“All honorable rules were violated during that debate, and Brother Shepherd handled the situation calmly and with ease, and when Mr. Pigue undertook to take charge, even of Brother Shepherd, he was met by a dissertation on Parliamentary laws and common decency which in a small way was equal to the German blitz that preceded Dunkirk

“Finally: Brother Shepherd was a strong believer in letting the chosen man do the debating. He regarded it his business to moderate, and the disputant’s business to do the debating. And as suggestions would have interfered with his moderating, he felt that to busy himself in suggesting to the debater would portray a lack of confidence in his ability and thus interfere with truth.”

According to Brother Winkler, Shepherd’s chosen benediction upon his audiences was, “Now may grace, mercy and peace, the sweet communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with you all, both now and forever. Amen.”

It is interesting to note that seven of the fourteen recorded debates in which Shepherd served as moderator were those of his close friend and associate, I.B. Bradley. The contribution that Shepherd made in these debates is no doubt still being felt in many places. Truly a triumph for truth!

Our fourth section of this chapter directs our attention to:

Shepherd as a Preacher

Of course, it has been impossible to completely divide the work of Brother Shepherd into these four divisions; his efforts as a missionary, as an author, and as a moderator would all come under his work as a preacher. What we will attempt to do in this section, then, is to limit our thoughts to his work in the pulpit, or at least that which is closely related to that phase of endeavor.

An early insight into Shepherd’s ability as a proclaimer of the gospel can be seen from an incident alluded to earlier in this work. That, of course, would be the evangelistic tour Shepherd made as a youth with Brother I. B. Grubbs. For a young man barely over twenty years of age, having preached only one time previously, to conduct a successful

gospel meeting for a congregation which had been looking forward to the well known Professor Grubbs, is certainly an indication to Shepherd's pulpit ability.

Further indication to his success as a gospel preacher can be seen from his labors in general evangelistic work. For a period of fifteen years, Brother Shepherd traveled about conducting meeting after meeting. During those years he was naturally away from home a great deal of the time and, although he regretted leaving the burden of the family entirely to his wife, he answered the call of countless congregations to "come over and help us." The result of those meetings is seen in the great number of people that were led to Christ through his preaching. He often baptized thirty or more in a single meeting. Many congregations, such as Science Hill, Tennessee, invited him back year after year. In this connection, Brother Shepherd often rejoiced to find, in a return meeting, people that he had baptized years before who were still faithful and active. In his evangelistic efforts, he was also instrumental in establishing a number of new congregations.

Early in the year 1915, Shepherd concluded this period of nearly full time protracted meeting work and settled down to what is commonly known today as "located" work. In February of 1915, he began a stay with the Vinewood congregation in Detroit, Michigan, that covered a span of nearly ten years. At that time, Detroit was a mission point indeed, and the work at Vinewood was difficult, but very rewarding.

The following excerpts were taken from an article written by one of the members of the Vinewood congregation concerning Shepherd's labors with that group:

"Because of the strong character and preaching of Brother Shepherd, an interest was created for the first time in Orphan Homes and in sending our boys and girls to our own Christian schools. His granddaughter was the first to go from Detroit.

"It was the Shepherds who stirred up the Detroit leaders to bring N.B. Hardeman here for the citywide Masonic Temple Meetings. It was they who brought Brother Hardeman to Detroit for the first time when he held a meeting for Vinewood a few years before.

"The united work out in the state, carried on for years, was, in the beginning, due quite largely to Brother Shepherd's influence. Such men as Charles Black, Leslie Thomas and C. B. Clifton were those engaged in this work, which helped and encouraged many individual Christians and weak churches in the state.

“The churches learned much about *giving* to the Lord’s work because of Brother Shepherd’s strong teaching and preaching.

“The Vinewood church grew both in numbers and spiritual development during his work with it, and much credit is due him for the growth of all the churches in Detroit.”

When the Shepherds left the Vinewood congregation in December of 1924, a notice which appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* stated that he had “succeeded in building up one of the congregations of the brotherhood.”

After leaving Detroit, the Shepherds next took up the work in Birmingham, Alabama, where they remained over two years. While here, Brother Shepherd was faced with the difficult task of smoothing over “church troubles” which existed before his arrival to that place. After leaving Birmingham, Shepherd took up work in Washington, D.C., remaining there but a relatively short time.

Shepherds last full-time located work was back in the state of Michigan. Lincoln Park is a city adjoining Detroit, and some brethren were starting a new work there. They had purchased corner lots and built a house to serve as their building, having made the lower floor into the auditorium and the upper story into a dwelling for the preacher. At that time, Brother Shepherd was actively engaged in the work of the Lipscomb commentaries, so the brethren at Lincoln Park agreed that if he would only do the preaching, they would look after the rest of the work so that he could be free to devote his time in writing. The Shepherds remained at Lincoln Park under that arrangement until they returned to Nashville to spend their last days. With that, we conclude this portion of the story of the life of J.W. Shepherd.

Chapter Three INCIDENTALS

This short section will be devoted to generally unrelated incidentals concerning Shepherd's preaching style, some events in his life, and one or two of his stronger convictions, all of which may prove to be both interesting and profitable to the reader.

Preaching Style

In his preaching, Shepherd's movement in delivery was very limited. One who knew him well and heard him often, Brother S.P. Pittman of Nashville, gives us this insight: "Not much did he gesture. I would not say that he stood statue still, as did T.B. Larimore, but I don't think he moved about much in the pulpit." Brother Pittman further relates, "What he said was forceful, for he was deliberate in search for truth, and accurate in interpretation of scripture." Because of this deliberateness, dignity and devotion to truth, Shepherd commanded the respect of listeners.

Arbitration

Because of Brother Shepherd's zeal for the absolute victory of truth, he was often called upon to act as an arbitrator in church troubles. These occasions were very trying to him, as one can readily understand. Concerning these meetings he once remarked, "Were it not for the hope I have of bringing about peace, I would absolutely refuse to preside at them."

Acquaintances

One could record scores of great men of God that Shepherd knew and was associated with during his lifetime: men such as J.W. McGarvey (who originally recommended him as the man to go to New Zealand), the great evangelist T.B. Larimore, and so many others. In his younger years, it seems that he was especially close to James A. Harding (who had baptized him), David Lipscomb and Dr. J.S. Ward.

When the Shepherds first moved to Nashville, they lived across from the old Nashville Bible School, and directly across the street from the home of the J.A. Harding family. The two families were very close. In fact, Harding frequently remarked that he had originally "made the match" between Brother and Sister Shepherd.

When the school moved to new location (the Lipscomb farm), the Shepherds moved with it, as did others including Dr. J.S. Ward, a teacher at the school. The two families built houses on adjoining lots, each helping the other in the work. Brother Ward and Shepherd were referred to by some as “David and Jonathan”.

It was also at this time that ties grew strong between Brother Shepherd and David Lipscomb. They were then working together on the Gospel Advocate and often would come home together in the buggy, Brother Lipscomb’s horse, affectionately called “Old Henry”, pulling them along.

Library

Shepherd was well noted for his great library. Few men in our brotherhood have ever acquired a group of books such as he had, both in regard to quantity and quality. While engaged in research, the writer of this paper was privileged to talk to the gentleman in charge of a large library in Nashville, who freely admitted that Brother Shepherd possessed one of the best private libraries in his knowledge.

Emphasis in Preaching

One of Shepherd’s most pronounced feelings was concerning the practice of practical preaching. It was his conviction that in order for a sermon to be valuable, it had to be practical. He attempted to make each lesson apply to his audience so that they would grow spiritually. This attitude can readily be seen by the type of sermon he most frequently preached. Note the following examples taken from his records: *Sowing and Reaping*, *Take Heed Lest You Fall*, *a Good Conscience*, *the Christian Warfare*, *Cross Bearing*, etc. On and on the list could be multiplied, indicating beyond doubt Brother shepherd’s firm belief that spiritual strength comes as a result of practical preaching.

Chapter Four

THE AUTUMN OF LIFE

In the previous chapter, we concluded our consideration of Shepherd as a preacher while he and Sister Shepherd were engaged in the work in Lincoln Park, Michigan. It is at that point that we wish to pick up our chronological study with what we choose to call “the autumn of life”.

After the Shepherds had been at Lincoln Park for some time, they both decided that they would like to return to Nashville to live out their last days on earth. Most of their life-long friends lived in and around Nashville, and it was here that they felt most at home. Upon moving to that city, the Shepherds placed their membership with the Shelby Avenue congregation which, incidentally, Shepherd had helped to establish several years before.

The Shepherds remained at Shelby, with the exception of his occasional preaching at Central, until the death of Sister Shepherd on January 11, 1939. She had been for some time suffering with a heart ailment, and her death came as a result of that affliction. On the morning of her death, Brother Shepherd had risen early, as was his usual custom. He had been in his study for some time when Sister Shepherd came to his door and exclaimed that she could not breathe! Help was summoned immediately, but she passed away just one hour from the time she was stricken. Her last words on earth were directed to Brother Shepherd; she said, “I am sorry to leave you.” That was her only regret.

Many of the Shepherd’s dear friends felt it would be appropriate for her, and later Brother Shepherd, to be buried near “Uncle Dave” and “Aunt Mag” Lipscomb in Mount Olivet cemetery just outside of Nashville. This arrangement proved satisfactory to all, and so her mortal remains were laid to rest at the foot of the Lipscombs, whose close friend she had been for many years.

The lot of a preacher’s wife is often hard and lonely. Her path is often rocky, and seldom strewn with roses. Shepherd made the following tribute to his noble helpmeet one year from the day of her funeral which, incidentally, would have been their fifty-second wedding anniversary. He said, “Fifty-three years ago was one of the happiest days of my life, when I was joined in marriage to Julia Neely of Shelbyville, Tennessee. To the vow

she made that day, she was true and faithful in every respect. During all the years of hardship which she endured in our various trials, she bore the burden without a word of complaint. During fifteen years while I was engaged in general evangelistic work, the burdens of caring for our children and the scanty support I received for my work, she labored uncomplainingly under all the trials the care of five children threw upon her. She nursed me through three spells of severe illness as faithfully as it was possible for her to do.”

Sister Shepherd was loved and respected for her great love of the scriptures and her deep devotion to the church of the Lord. She will also be remembered for her contributions to the greatest work on earth through the help and encouragement she gave to J.W. Shepherd for over half a century. Indeed, she was a virtuous woman, and her price was far above rubies.

The passing of his noble wife left a vast and never-to-be-filled emptiness in the life of Brother Shepherd. He continued mightily in the work of the Lord, however. It was at this period of his life that he became affiliated in an “official” sense with the Central congregation in Nashville.

In spite of his sorrow and loneliness, his days at Central were, for the most part, happy ones. Brother Shepherd was given an apartment right in the church building and was thus available for service at all times. Countless people came to call on him. Many of those who came were his old friends, but many also came for help and advice. He was always glad to be of service when he could. Actually, he thrived on work and, as long as he was busy, he was happy. He was especially pleased with the help and encouragement he received from E.W. McMillian, the preacher at Central in the early part of Shepherd’s stay there.

At this time, Shepherd was actively engaged in finishing up the work on the commentaries that we have already mentioned. He remarked on more than one occasion that he had no time to lose and that he must keep busy to complete the work. Early in the year 1942, Volume Five (I Thessalonians through Philemon) was completed and printed. It was his last published work. He did a considerable amount of work on volume six, but during an illness of his someone borrowed his manuscript for the book of James, and it was never returned.

During this period of his life, he kept relatively active in the pulpit, as well as his writing work. He frequently drove out to the Pomona congregation and preached for them, as well as for other congregations in the Nashville area. Often on these preaching trips, he would stay in the home of Brother and Sister I.B. Bradley.

In July of 1943, he began his thirty-fifth annual gospel meeting with the Science Hill congregation, at that time being nearly eighty-two years old. He was to stay in the very room that he had occupied in his first meeting there so many years ago. Unfortunately, Brother Shepherd was forced to close the meeting almost at its beginning when he collapsed in the pulpit. This sad occasion brought to a close his meeting work. He frequently preached after that, but never again in a protracted effort.

Shepherd was strongly opposed to a Christian going to war. During World War I, he had traveled to Washington, D.C. and held several conferences with the authorities there in this regard. In these efforts, he was able to obtain special consideration on behalf of Christian young men who were drafted by the government. It was during his stay at Central that World War II was fought and, again, he did what he could to help young Christians that had been drafted.

Brother Shepherd continued to work as he was able, but as the months rolled by, he became weaker and was sick quite frequently. Finally, he reached the point where his friends felt he should not live alone in his apartment. As a result, in March of 1944 he entered a convalescent home. He remained there for nearly two months while arrangements were being made for him to move in with his daughter, Mary French, and her husband, Claude. They had a fine home in Detroit, Michigan and prepared a lovely room for him, ample for all his needs. Their home became his until the Heavenly Father, whom Brother Shepherd had served so faithfully, called him to a better place.

As the final months crept slowly by, Shepherd grew more and more homesick for Nashville. He had brought a few of his beloved books with him to Detroit, but the vast majority remained in the Central church building. Finally, his daughter Mary agreed that if arrangements could be made for him to stay in the rest home he had been in before, she would see to it that he returned. In a short while, the Frenches received a letter from the home in reply to their request. Sadly enough, it stated that they would be more than

happy to have Shepherd again, but that they were all filled up at that time and did not know how soon space would be available.

The Frenches allowed him to read the letter for himself and, needless to say, it broke his heart. At that point, he lost his appetite and began to weaken rapidly. The letter was received and read by him on a Saturday; the following Tuesday, July 27, 1948, his will to live was gone and he passed quietly away. His last moments were spent with his daughter on one side of his bed and his son-in-law on the other side, each holding his hand and assuring him that he would be taken to Nashville and placed beside his beloved wife near the Lipscombs.

A service was conducted in Detroit with James D. Groves and Harmon Black presiding. Later, another service was held at the graveside in Mount Olivet with E. W. McMillan taking charge. Mary French, his daughter, describes the scene of his burial in these words: "Brother Charles R. Brewer had arranged for the service there, which was so lovingly and beautifully done. The Lipscomb quartet did such a wonderful job with the singing. Rain in the early part of the day had freshened the air and, at the time set for the service, the sun came out in all its glory and the air was filled with the fragrance of the lovely flowers. As the casket was being lowered down into the grave, the Quartet sang "Rock of Ages" more beautifully and meaningfully to me than I had ever heard it before! It filled me with all the sweetness and all the great comfort and satisfaction to me of my father's life of whole-hearted sacrifice for, and devotion to, the Rock of Ages, and of the crown of righteousness which awaits him at the appearing of the Lord Jesus!"

Thus ends this brief account of the life of J.W. Shepherd. We can think of no better way to conclude these remarks on the life of this great soldier of the cross than to use the closing words of Brother Groves at Brother Shepherd's funeral:

"We honor him in God's name for the lessons of courage, steadfastness, independence of spirit, tolerance, kindness and for his love of the search for truth; for his hard work in bringing from the hours of study in solitude the fruits of toil of his mind and the experience of his soul. The mantle he let fall, and the way he pioneered the true way of the spirit, others have taken up and have fallen into the paths he has helped to blaze. God rest his soul in peace:

"Rest on noble soul in the bosom of thy Father;

No darts of man, no shafts of hate can longer make thee afraid.

Nor cause thy foot to stumble from the righteous way,

Thy work is finished, thy path to his presence forever laid.”