

Adolphe Stagg Life and Work

The First Baptist Missionary

TO THE

French Speaking People

IN

Lovely Louisiana

*"Where unto I am appointed a preacher, and an
Apostle, and a teacher."*

WILLIAM L. STAGG, SR.



Adolphe Stagg Life and Work

————— 1834 - 1914 —————

BY
WILLIAM L. STAGG, SR.

Published with full approval of the Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, Atlanta, Ga., for use of material to which they have acquired rights, some of which was published in "In Evangeline's Country," by John Caylor, 1953. This will acknowledge any statements contained therein.

BAPTIST CONVENTION PRESS

Albuquerque, New Mexico

1954

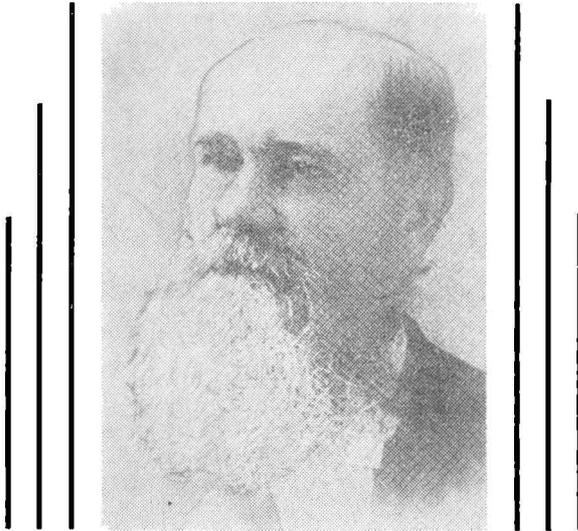
SOUTHERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY.

2825 LEXINGTON ROAD

LOUISVILLE, KY.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my loving wife and six devoted children, and to all young men and women who, under God, hear and heed the call to be missionaries — Home or Foreign.



Elder Adolphe Stagg, first Baptist missionary to the French speaking people, Louisiana, whose life and work covered the period of 1834 - 1914.

72599
922.6
St/3a



Elder William L. Stagg, Sr., fourth son of Adolphe, a retired minister in his eighty-seventh year, February 11, 1954.

10 12 14 40

INTRODUCTION

It is a wonderful heritage to have such a father and grandfather, with which some of the Stagg tribe of Louisiana have been blessed. Such an inspiration to manhood, purity, integrity, honor, and true Christian service could hardly be surpassed.

The last statement my grandfather made to me was on a visit just a few weeks before his death, when I told him goodbye, he said, "Son, be a man."

These two men, the subject and author of this sketch, have already covered a life span of one hundred and twenty years. These years have been duly marked by monumental expressions in continuous battles for righteous adherence to the Word of God in personal living, community affairs, civic and political uprightness, and in the building of churches in the extension of the Kingdom.

William Lawrence Stagg, Sr. was born in the country near Opelousas, just south of the center of Louisiana, on February 11, 1867. He was graduated from Keachie College with B. A. Degree in 1891, which was reenacted by Louisiana College in 1919. He attended the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

He was married to Lizzie Kate Everett, Red Fish, Louisiana, on May 10, 1893.

During his active ministry he served 28 churches in the country, and 4 in towns, in 13 parishes, covering a period of 40 years. He served on the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and has served as Clerk in three associations for a total of 32 years. He is still serving in this position.

On one occasion his life was threatened by a man for baptizing his brother. He had so many rich experiences during his own ministry that we have been anxious for him to record them for us, which may be possible since

this other dream of many years has been accomplished.

It is a deep joy to me in having this opportunity to pay sincere tribute to my illustrious grandfather, father and their loyal, consecrated companions, in making these noble experiences available to those who by kinship in blood or missionary interest may be concerned.

Harry P. Stagg, Executive Secretary-Treasurer
The Baptist Convention of New Mexico, Albuquerque

PREFACE

During the one hundred and second session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention held with the Emmanuel Baptist Church at Alexandria, at the noon recess I found L. A. Stagg, Jr., Pastor at Houma, La., in conversation with Dr. John Caylor, then Education Secretary of the Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Ga. During the conversation Dr. Caylor asked L. A. if he knew anyone who could write the life of Adolphe Stagg. In answer, referring to me, L. A. said, "There is one here." Then Caylor, who had known me for years asked what was my relation to Adolphe. He seemed surprised to learn that he was my father. Immediately he asked that I write everything I could remember and all I could find written about him. I had a similar request several times from Dr. E. O. Ware, a good friend and a colaborer of my father. Still others made the request, but I refused to attempt such a task, **First**, because I felt my unfitness; **Second**, because I was too busy carrying out the task to which the Lord had called me and to which my father had committed me; and **Third**, and finally, because I had the impression that it was "more important to make history than to write it." However, I have not made much history that is worth writing.

Now when I am in retirement and near the end of my earthly journey, my brethren and relatives still think I can do the job and request that I undertake it. I wonder if it is possible that the Lord in mercy is sparing me for this task which may in some mysterious way glorify Him. At any rate, I am now dedicating my feeble body and mind to this work, hoping that everyone who reads these lines may be sympathetic with my effort and be encouraged to fight Satan harder, love righteousness, holiness, and purity more tenderly; and be more faithful in proclaiming the truth which my father preached to others that they might enjoy the freedom found only in Jesus Christ our Lord.

In a very humble manner I feel as if I am peculiarly qualified to pay living tribute to the memory of my great father, foremost because it was when I was three

years old that he emerged from the darkness of sin and superstition to the marvelous light and liberty of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ.

When I was three years old my father was converted to the Baptist faith, not from the Catholic faith, because I heard him say many times that he instinctively disbelieved in it. As soon as he was converted he began testifying or witnessing what the Lord had done for him and within two years he was ordained to the gospel ministry by his church. Of course I was not too young, but too dull to remember either his baptism or his ordination. My father and mother were baptized on the same occasion. I suppose I did not see it. My earliest memory of my father is riding behind him on horseback coming home from church and the first memory of my mother was on the same occasion on returning home when she made me change clothes, which I did not want to do.

As a child I did not understand his preaching about the wonderful grace of God, nor did I understand the French language which he spoke to my mother. He did not teach the younger children to speak French. I often wondered why and when I was about grown he told me the reason was that if we spoke French we would naturally associate with the French who were mostly Catholic and he was afraid we would more or less be exposed to their influence. He might have been wiser than I thought.

When I was about eleven years old, I began to understand a little of what he said about the Holy Spirit. When that Mysterious Person spoke to my own poor heart, I was so blinded by the god of this world that I had been tempted to think I was unfortunate in having a preacher-father. I had wished he might be a lawyer, doctor or an honorable business man like several of my uncles, good men but not preachers. When the Spirit convicted me that I was wrong and I yielded to Him I came to love my father more and rejoiced in the fact that he was a minister. I began to help him instead of hindering and harrassing him; yet I never fully appreciated nor entered into fellowship with him until I surrendered to preach. As a fellow preacher of the gospel, I knew better than any layman how to interpret the springs of success and failure and count the cost of

efforts made, and I could better understand his life-work in all its details.

Sometime before I thought of preaching I heard someone ask him if he would make a preacher out of me. His reply, which struck me forcibly was, "I am not in that kind of business."

At the time of his conversion he had six living brothers and four sisters, all of whom had Catholic families except one. He was not married at the time, and he was the only brother who was a REAL Catholic. The four sisters were devoted to the Roman Church. One brother, Etienne, continued friendly and was converted not long after Adolphe, but Etienne's wife was bitter for some time and persecuted her own husband, but a little later she was gloriously converted. While they were not especially cruel, they, the other brothers and sisters, felt as if they had been somewhat disgraced by the two brothers, therefore held themselves aloof from the two Baptist families. Only in sickness, distress, and death would they show any regard or sympathy; yet in these times of misfortune they never withheld anything. That kind of conduct, of course, was in keeping with their religion.

Among the children of both the Catholic and the Baptist families, there was manifest absence of cordiality in school, on the playgrounds, and in classes. This feeling diminished greatly before the end of the second generation. Because my father was a preacher, some of my wicked cousins would call me "Preacher," in contempt, ridicule and sarcasm. One especially cruel, would mimic the way my father rode on horse back. Once in speaking of baptism washing away sins, though he knew better, he said, "I am so sinful that if I were converted and baptized in the bayou all the fish downstream would die." This same boy, whose sweetheart was converted, threatened to kill the preacher and drown her if she proceeded to be baptized. She desisted and soon they were married. Some twenty years after this I baptized that wife and two daughters in the presence of that husband and father. He became interested enough to ride 10 miles on horseback in the hot sun to attend my meet-

ing. I believe he was saved but never made a public profession.

The writer, with little historical data and a feeble memory of what happened during a period of forty-four years (1870-1914), and lacking the infallibility of divine inspiration, can at best only touch upon the facts here and there, catching occasional glimpses of the plan which Adolphe Stagg lived out, while the more important things are hidden with God. Only eternity can reveal a true record of all the supernatural influences which worked with the natural ones in making up his career. To separate such a story from superstitions which are naturally thrown about it by the ignorant and from the criticisms of the scholastics is a difficult undertaking.

His life has never been written as a consecutive story. Many have written the meager facts about his conversion from the Catholic faith and his ministry to the French, but failed to stress the most startling things connected with his experience.

Somebody said, "History is composed of innumerable biographies." At least, it should be so. We love to tread the path beaten by human footsteps and that has been lighted by imperishable deeds. Men and their acts are the waymarks which make the road familiar. The travelers and their foot-prints give all that's of interest to the moss-grown pathway.

I am indebted to the following persons for their valuable assistance:

Mrs. Hazel Hall Howell, English teacher at Louisiana College, for helping to edit the manuscript.

Dr. Edgar Godbold for editorial work.

W. L. Stagg, Jr. for typing.

Harry P. Stagg for publishing.

I am also grateful to Dr. W. H. Knight, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, for use of Convention Minutes and the Louisiana Association minutes as a source of much material.

We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Editor Lewis A. Myers in helping with arrangement, layout and comments regarding members of the family.

CHAPTER I

Childhood and Education

The subject of this sketch, if it may be called such, comes from a family whose origin is traced back to the counties of York and Dorset, England. The families bearing this name belonged, in many cases at least, to the educated classes of the British Isles.

Among the earliest definite records of the name in England are the names of Thomas Stagge of Yorkshire who lived during the reign of Edward III of England (1327-1377), and that of Adam Stagge, who was living in Yorkshire in 1379.

In spite of the fact that some of the families of the name in America are probably of German descent, it is generally believed that the greater number of the Stagg families in this country are descended from the English lines.

Intelligent and broadminded, the members of this family have been known, generally speaking, for their ability to influence and direct others; for their literary abilities; and for their military prowess.

Many of the name served in the war of the Revolution. One, Peter Stagg, served with George Washington.

Of the members of the family who have been prominent in America, in recent years, the following are considered representative; Edward Stagg of Missouri, early 19th century poet; Amos Alonzo Stagg, (born 1862 and still living) of New Jersey, Illinois and California, physical director; John Weldon Stagg (born 1863, died 1915) of Virginia and Alabama, Presbyterian minister; Benjamin Stagg, killed in Civil War, a brother of Adolphe; Malcom Stagg, grandson of Adolphe, son of Robert Stagg, killed in France in World War I.

Probably the first of the name in America was Thomas Stagg, who was living in Virginia before 1639, and was Burgess for Charles City in 1642.

Our earliest definite ancestor is one John Stagg who was living in New York before 1732 and in 1769 was

married to Anneka Stontenburg in a Dutch Reformed Church in New York City, then called New Amsterdam. They had eight children, one of whom was Henry who went to New Orleans, served as a commission broker, and married Josephine Fusilier in the old Spanish Catholic Cathedral about 1795. They had eight children, one of whom was Phillip Gabriel, who married Josephine Guillory in Opelousas, Saint Landry Parish, Louisiana, about 1825. They had sixteen children, one of whom was Adolphe, born December 17, 1834, near Opelousas in Grande Prairie. This was an open country containing an area of about twenty-five square miles, sparsely settled with a population of about 2,000. It now has about 12,000 people.

The original Staggs have not been mentioned in connection with the Catholic faith until Henry and his son Phillip married women of that faith.

Having absolutely no records of his childhood, except the place and date of his birth, the writer must depend on memory, tradition, and imagination. Memory being dimmed by the lapse of several decades, traditions few and imagination weak, not much can be expected.

Every life has its romances, its mysterious impulses, its strange events, its unaccountable results. Here is a life beyond precedent in the walks of life where we find it. His parentage, his birth place and circumstances combine a variety of causes and consequences beyond explanation by the most analytical mind.

Any human life is in itself a divine miracle. Birth is the universal miracle! There can be no greater wonder than the creation of physical life, not even the creation of spiritual life. "At every tick of the secondhand of your watch a baby is born, an event so frequent that much of its wonder is lost."

In any biography we need to take into account the effect of hereditary traits and the molding character of scenery, association and climate; but these in the life of Adolphe Stagg, do not account for all the mysterious results of his life and work. There are strange turning points in his history, the causes of which are beyond our understanding. He himself often declared them "real miracles" beyond hope of explanation.

His life, if written as fiction, would doubtless be regarded as improbable.

His becoming a gospel preacher, made so by causes unusual and strange in such environment, places the event beyond anything that is called the "law of nature."

The house in which he was born in Grande Prairie, located just off the highway halfway between Ville Platte and Washington, still stands, though it has been repaired and remodeled. His father, at that time was engaged in business: merchandising, farming and live-stock in the open country some fifteen miles from Opelousas, the Parish seat, a small town at the time, now quite a city.

The house was a wood frame building with walls made of mud mixed with moss with high ceilings plastered with cement. This house consisted of several rooms and large galleries or porches. He was the fourth child of the sixteen children, seven boys and four girls lived and reared large families.

In keeping with the background of his ancestors, Adolphe's father, as previously suggested, belonged to the landed and educated classes of his day. His houses and lands were out-standing in his community. Because the schools and colleges were in the towns and cities for the most part, the most prosperous families in the country hired private teachers of high culture to teach in their homes. When they reached their teens they were sent to private schools. Sometimes they boarded and returned home on week-ends. Few were sent to college. Poor families seldom got any education for there were no public schools at that time. Only one, the youngest brother, in my father's family attended college, but all the rest received what was then a fair education.

I do not think they all went to boarding schools, but it so happened that my father and a younger brother, Etienne, went to a private boarding school at Bayou Chicot. This was conducted by a Baptist preacher, Thomas Rand, born in West Springfield, Mass., graduated at Hamilton Theological Seminary, New York, August 15, 1838, and died at Lake Charles in 1869.

A few references to Adolphe's childhood made by him occasionally, make up the sum of knowledge we

have of those important youthful years. Some one has said, "The country boy is the favored boy." If the early associations of childhood do make or unmake genius then it is interesting to note that many great men have passed their early years in country homes.

He watched the slaves herding the cattle, branding the calves, lassoing the ponies, milking the cows, feeding the pigs, and often took part in these activities. Whatever else may be attributed to the influence of natural scenery and rural life, it may be assumed that the strong physique which carried Adolphe through so many years of arduous labor, was due to the fresh air and outdoor exercises of that farm life.

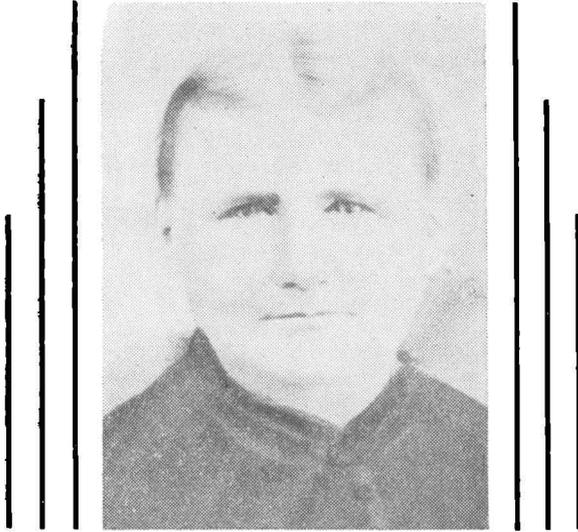
I heard him say he was awkward, ugly, and cotton headed, with a long nose and large mouth. When he clerked in his father's store at the age of eighteen he had never shaved and his whiskers were two inches long and were as white as cotton. A traveling salesman offered him two dollars to shave. He gladly accepted saying it was the easiest money that he ever made.

Another incident of his boyhood occurred when a neighbor's slave, entering the kitchen to steal, was surprised to find my grandmother. She screamed and dad, hearing the scream, ran in to find the thief leaving through the back yard. He overtook him and held him until help came.

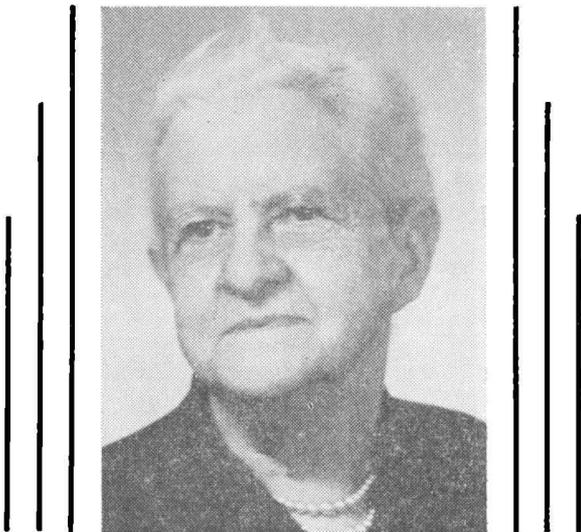
The last time he shaved was the year I was born, and tradition says that his nearest neighbors failed to recognize him.

As for sports he mentioned baseball and bull-pen. He also played ball games with the Indians using some kind of sling with which to throw the ball.

Many ascribe a large share of human success to the influence of early education and others to the influence of hereditary traits. To an Englishman this is natural, but to an American these efforts to give credit to a long line of good men which preceded him appear to be absurd. Someone said, "Some men are born great, but families are not." Mr. Spurgeon said, "The boast of pedigree is common but silly." "Families as families, have no right to the landed domain, to the palaces, to the castles, to the offices or to the throne."



Ultima Carrentine Stagg, wife, companion, encourager, and helper throughout the useful ministry of Adolphe. She was consecrated and ever alert to every mission challenge.



Mrs. Lizzie Kate Everett Stagg, wife of the author of this historical sketch and mother of W. L. Jr., and Harry.

Other members of the family are: Adolphe Everett, Albert Manly, Eudora Alice, (now Mrs. A. C. Harris), and Basil Dewitte.

CHAPTER II

Young Manhood and Citizenship

Like all boys in their teens who dream of what they want to be when grown up, Adolphe had his and his ambition was to be a civil engineer. He majored in mathematics and acquired full preparation for the work along with a working knowledge of both the French and English languages.

Again, like many a youth who having qualified for a certain occupation changes his mind and does something else, he took up the usual family calling of merchandising. His first job away from his father's store was with his older brother at Washington, La., a few miles from home. This town now has a population of 2,000, situated on Bayou Courtableau and until recently had never had a Baptist Church. L. C. Smith, a missionary of the Home Board, has bought a lot and established a mission there. The mission has been established and is now sponsored by the First Baptist Church of Opelousas.

After working in Washington a year or two Adolphe married Ultima Carrentine, a resident, who had come from St. John The Baptist Parish, Edgar, La. Again he changed his occupation, to farming this time. In partnership with his oldest brother, he bought a farm on Bayou Boeuf, about 15 miles north of Washington. Soon after he moved on the farm and started operations. Then came the Civil War, in which he spent four years of hard service leaving his young family like many others, to the care of the slaves and neighbors. He took one slave with him for company and service, as was allowed by the Government. His parents had made a habit of giving each of their children a slave as a wedding present.

The peace having been declared he returned to find ruin and desolation. He lost a brother, age 21, in the battle of Gettysburg, killed in service as a flag bearer, the only one out of six brothers in the service who was killed. Louis, Etienne, and Adolphe received slight wounds.

I have no record of the battles in which he was engaged, but they were many in several states. In 1891

while attending a State Convention with him in Mansfield, La., he mentioned the Battle of Mansfield, and suggested that we visit the old site. We did so and he found some marks of the conflict. He was in a later skirmish which I think occurred at Pleasant Hill.

Facing the changed conditions in government, society, and economy, he went into a partnership with a friend who rented a large cotton farm using free negro labor which proved a disastrous failure, incurring debts which took him years to pay. The partner proved to be irresponsible.

He then sold his interest in the farm owned with his brother and purchased another just across the Bayou from the old place. My mother planted some live-oak and pecan trees on the old place, one of which was still standing a few years ago when I visited there. A first cousin, John Stagg, now deceased, lived there then.

The place across the Bayou where I grew up from age two years to manhood is located about half-way between Bunkie and Opelousas on a gravel road which runs through the farm, now a huge pecan grove.

Adolphe was energetic and thrifty in keeping with the characteristics of his ancestry as described by those who wrote about the family in the 14th and 15th centuries in England and also down to the present in the United States. Among seven brothers he was the only one who did not own and run a country store, carrying everything known at that day as general merchandise, including hardware, groceries, clothing, fruit, fresh, dried and canned, on down to matches and whiskey. My dad was practically reared in a store for many of his boyhood years, the only one around for many miles.

His farm was only about seven miles from his birthplace. He engaged in small general farming using mostly free negroes, who were enjoying their late freedom, and thereby furnishing the employer a difficult problem, one that is still unsolved.

Like all thrifty people who see and seize all opportunities, he took advantage of the use of free open range especially suited for cattle, hogs, and wild ponies. The vast open and unoccupied prairie lands near by furnished

free grazing for cattle and ponies during the summer. Switch-cane covering the swamplands furnished grazing for the winter months as well as protection from the cold winds. So by shifting from the one to the other of these free ranges the feed bill was entirely eliminated. To those who could see this and utilize it the cattle business became a lucrative proposition, in spite of the fact that a calf now selling for more than \$100 would bring only \$5 at that early day. The hogs could thrive on acorns in the swamps during the winter and on fish and soaked acorns in the marshes, along with some grass and palmetto sprouts in the summer.

In some ways my father was a moderate seer, living fifty years ahead of his time. Concerning forestry, when I was a boy I heard him describe the conditions we now see and have seen for twenty years, a scarcity of good timber. He urged people to preserve the forests, and hardly anything exasperated him so much as for one of his workers felling trees to let a large one fall on and destroy small ones. When the lumber industry began to grow in the South and great sawmills were built our great forest pinelands sold for \$1.25 per acre. The U. S. Government offered any citizen clear title to a homestead of 160 acres almost for nothing except to live on it for five years. My father urged people who owned land to hold it and preserve the timber and those who did not own any, to take advantage of the homestead law. Some took his advice and afterwards had cause to thank him for his counsel; while others did not accept the counsel to their deep regret ever afterwards. Concerning agriculture he warned backward, ignorant farmers to conserve their land along the very lines now followed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Staggs of my father's generation were regarded as leaders in civic affairs. They were always loyal democrats, urging everyone to exercise his right to vote for honest sober leaders who would bring honor to the office instead of using positions for personal gain. While he might have been somewhat prejudiced, he always contended for justice and fair treatment for all human races. Yet he never could yield political privileges to the Negro. I heard him tell a Republican that he was a Democrat

because he was a white man. Certainly he had better reasons. Religiously he loved the Negroes, and would fight for their economic rights, pray and preach with them, but he did not want them to vote. He condemned strongly his white friend who took advantage of the Negro because of his ignorance; yet he would vote with his white friends who were really not as good as the Negro.

After preaching a few years and serving as a missionary under the auspices of the Louisiana Association with very little financial support, he was offered the position of Parish Assessor, which he accepted for a four year term. But he was always preaching on Sundays and often on week nights.

When our state was cursed for twenty-five years with a lottery licensed by the State Legislature, some of the best citizens became alarmed by the degrading influence of this gambling machine and determined to destroy it by electing a legislature that would refuse to grant a new franchise. By this time the machine had so permeated the political thinking with its immoral influences -- offering bribes and temptations of revenue to the state and even to churches, hospitals, and schools, all so much needed -- that it seemed doubtful if the good people could elect a legislature that would oust this octopus, as it was called.

In searching for men upon whom these advocates of righteousness could depend as being beyond the influence of bribery, several preachers, among whom was Adolphe Stagg, school teachers, farmers, business men, and doctors were put in the Legislature, with Murphy J. Foster, a farmer, as Governor. While some, even preachers, yielded to the pressure of the forces of evil by accepting bribes and betrayed their friends, their country and their God, enough remained faithful, among whom was Adolphe Stagg, to destroy that monster evil. As a temptation blank checks were placed on each man's desk. All he had to do was to write the amount it would take to buy his vote. Adolphe wrote across the back of his, "Not for sale at any price." Should I be proud of such a father? It was said that every preacher who sold out died within a year.

Some of the opponents of the lottery formed a club known as "The Old Guard," whose pictures and names are given elsewhere.

When I was a young man soon after this victory over the lottery I was in the company of some men and women who were expressing freely their opinions concerning the issue. One middle-aged man expressed the opinion that those who held out against it did so because they were not offered amounts large enough. He said, "Every man has his price." I gave my opinion, "That any man who would make that statement really has his price and I do not think it is a large one."

Father had not only moral but also physical courage. I give two instances. While he was at home on furlough from the Confederate Army during the Civil War two men rode up to his front gate. They were Yankees. He picked up his rifle and went out to meet them. They pointed to a nice horse nearby and asked if that was his horse. He said, "Yes, and I dare you to take him." They rode away. The second incident occurred when he drove on a bridge across a stream and met a man who said to him in a haughty voice, "Back off!" My dad replied "If there is to be any backing done, you will do it, for I came on the bridge first." The other man backed off. They were not acquainted, but dad knew from his garb that he was a Catholic priest.

As a neighbor he was kind and sympathetic in sickness, distress, and death. The scourge of Yellow Fever killed my grandfather, as well as many other relatives and neighbors. Adolphe went through it and recovered. Some years later when he had a family another seige cursed the country. Some of our neighbors were stricken and in need, so Adolphe answered the call for help. Notwithstanding the fact that his own family was in danger he nursed his neighbors. As a safe-guard mother would send a servant with clean clothes to meet him at the gate. He would then go to the Bayou, strip and bathe, washing out the dirty linens and putting on clean clothes to avoid contagion. Needless to say that in those days doctors were very scarce, and nurses known only in hospitals in large cities.

Among the many things Adolphe Stagg did was school teaching. In that connection there are two incidents. As already stated he was quite rigid in exercising discipline especially in regard to the moral code. One rule was that any pupil fighting should be whipped. No excuse could be rendered as acceptable. He said if any fighting was to be done he was the only one supposed to do it, and there was no exception. His own children, nephews, and neices knew very well where they stood. As one of his children it seemed to me that he was harder on us than any others. During one term of school when I was about ten years old, my oldest brother, about eighteen, had a fight with one of his cousins, who was nineteen years old. Pupils of that age were few and seldom misbehaved in any way, but among the younger ones and even among the girls there was fighting and consequent whippings frequently. When the big boys fought the younger fry wondered what would happen.

The fight occurred far out on the playground, so the teacher, seldom mixing with the pupils, failed to see it, and heard nothing of it for several days. After he investigated, he called the culprits to come before him as his custom was and submit to the punishment effected by the application of the apple-sprout, which was always ready. He might have forgotten many things but he always had his sprout, and it seemed to me he had a heavy hand. Brother stepped up to take his, but cousin reached for his hat, went out and went home. When leaving Dad told him to take his books, that he did not have to take the whipping if he wanted to leave school. He went on home, I suppose, thinking that he might come back. He lived about a mile from the school and within the hour, during recess, we saw him coming with his father, my father's brother. When they walked up, uncle said, "Adolphe, we are going to whip this boy if we have to chain him to that China tree." They did not have to do that. He submitted himself humbly, and continued on in school. When he was grown up he bragged that, "Uncle Adolphe made a real man out of me for which I am grateful."

The other incident was also a fight between two cousins, one a younger brother of the above mentioned

boy, and Uncle Etienne's oldest son, who is now ninety years old and still teaching a Sunday School class. He is also an uncle of Dr. Frank Stagg, professor in the New Orleans Seminary.

CHAPTER III

His Christian Experience

I am forced to think of the great contrast in the early religious experiences of my father and that of Charles Spurgeon. About the only thing they had in common was that they were born in the same year, 1834, and married in the same year, 1856. Spurgeon was born of religious parents, his father being a Congregational preacher. Therefore he was ever under the influence of Biblical teaching from the day he began to learn anything. Adolphe's father was a non-Christian man, and his mother a Catholic. It is doubtful if they ever had a Bible.

While the large family enjoyed a degree of culture above that of the average Creole family of that day, the children were brought up to work and recognize the fact that they did not belong to the "Aristocracy," even if they did own quite a number of slaves, large numbers of live-stock, and many acres of land. While there was a general atmosphere of moral dignity and wholesome living in the home, there was no religious teaching other than routine catechism and going to mass on Sunday. While he didn't live in the church as some boys do he declared that he had some early convictions that there was something wrong with the practices of his church. But he continued performing the ritual in his childhood and youth just out of respect and love for his mother, and because he did not know anything better. His father's attitude of indifference which amounted to rejection of the church possibly had much to do with creating doubt in the mind of the boy.

His father never professed any religion; yet he expressed a belief in God and lived an upright and moral life, because he said, "Those who live that way can better enjoy life." He went on the principle that honesty is the best policy, tell the truth and shame the devil, don't

gamble because you may lose, and don't drink because it may make a fool out of you. No matter of conscience was involved. In this contradictory atmosphere the boy grew up having little or no opportunity or special inclination to seek the truth, or try to settle the doubt in his mind. He followed his father's attitude of just living without God, the way he thought best, not a real moral life, but what human wisdom dictated.

When in his teens he went to a private school taught by a Baptist preacher. He must have learned something besides the "Three R's." Later in the Confederate Army he heard the gospel preached and went through great revivals which failed to reach him. Yet when he had reached middle age and had a family the miracle happened. Every conversion is a miracle but some more wonderful than others. There were seven brothers and four sisters, but only the two brothers who went to school to the Baptist preacher were ever converted. The youngest of the brothers was really Catholic in faith, but the others made no profession of any religion, living and dying as their father had lived without God and without hope. All were nursed by the same mother, brought up in the same home and church, taught the same catechism, baptized or sprinkled with the same ceremony. We believe in the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit in connection with the conversion of every soul turned from the world unto God. No known natural law accounts for the revolution in disposition and the change in relation to God and godly things which come to the heart that surrenders itself to a belief in Jesus Christ. We do not expect to explain these things, but we are simply calling the attention of greater minds to them. Can these mysteries be cleared up without attributing the causes to divine interposition?

Men who spend years in investigating the origin of the universe and the first causes of modes of motion in the development of animal life, would regard it as foolishness to spend even a day in looking for the first causes of great moral and religious reforms. Yet to trace the genesis of moral impulses or religious ideas is much more important and requires just as scientific and careful methods. Providential and apparently natural cir-

cumstances and social contacts brought to bear upon these two brothers named above deserve close scrutiny. I mention the two, for they were almost inseparable in childhood, maturity, and old age. Their views on almost any subject were the same. Their objectives in life and even in death were almost the same. When Adolphe died, Etienne asked for the privilege of furnishing the vault.

Let us look at the environment which usually plays such an important part in shaping the lives of children and consequently their destiny. In this case the very fact that the father rejected the teachings of the Catholics must have had its influence on some of the children, causing them to wonder why their dad took such an attitude, while their mother was such a devout Catholic and their dad's own mother, who was a Fusilier, was such a Catholic that she was married in the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans.

One of the strange things connected with the circumstances of his conversion was that they smacked of superstition, the very thing from which he was turning. This is the story: While Catholics teach the holiness of the Lord's Day, they are usually careless in its observance. While they condemn general labor on Sunday they do light jobs as working in gardens and orchards, indulge in pleasure and sports of various kinds -- golf, hunting and fishing. So it was the usual custom to herd cattle and brand them, pen wild hogs, mark them and sometimes butcher them -- all on Sunday. So in keeping with custom on one Sunday in company with a Protestant backslidden neighbor, he rode until late in the afternoon hunting hogs; and finding none, he stopped and said to his friend, "Hanks, this is the end of my Sunday hunting. Just to think that this woods is full of hogs and after all this riding we have not even found the sign of any. I am through." His friend was shocked at those words coming from a man who was in the habit of doing anything he pleased on the Lord's Day. On recovering from the shock his friend said, "What in the world has come over you?" His reply was the same, "I am through." The friend was shocked into repentance and became a useful Baptist deacon.

On his return home he told my mother about his

decision. Being Catholic and having no scruples about hunting anything on Sunday, she nevertheless, was glad to see him interested in religion. He knew little about the Bible, neither did she, because her church did not stress the reading of it and even forbade any private interpretation thereof. Mother had been taught that her church was founded on the Scriptures. So she readily agreed to search the Scriptures, which Dr. T. T. Eaton said was a dangerous thing for anybody but a Baptist to do. For several months they did little more than read the Scriptures. As she read on hoping to find some support for her faith, she found instead quite a bit that condemned it and that was in direct conflict with her faith and practice.

This investigation, instead of strengthening her faith in her church, really caused her to doubt. Continuing their reading and investigations they attended other church services, praying for and seeking the light to guide them into the way of truth as it is in Jesus. After much study, prayer and meditation, they together were convinced that they were changed and saved, and that the Baptist faith and practice came nearer complying with the Bible than any they had found. So they both united with Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Whiteville, St. Landry Parish, La., in 1870. This was just about thirty miles from Bayou Chicot where he went to school to the Baptist preacher years before, and where stands the first Baptist Church to be organized west of the Mississippi River. (Calvary Church, Bayou Chicot, was organized in 1812 by Joseph Willis, who has a glorious history in 'Lovely Louisiana'.)

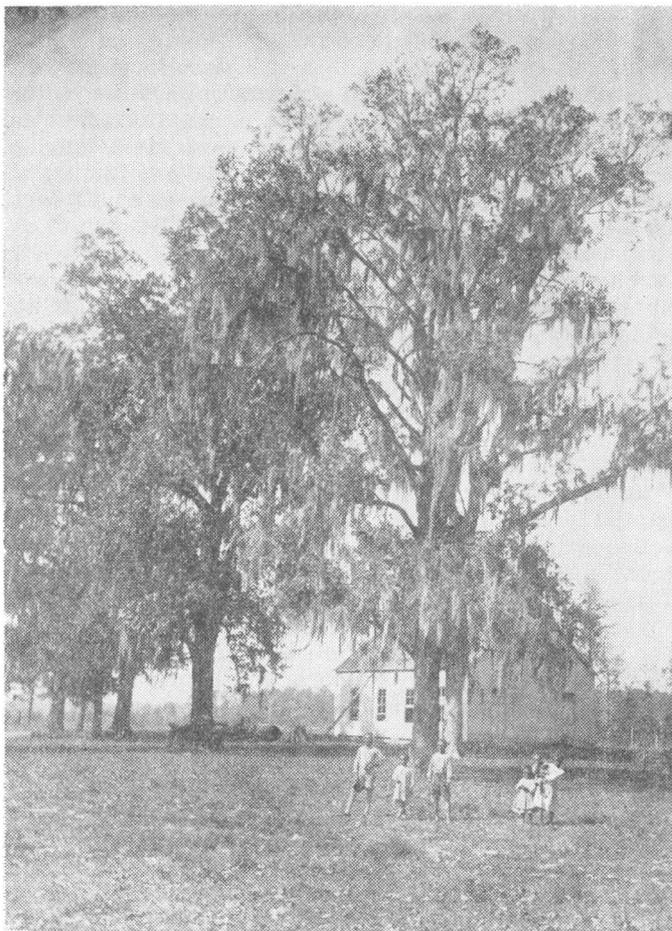
The writer was pastor of this church from 1906 to 1917. The Louisiana Baptist Association, the first to be organized west of the Great river, was organized at Cheneyville in 1818. This Association met with Calvary Church to celebrate her Centennial in 1912. Adolphe Stagg served on the program for this occasion by reading a history of the Church and the Association up to that time.

At that time and place it was quite unusual for a Catholic to change to some other faith, and my parents' change caused quite a commotion among non-Catholics as well as Catholics in general. It also stirred among the priests the spirit of persecution; among relatives the

spirit of ostracism. They could not understand how such a thing could be possible. Just today one of my nephews told me that some years ago he heard one of his oldest Catholic cousins say his uncle Adolphe had left the mother church because he was weak in the faith. The fact is he never really had their faith.

I heard my father say that one of his nephews who had been a priest for several years met him while visiting his sick brother, the father of the priest. The priest engaged in a discussion on religion endeavoring to convince his old uncle that he was wrong in leaving the mother church, and prophesied that either before or at his death he would renounce his newly-found faith. Strange to say that after father's death there was a rumor that he did just that thing. I want to declare here that I was with him almost all the time during the last weeks of his life, and I testify that in brief periods of consciousness he did not renounce his faith but emphatically declared his loyalty to the great truths and principles of the Bible which he had preached since his conversion.

The Holy Spirit seemed to use many early circumstances to strengthen his faith. These were: his father's attitude toward the Catholic Church, his contact with a Baptist preacher-teacher in his teen-age, his war experience and hearing the Gospel preached in evangelistic revivals, and his contact with a Baptist as his captain. This officer was Sam Hayden who, after the War, became a great Preacher and leader admired by both Adolphe and Etienne. While the failure to find his hogs on Sunday (attributed to a violation of the Lord's Day) seems a little bit superstitious, it could be attributed to the Holy Spirit using the Word of God as a sword to cut him loose from the bondage of sin. God is not confined to any particular agency in making his chosen communications. It is, perhaps, enough for us to know that he does communicate with his own in some way and impresses upon them his will. Impressions of great variety are continually being made upon the wicked going into deeper wrong. This to the Christian is clearly from the Good Spirit which would turn him back from his evil ways before his soul is utterly lost. In the same way spiritual voices are continually encouraging the soul which is struggling after the truth.



Calvary Baptist Church at Bayou Chicot, where was located the school attended by Adolphe and Etienne, taught by Thomas Rand, a Baptist preacher.

CHAPTER IV

His Preaching

With limited education, natural slowness of speech, and no training it must have taken courage, deep conviction and heroism for the rugged cow-driver and farmer, already middle-aged and with a family to support, to dare engage in such a high and holy calling.

I heard him say a number of times that with the call to salvation almost simultaneously came the call to preach the good news to those who knew little and cared less about their relation and responsibility to God. So he began at once to tell the old story of Jesus and his love. It was new to him and he had no authority but the Bible and his conscience. While he was not guilty of persecuting Christ by dragging his followers into prison like Saul of Tarsus he disobeyed his commands. While he was not stricken down on the road by lightning he was stricken by his conscience or the Holy Spirit in the wilderness. While he did not hold the clothes of those who witnessed the stoning of Stephen as did Saul, he was guilty of indifference and ignorance concerning his relation and his responsibility to God.

After his baptism his first recorded activity is found in the minutes of the Louisiana Association which met with Beulah Church in Cheneyville in 1870. Here his name is mentioned as a messenger from Mt. Olivet Church and a member of the committee on Missions and colportage. Again in the minutes of 1871 his name is listed as a messenger from the same church, as reading clerk, and also as a member of committees. Each time he is referred to as brother and not elder, a title used to designate ordained preachers. From this fact I gather that he was not ordained until 1872 when he is referred to as elder and pastor of Mr. Olivet Church.

Without any training in the schools of oratory, he could speak only in a rude manner the truths of the gospel. With only the Bible, a good commentary, and Smiths Bible Dictionary, his messages were prepared in his mind and heart without regard to rules of homiletics,

and delivered extemporaneously, depending upon the Holy Spirit to give him utterance while standing before his audience. Never until late in life did he use any notes or outlines. Among his papers I found an outline of a sermon on "The Great Commission" written on a page of small note paper. Do you think I prize that scrap of paper?

He made no effort to please or entertain, only to instruct and provoke thought.

In the beginning of his ministry the novelty of the thing attracted many who came just to see what would happen. Someone said the priest wondered why his congregation had fallen off and was told if he would send someone to see how many of his flock were attending the Baptist Church he would know why.

It was an unheard of thing for a Catholic to change his religion to say nothing of becoming a preacher. His complete confidence that he was right caused him to speak boldly as one having authority.

Many came to scoff and even disturb the worship, but persecution always helps any cause, right or wrong. The priest himself came with a crowd and visited, not the church services, but home services which he was supposed to control. He broke up the meetings on several occasions, but once the landlord routed the priest and made him leave.

Once, when the Baptists were assembled on the banks of a stream to baptize, the priest drove his buggy right into the crowd, stopped and stood up in his buggy, harangued the people, and ordered all Catholics to leave the place. The crowd remained quiet until the priest got tired and drove off. A few followed him, then the baptismal service was finished.

On another occasion during the service in a private home the priest was accompanied by men with guns, big knives and pistols. The men surrounded the house while the priest entered, walked through waving his hand, commanding all Catholics to follow him out, which some did.

Before Adolphe had been preaching very long, before I can remember, the priest at Washington challenged him to debate publicly in the Catholic church "The Bible

vs. The Catholic Church." The challenge was accepted, the debate held, and during the discussion the priest left the scene. Not many years ago one of my nephews met a man from Texas who told him that he heard the debate and in his opinion the priest was well beaten.

He did not borrow much from others but made his meaning clear using homely illustrations. He used the conversational style giving much time to the exposition of the Scriptures.

He used all kinds of circumstances to illustrate the truth in the application of Scripture teaching to the lives of his hearers. Dr. R. H. Conwell said Mr. Spurgeon preached with his fingernails. When I was a boy I heard Dr. W. S. Penick say that Brother Stagg preached with his feet. His mannerisms were strictly all his own. It is said that if you tied a Frenchman's hands he could not talk. Adolphe had a way of using his index or forefinger even in conversation as if pointing out something. "Preaching with feet" was said because he would stand on one foot and balance himself with the toe of the other on the floor. Recently I saw a preacher, the only one I remember seeing, doing the same thing.

His favorite sayings were; in attacking a man's religion, first show him that you have a better one. Hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may. If the cap fits wear it.

While he did not possess a college education, he did have a familiar acquaintance with the rules of composition in both the English and the French languages and was an industrious student of history and the teachings of great men such as J. R. Graves, J. B. Hawthorne, J. B. Gambrell, T. T. Eaton and other theologians, such as B. H. Carroll and John A. Broadus. By careful study he acquired a practical if not scientific, knowledge of theology. He believed in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and their literal interpretation where there is no direct conflict. He was eminently practical in his views of religious truth and by his peers considered sound in doctrine, especially as to man's personal responsibility to God, his free access to God through only one mediator, Christ Jesus, and that without any help from Mary or anyone else. He was eloquent only in simplicity and

earnestness. He seemed sincere and succeeded in convincing others that in his contention for the faith, he was fully satisfied that they were worthy of his earnestness and their attention. In the pulpit he was grave and disdained to call up a smile. He was never known to tell a joke while preaching though he enjoyed good clean jokes as few people do. He considered all fun during worship as sacrilegious.

Feeling his responsibility he spoke boldly, confessing that he, too, was a sinner and that he had a higher duty to perform, as a teacher, than to please the people and gain popularity for himself. He was often accused of being rough and unkind in his vehement condemnation of sins of all kinds; yet at heart I know he loved and sympathized with the sinner.

I fully realize that in my childhood when I thought his chastisement for my wrong-doing was too severe that he really did it for my own good, and that it was because he loved me. He was rigid in his discipline as a parent. He might have spoiled the child, but he certainly did not spare the rod. He was not so tough on the girls but Oh! you bad boys! He might have been extremely hard, but I know he loved us, and I know also that we all loved him, and I still love his memory. The others are all gone to meet him.

"The virtues of the good who have gone to their final reward are cherished in the memories of the living for study and imitation. Shining excellence of character constitute a richer legacy to the descendants of the good than great riches or high honor."

"The lessons of life are set before us in two forms for study: examples and precepts. Both are needed to produce the impressions which must be made to mold the character into the form designed by the Master."

"We are so constituted that we need the application of a mighty principle set before us to induce us to embrace and practise it. Truth may be ever so beautiful but unless it can be impersonated, mankind seldom falls in love with it. The truth had been in the world for about forty centuries in the abstract, but it took the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to impersonate its glory

to the delight of angels and the astonishment of our whole race."

Like many Baptist preachers, Adolphe spent several years of his life teaching in small private schools. High eulogies have been bestowed upon those who have donated a few thousand dollars to some benevolent purpose, but what is such a donation in comparison with the gift of learning to the schoolroom and the pulpit?

"Throughout the ages of Christianity the most powerful exponents of his pure principles have been those who have most meekly followed its precepts and copied its early examples."

"The type of religion which makes its deepest impression upon the age is that which presents the closest conformity to primitive Christianity."

Every part of our country has had its great and good men "living epistles known and read of all men." Louisiana is not an exception. We come to place on the roll of departed heroes the worthy name of one to be listed, not among the best, but only among the faithful.

"It is not to praise. It is not to emblazon or trumpet great deeds, for fame is the shade of immortality and itself a shadow." It is because the memory of the just is blessed that we review the history of a good man.

CHAPTER V

His Ministry and Pastoral Labors

While his entire ministry was a time of seed-sowing it is especially true of his missionary efforts. He is correctly classified as one of "God's Dividends in Louisiana" by J. Dandy and Marilyn Wagnon, and as a Baptist Builder by John Raymond and J. P. Durham.

In the first instance he was one of God's dividends in Louisiana because he was not the first one who made an effort to reach the French people, as is correctly stated by Mrs. Jenkins, but was the first one officially employed by Louisiana Baptists for the task. Adolphe's teacher, Thomas Rand, already referred to, was one who "among the French population did more good than

any other man who lived among us the same number of years." "To them he seemed to have a mission and among the many whom he taught to speak the English language are some who have renounced the errors of the 'man of sin.'" "A great part of the time that he was teaching school he preached every Sunday and the Lord gave souls for seals to his ministry." I quote this from the minutes of Louisiana Association where appeared Mr. Rand's obituary, because I believe by his teaching he also really produced a dividend for God in the person of Adolphe Stagg.

I believe the number of dividends for God depends largely on the clearness as well as the number of blazes made along the trail. It is difficult to follow a trail through the woods where the blazes are few and dim.

While the soil in which Adolphe sowed his first seed as well as his last, seemed to embrace all kinds, the harvest was not too discouraging. One thing we do know is that some fruit is still being borne. While his ministry began soon after his conversion, his first pastorate was with his home church for one-half time, some two or three years later. His official employment as a missionary to the French did not come until 1873.

Among the briars, rocks, and thorns that encumbered the ground upon which seeds were sown in those days were the terrible results that followed the war between the states, usually referred to as Reconstruction days: political, social and economic confusion. Race prejudice, especially toward the recently freed negroes, furnished a political problem more difficult if possible than the social or economic.

The financial bankruptcy problem was also a sharp thorn which pierced deep into the flesh of languishing civilization. The devil uses poverty as well as riches to carry out his destructive purposes.

Religious prejudice causes many Christians to remain in the briar patch and fail to grow in grace, as it also causes many to fail even to become Christians.

Dr. Christian says the history of Louisiana Baptists is a history of contrasts. "The Frenchman-Spaniard, Englishman-American, Creole-Indian, Negro and the White Man."

The social and economic conditions vary as much as the races. These problems have existed ever since the foundation of our country and still are unsolved. Christ is the only solution. Just in proportion as we make the full surrender to him is the problem solved.

Louisiana, with people of all these nationalities, naturally had many distinct beliefs about God and religion, but with the exception of the Indians we may divide them into two classes: the Catholic faith and the anti-Catholic faiths. The first settlers, the Spanish and the French, were predominantly Catholic while the later settlers were a general mixture of almost everything and quite a bit of nothing.

The Spanish and French descendants occupied mostly the southern part of the state while the Protestants and the Baptists coming from other states settled for the most part in north Louisiana. The few Protestants who settled in the southern part among the Catholics had a hard time even to maintain their principles. When they failed to propagate them they were usually lost in the avalanche of indifference, ignorance, and superstitions. New Orleans came to be known as the burying ground for Baptists. Because of this contrast between the progress and prosperity of north and south Louisiana a natural prejudice arose between the two sections. This Catholic influence continued, especially in New Orleans, for about one hundred years. The weak struggling churches, many of them, alas, fell by the wayside for lack of help from stronger ones. Thanks to the Lord many of them persevered until this prejudice or indifference subsided and through the efforts of Associational, State and Home Missions, the story of Missions in south Louisiana reads like interesting modern fiction. Still with all our great institutions and wonderful achievements there is great lack, because where iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold.

Why combine missionary and pastoral labors? Because they began that way and continued that way as long as Adolphe lived. The call of the little struggling church, Mr. Olivet, of which he was one-half-time pastor is still ringing from many weak churches today and is

not turned down by deaf ears as was that feeble cry long ago, but is answered by our State Mission Board.

Few Baptist churches in the entire state at that time were strong enough to support pastors for full-time service so that the pastor must either serve two or three or four churches or do other service for a support. It was often the case even four or five churches could not or did not contribute enough to support the pastor. Only when the missionary agencies such as the Louisiana Association, State Missions, and The American Baptist Publication Society, employed Adolphe did he receive salary sufficient for his support.

These periods of employment were not regular or of long duration. The association's periods varied; sometimes three months, six months, or a year, and then small amounts and usually belated.

In spite of the tremendous odds against evangelical Christianity some progress was made. With no organizations in the churches at the time except the Sunday Schools, and some churches did not even maintain Sunday Schools, the propagation of the gospel depended largely on the preached word backed up by the ancient custom of personal testimony such as Andrew to Peter. We like to stress trained leadership which is all right, but Andrew was not trained. It may be surprising, but in studying the methods employed in that period I am convinced and surprised at the similarity of the methods used today by our rural and even city missionaries under the auspices of our mission boards.

In the sparsely settled communities in that day were found Baptists and Christians of other means isolated from towns and community centers out of touch with church and school privileges, neglected and sometimes forgotten by the more fortunate. With many difficulties these people are often discouraged, become indifferent, and sometimes backslide. They may be enlisted and used to reclaim others and win the lost and sometimes form the nucleus for a church as others move into the community.

In these isolated sections of the country often there were Catholic families who were neglected by their priests, and they became careless about their church;

their children married Protestants and furnished good material for evangelization. When Catholics are alert they usually take care of mixed marriages by requiring the non-Catholic to promise to let the Catholic party rear the children in the Catholic faith, but when they are careless it often happens that they are married by a preacher or compromise by having a Justice or Judge perform the ceremony. As unfortunate as mixed marriages are, usually resulting in favor of the Catholic, yet the advantage is often in our favor. According to my observation it almost always happens when the non-Catholic is faithful and careful the non-Catholic wins to the extent, at least, of rearing the children according to his faith.

Often too when invasions were made by Baptists or others in such communities the Catholics would establish missions and sometimes churches to protect their faith. Moreover they attempted to persuade some who had been married by preachers and magistrates that they were not really, although legally, married. They caused even old people to be remarried by the priest with the blessings of the church.

It is astonishing how much power an ignorant untrained person can wield when he has the truth of the Bible on his side. I knew a man barely able to read who challenged his wife, a Catholic, to go before the priest with him and he would prove by the Bible that her church was not according to that book. She accepted the challenge and made arrangements with the priest for the meeting which resulted in the woman's conversion to the Baptist faith.

In the minutes of the Louisiana Association, meeting with the Beulah Baptist Church at Cheneyville, 1872, Adolphe Stagg is listed as one-half-time pastor of Mt. Olivet Church, Whiteville, Louisiana, where he had recently been ordained to the gospel ministry on Saturday before the fourth Sunday in April, with the following council: Chairman Elder John O'Quin; Sermon, Elder Thos. E. Muse.

In the same minutes is recorded a petition from the above named church to the association for financial aid in sustaining her pastor while he devoted one-half of his time to missionary labor among the French. Also the

report on missions recommends that something be done: "That inasmuch as the association is unable to carry on the work, that an appeal be made to the Domestic Board of Missions for help. We urge upon the churches to arouse to duty that they make it a special subject in their prayers, talk about it, preach about it, and manifest their love for Jesus by a free and systematic giving for it."

In connection with this report the following resolution was passed: "That the matter be published in the Louisiana Department of the Baptist: that Dr. Blake-wood be requested to write to the secretary of the Domestic Board of Missions: also present the subject to the Southern Baptist Convention." The committee also stated that "In Bro. Stagg we have an opening wedge, a Creole himself, more fluent in the French than in the English language, of high repute and extensive influence among his own people. It would be hard to find one better fitted."

It seems that this petition from the church for help from the association and the recommendation of the committee to do something about it and the resolution passed by the association to seek help brought no immediate results.

In the minutes of the Louisiana Association in 1874, the report of the Executive Board shows reports of Elder Adolphe Stagg, missionary for 1873-74: "Engaged about one-half time on a salary of \$800.00 per year; miles traveled 1430; Families visited 59; sermons preached 45; persons baptized 18; received on salary \$169.00." "For the time he was engaged his labors were abundantly blessed."

This was the beginning of the Baptist work among the French, first by the association alone. So it started with a missionary pastor, just what we call them now.

The report on missions states that "our missionary work for the past year is not by one-half what it should have been. The cheering news from our missionary calls for greater efforts on our part: therefore we recommend a plan of forming in each church a mission society."

Among the resolutions adopted was that if possible, the Executive Board keep Elder Adolphe Stagg in the field as missionary.



W. L. Stagg, Jr., Pastor, First Baptist Church, Mosspoint, Mississippi — son of W. L. Sr., and grandson of Adolphe — one of two preacher sons.

Most of his ministry has been in Louisiana, where he served as Recording Secretary of the Executive Board; President of the Board of Trustees of the Louisiana Baptist Hospital; member of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College and the Baptist Message; and as President of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He is now a member of the Board of Trustees of Mississippi Woman's College.



Harry P. Stagg, pastor, writer, administrator - presently the Executive Secretary of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. Harry has spent more than a quarter century in New Mexico, identifying himself with every interest of the Southwest. He is in the leadership councils of Baptists on a world-wide front.

The Executive Secretary represents the third in line of ministerial succession. Educated in the schools of Louisiana — college and seminary - he has been honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from Hardin-Simmons University.

There is no report for 1875, but the minutes of 1876 in the report on the state of the churches is listed Eden church of Ville Platte, with statistics unchanged. "Surrounded as she is by the power of Catholicism we commend her for her zeal. She has preaching every Lord's day by Elder Adolphe Stagg and J. F. Shaw." This church is listed as organized in 1875. It was the first church organized by Adolphe Stagg. The report of the Executive Board 1876 says "We have had no missionary in the field and hence, have nothing to report." "We have endeavored to carry out your wishes, in the employment of a missionary. The work was offered to Elder Adolphe Stagg, and it was the earnest desire of the Board that he should continue in the work, but his mind was otherwise directed."

No reason is mentioned but a glance at the treasurer's report shows that balance due him for 1873-74 was not paid until October 3, 1875. Being human and not as self-sacrificing as he might have been he yielded to other employment which brought more certain and larger compensation.

Yet while not employed officially as a missionary he was pastor at Mt. Olivet, Eden, Coule Croche, Belleview, Pilgrims Rest and Big Cane. He preached somewhere every Sunday and often during the week at night, at school houses and often in private homes. He did a great deal of personal work during contacts with people all day.

Not long after his death I was looking over his papers and found a letter of about ten pages addressed to him, signed Elder A. J. Terry, Father of Dana and A. J. Jr., Missionary to Brazil, urging him to resume the position of missionary to the French. I do not remember the date. It must have been in 1876 when he refused the work. About this time he accepted the office of Parish Assessor which he held for four years. During these years he continued as pastor of his first love, Eden (Ville Platte) and was active among the leaders at the associational meetings, serving on the various committees and as moderator for three consecutive sessions: 1878-79-80; and on several occasions later. In 1877 he brought the report on missions and colportage, was listed as pastor of four churches and preached on Saturday night during that session.

At every session of the association after this his

name appears only as a messenger, member of some committee, moderator, pastor of some church until 1882 when the report on State Missions mentions that "the work of Adolphe Stagg, though brief, was a success." "The hope of your committee is that he may be kept in the field for all his time, devoted wholly to the French population." The report of the Executive Board again recommends that Brother Stagg be placed in the field again as missionary to the French, and that steps be taken to provide for his support. "The steps to be taken were to get the assistance promised by the State Board with a view to permanent work. This support was given, but for only a brief period as we see from the report on State Missions and the Executive Board for the next year, 1883. Again the association without the assistance of the State Board undertook to carry on the work, but for only another short period. The report says "We regret to say that we have been unable to get the work done in our association that we expected as a result of our cooperation with the State Board." Again he received only a small sum on his salary. At this session he reported that he had made four visits to Aimwell, revived and reorganized Aimwell Church as requested at the last association.

The report on State Missions at the 1884 session says that "Elder A. Stagg has not abandoned his field of labor since he was recalled by the State Board but continued in his work and reported to our own Board." The report of the Associational Board at this same session states that "At the beginning of the Association year, Brother A. Stagg was employed as Missionary to the French. The State Board of the Convention stipulated to pay one-half of his salary from the first of January 1884. Our French Missionary has labored faithfully with a little less than half his salary unpaid."

In the minutes of the association which met for the last time with Mt. Olivet Church on October 1-4, 1885, Adolphe Stagg, moderator, we find these statements: "We have only two ministers Adolphe Stagg and J. F. Shaw, who can preach in French." "These two ministers ought to be put into the field for the whole of their time." "The next session will be held with the Bayou Rouge Church at Evergreen." "The Missionary Sermon to be preached by

Elder Adolphe Stagg. The Executive Board employed Elder Adolphe Stagg as our missionary for three months. Your Board would have kept Brother Stagg in the field but they were without means."

The report on State Missions at the Association meeting in 1886 says "By referring to the minutes of the State Convention, it appears that the State Board has employed two missionaries to labor within the bounds of Louisiana Association one of which was to do French Mission." This is supposed to be Adolphe. Again the report says: "We learn that the State Board intends to continue the missionary to the French." "The next meeting to be with Eden Church Ville Platte, Adolphe Stagg to preach the Missionary Sermon."

In keeping with the above appointment the association met in 1887 with Eden Church at Ville Platte. The report on State Missions says "The Louisiana Baptist Convention has made considerable progress in the mission work during the last year. Missionaries were employed and sustained in different parts of the State, three of whom have been laboring among the French and Americans" one of whom was Adolphe. The destitution in our State is great, but it is the desire and intention of our State Board to relieve it. They reported one hundred and six baptisms, three churches constituted and three Sunday Schools. One church house constructed, four hundred twenty-five dollars raised for State and Foreign Missions.

By request of A. Stagg, appointed to preach the Missionary Sermon E. K. Branch preached the sermon in English, and Adolphe followed preaching in French the same Text: "Ye are the Light of the World."

Records of the Louisiana Association give Adolphe's name as supply pastor for Bayou Des Glaises and Providence Churches while he was employed by the State Mission Board in 1888.

In 1889 he is still listed as supply pastor for the above named churches and also for Fidelity which he organized on Bayou Jacque in Avoyles Parish the year before. Providence, near Marksville, was also organized by him in 1887.

In 1890 he is again listed as supply for Fidelity and

Providence while serving as Missionary to the French, also in 1891 the same thing is recorded.

In the minutes of 1892 he is not listed as supply or pastor of any church. He brought the report on State of the churches.

In the proceedings of the Louisiana Association 1893 we read that the Introductory Sermon was preached by Elder Adolphe Stagg, Text: Matt. 18:20.

The following officers were elected: Adolphe Stagg, Moderator; W. L. Stagg, Clerk; and Dr. P. B. Wright, Treasurer.

In the same minutes he is listed as pastor of Aimwell Church.

In the Associational meeting at Boyce, in 1894 he is again Moderator but not listed as pastor. He was pastor at Pilgrims Rest because I supplied for him while he served in the legislature.

In the report of the Executive Board to the State Convention at Amite City this same year he is mentioned as a missionary to the French and as having recently baptized four on his field.

In 1895 Adolphe is again listed as Moderator of the Association and Pastor of Pilgrim's Rest Church, also as Missionary.

In 1896 the very same conditions exist.

In 1897 he is listed as Moderator and not as pastor.

In 1898 he is again Moderator and not pastor.

1899 he is again Moderator and not pastor.

In the report on State Missions in 1899 at Bunkie, there is a statement that "We trust the time will soon come when the work among the French speaking people will be resumed," signifying that it had been dropped.

In the minutes of the 1900 session of the Louisiana Association held at Simsport, the familiar name of Adolphe Stagg does not appear except in the "List of Ministers."

Younger and more efficient, but not more faithful, hands will direct the affairs of the old beloved Association.

His name appears as a messenger from Pilgrim's Rest to the Association meeting in 1901 with Big Cane and as serving on the Committee on Ways and Means. Again the report on State Missions says "The missionary efforts among the French will be resumed as soon as practical."

In 1902 when the Association met with Beulah Church in Cheneyville, a motion by Adolphe carried to re-elect all the officers who had served the previous year. He also brought the report on Publications.

In 1903 his name appears only as a messenger from Pilgrim's Rest Church with which the Association met.

The Association meeting in Lecompte in November, 1904 the Clerk was instructed to send Christian greetings to Elder Adolphe Stagg who, on account of sickness, could not attend He is listed as Pastor of Mt. Vernon church.

In 1905 he seems to have gotten back in service, listed as messenger from Pilgrim's Rest to the Association meeting with Bayou Rouge Church at Evergreen. He served on the Home Missions Committee, also on the Committee on Ways and Means, and is listed as messenger to State Convention and alternate messenger to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The devotional service at one session was conducted by Bro. Stagg, pastor of Mt. Vernon. This was his last pastorate.

In 1906 he is listed as a messenger from Mt. Vernon, at Garland, to the Association which met that year with Emmanuel Church of Alexandria. His only service seems to have been as a member of the committee on Ways and Means.

The Louisiana Association met with Calvary Church at Bayou Chicot in 1907 and elected Elder Adolphe Stagg, Moderator and appointed him as "messenger to the Southern Baptist Convention which meets in Hot Springs, Arkansas next May."

Again when the Association met in 1908 with the Bunkie Baptist Church we find him in the Moderator's chair, conducting the business as usual. Again he is listed among the messengers to the State Convention.

In 1909 at Cheneyville the Association was called to order by Moderator Adolphe Stagg, but he was not re-elected. He served as chairman of the Home Missions Committee.

Again in 1910 with Pilgrim's Rest Church we find him Moderator.

In the report on State Missions, R. M. Boone says "Gratifying reports come to us from our French Mission

Field." I know these cheering words stirred deeply the heart of the old Moderator who had devoted so much of his life to that work which had for several years been practically abandoned by our State Board of Missions.

The Louisiana Baptist Association convened with Dry Bayou Baptist Church in 1911, near Morrow, Louisiana, the former Moderator, Adolphe Stagg in the chair, but again he was not re-elected. He served as Chairman of the committee on Foreign Missions.

On adjourning at the suggestion of W. J. Westberry, the Association extended the parting hand to Elder Adolphe Stagg, as he is the oldest preacher in our bounds.

In 1912 the Louisiana Baptist Association met with Calvary Baptist Church at Bayou Chicot, Louisiana, helping the church celebrate her centennial. The Association sang "Higher Ground," and Adolphe Stagg led in prayer.

After the organization the Moderator announced that Adolphe Stagg would give the History of the Calvary Church, together with some of the achievements of the Association which was organized in Cheneyville six years later in 1818. He was again elected to represent the Association in the State Baptist Convention to meet at Ruston. He attended that convention; and I think it was his last.

Of course I do not remember when French Missions began. The work at Faquetaigue was started by the late Brother Ozeme Derouen. The Faquetaigue Church was constituted May 29th, 1910. The church at Ville Platte was constituted October, 1915. Some specific words about French Missions. Standing now on the streets of Ville Platte, Eunice, Faquetaigue, and Mamou, looking at the modern neat buildings occupied by their respective Baptist congregations it is impossible to appreciate the small unpainted single-room, cheap buildings, in which the early missionaries preached to small congregations composed of a dozen to forty or fifty people. Just as great is the contrast when French pastors now preach to hundreds, and broadcast on the radio to thousands, who otherwise never would hear it. Then there was bitter persecution, now little opposition.

During my father's ministry there were no wealthy, liberal hearted Mary Lou (Johnson) Jenkinses giving to

assist in building and paying salaries of the few missionaries. They had to depend upon the small contributions of poor people and appropriations from associational and state boards, which seemed mere tokens of the necessary amounts to establish the work on an influential basis to arouse attention and create faith in the enterprise. As usual the people "despised the day of small things." A little boy, whose father was a Methodist and whose mother was a Baptist, when very small, went to Sunday School with his mother. When large enough to think about what church to join he said "I want to join the Methodist, they have a better house."

At Ville Platte where Adolphe established the first church among the French, he found a young man, John F. Shaw, who had been licensed in Texas to preach. Having married a French woman from Ville Platte, he returned there and was teaching school. He was led by Adolphe to make a full surrender to preach and was ordained. Having acquired a working knowledge of the French language, he was called as pastor of the young church, giving Adolphe further opportunity to preach in other places. The writer was the first convert baptized by Bro. Shaw. Father had the privilege of baptizing all his children but two. My youngest brother was baptized while away at college.

The little church after struggling for several years under the ministry of Brother Shaw without the support of the State Mission Board finally ceased to function until 1915 when through the efforts of L. C. Smith, employed by the State Mission Board, a few of the remaining members were gathered with several others and organized the now thriving Baptist Church at Ville Platte, Theodore Cormier, Pastor.

Two of the original members are still alive and still working as members of that church, viz: Mrs. Herodia (Guillory) Vidrine. She is a granddaughter of John F. Shaw. Another is Mrs. Homer Deville grandmother of Berkman Deville now pastor of one of the oldest churches **in the state, Bayou Rouge.**

God only knows how much of the success of the present work of the Church is due to the founding fathers. "One sows and another reaps." The prayers of faith and

labors of the Staggs, Shaws, Fontenots, Soileaus, Devilles, Winfields, Guillorys, Vidrines and others could not have been in vain. Among the families mentioned we have several preachers viz: Murry Soileau, Lastie, his brother, now deceased and his son Robert now a student in New Orleans Seminary and Berkman Deville, Adea Vidrine, and John Vidrine.

Another church, named Fidelity, was organized in Avoyelles Parish on Bayou Jacque in 1887. It was made up of English and French, flourished for several years but never became self-supporting. When several families moved away on account of overflows and the State Board withdrew its support the church disbanded. There is an incident, especially interesting to me, connected with this little church, viz: When my father began work in this community he sold and gave away Bibles and Testaments. A French boy, Felix Ortego, whose parents were Catholics, accepted one against his mother's protest. He became interested enough to hide it and read it on the sly. One day his mother found it under his pillow where he had forgotten it. She burned the book and gave him a severe scolding for reading it. The mother apparently succeeded, but ten years later during the first year of my ministry I was pastor there. During a revival that same boy then grown and married attended the meeting, made a profession of faith and was baptized and became an active Christian. His Catholic wife was soon converted. They reared a large family who with the mother belong to the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, La., the father, having died a member of that church several years ago.

When we met to baptize him, his father, mother, and grown brother appeared on the scene. The mother cursed and villified me, the church and my denomination; the father threatened to beat and drown me; the son with a shotgun in his hand threatened to shoot and kill me if I proceeded to baptize his brother. The candidate proposed to postpone the service for my sake and safety, saying "I know my dad better than you do." I had some difficulty in persuading him to proceed. It happened a peace officer, a Catholic, was called, took charge of the disturbers, and we proceeded. He often thanked me after-

wards for insisting that we should not postpone the service. The brother with the gun was charged with disturbing the worship. As a witness I testified that he did not disturb the worship. He disturbed and threatened me, before the time for worship. The jury cleared him, but one member, a Catholic, said "Let's stick him anyway, he had no business to bother the preacher."

This fact might be of interest to some: The grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, of Bro. Jaroy Weber who was born in Bunkie, La., were members of my father's congregation. Bro. Weber is presently pastor of the First Baptist Church of West Monroe, Louisiana.

While in the employment of the State Mission Board about this time Adolphe did quite a bit of work in Avoyelles Parish at Big Bend, Bayou Des Glaises, Moreauville, Cotton Port where Missionary Coats now has a mission; and also around Marksville, where there is now a church pastored by a strong man partly supported by State Missions. For quite a while Adolphe held regular services in the Parish Courthouse. It was in the country about four miles north of Marksville that he found a French man, Aurelie Dausat, who had been converted and baptized into a Negro Baptist Church. Adolphe instructed him more perfectly in the way of the Lord, and enlisted him in service organizing the Providence Baptist Church already mentioned. Dausat like Adolphe went to preaching immediately after his conversion and was soon ordained and employed by the State Board as a third missionary to the French. For a few years he did much good. Starting late in life, his work was necessarily brief.

A peculiar incident about this church; according to standards of that day the French with the help of a few others built a nice one room building out on the open prairie. No other buildings were very near. Not many years had passed. The church did not prosper rapidly because of strong opposition by the Catholic people who fought valiantly against all encroachments of any faith but especially Baptists. There came a storm which did little damage in the community but blew away the entire church building except the floor and pulpit leaving them intact with the Bible on the pulpit unhurt. The house

was never rebuilt, many were the rumors about it.

About this time a church was organized in the town of Marksville. Adolphe had a mission across Red River from Markville on the Experiment Plantation. The meetings were held in an old abandoned sugarhouse on the draining floor, a place where barrels of wet sugar were put so the molasses could run out through round holes in the bottom of the barrels. In these barrels stalks of sugar cane were placed after cutting the ends square to give space for the molasses to pass on to the floor. The floor was inclined enough for the molasses to run into vats, whence it was transferred into barrels for shipment.

Many French and English people were tenants on this farm, isolated from church privileges. While at home, one summer on vacation I went with my father trying to assist him by leading the song and prayer services. I remember holding services here many times. One reason I remember so well is that the overseer, Mr. Isham West, had two beautiful girls. We were entertained in their lovely home. There I drank my first iced tea and ate my first oatmeal.

While trying to write these lines, I was disturbed by the phone ringing nearby. My wife answered it. Sitting near, she worried me some with the conversation. Now and then I heard her say "Mary," but there are so many Mary's I kept on trying to write. A little later my wife said "He is here writing a biography of his father." She should have said "trying to write." When she hung up she said that was Mary West "and when I told her what you were doing she remarked 'Well I was converted under his preaching.' " She is the younger of the two girls mentioned above and went to college with me and my wife. She is a widow, Mary (West) Pearce, living in Bunkie, Louisiana, having reared an honorable family.

When we undertake to estimate the value, virtue or success of an individual, enterprise or institution, if we follow the plan revealed in the Holy Scriptures, we must not fail to record their defects, failings and short comings. As the revealed word of God says "By their fruits ye shall know them," yet no saint can claim to bear perfect fruits. Therefore we are forced to let our estimates of character be based on the dominating spirit of those under

consideration. "If ye have not the spirit of Christ ye are none of His." As many as are led by the spirit of God are his children whether great or small.

As individuals we hear great appeals made in great addresses and are stirred to make resolutions which often are soon forgotten. As associations and conventions we recommend plans, pass resolutions to request the churches to contribute funds for scholarships, for worthy students and endow colleges and seminaries. Some churches exercise their independence and many do little about it. Others do nothing, but the work in general goes on. So every individual Christian life in spite of his defects goes on.

In expressing my views I hope I shall not be misunderstood for some one may ask "Why were you not a French Missionary?" To this question I would answer I am willing to let the Spirit have His way and absolutely He never impressed me to take up that work. So it may be possible that He did not call other French converts to be missionaries among the French.

It seems to me that French Missions has never enjoyed the full sympathy of our state denominational leaders. My memory goes back almost to the beginning, and I heard expressions, which manifested doubt as to the wisdom or necessity of giving the gospel to the French in their own language. Some who did sympathize and engage in the work became discouraged because of the lack of support and enormous difficulties, and the slow progress made by the feeble efforts put forth by the weak servants personally engaged. Some conclude that it is a useless effort and a waste of money and time. The work is difficult and therefore slow, not because it is French, but because the people are dominated by Catholicism. In all countries where the people are priest-ridden it is extremely difficult to win them to true Christianity. There seems to be an impenetrable barrier between them and the truth. Then there is a race prejudice as well as religious prejudice which is so hard to destroy even among Christians.

Even some French converts who are called to preach go to college and seminary and seem to have little or no interest in their own people, but work with other people.

Is it a lack of special calling? Is it prejudice? Is it superior living facilities or lack of willingness to endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ? I am frank to say "I do not know." I will say French Missions is not now receiving sympathy and support from people in general that is pleasing the Lord.

While it is true today that due to the progress of the State Public Education many young French people understand English, many do not.

Many, young and old, who do understand English have no opportunity to hear the gospel, and many say they prefer to hear it in their native tongue.

Then let us not forget there are thousands of older people in undeveloped territories who know nothing about salvation apart from Mary, and are therefore lost.

Let us not neglect the heathen in the far country; yet let us remember those perishing at our very doors.

My dear father might have been mistaken in yielding to the call of the state to serve, as Parish Assessor, and State Legislator, yet in these capacities he had opportunities to serve and honor God as well as his country. I verily believe had he received reasonable support and more encouragement he would not have neglected his French Mission to serve in these capacities.



This group, entitled "The Old Guard" is of a state legislative contingent who stood out against the evils of the day. Adolphe Stagg, a member of the legislature at that time is shown, second down in center row.

The men are, top to bottom, first row: J. W. Young, D. E. Harp, T. E. Murphy, O. C. Dawkins; 2nd row: T. L. Lewis, J. A. Pulford, T. L. Mathis, John Franklin; Third row: T. S. Adams, Adolphe Stagg, Ambrose Mouton, Fred Deibel, George Lomax; Fourth row: M. R. Joyner, Sol Shelby, B. F. Brian, J. T. M. Hancock; Fifth row: H. L. Brian, A. Benoit, P. L. Collins, J. J. Fike. Other members of the Old Guard, not shown, included J. W. Taylor and A. T. Nelson.



This is Mount Vernon church, the last pastorate of Adolphe Stagg. His son, W. L. Stagg, Sr., was pastor at the time of this picture. He is standing almost directly in front of the door to the left. Sitting on the ground in front of his father-preacher is Harry Stagg, then under 12 years of age, destined later to bear in reputation and service the Stagg name across the breadth and depth of Southern Baptist Zion.

CHAPTER VI

Mrs. Stagg and Her Trials

It has been said that, "The sweetest words on earth are mother, home, and heaven." The domestic love which makes home what it is intended to be is the only stimulant on earth which makes heaven intelligible. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and hence made a help that was meet for him.

Miss Ultima Carrentine's father was a native of France, and was among the early settlers of St. John The Baptist Parish in Louisiana. He was a cabinet-maker in prosperous circumstances but died when Ultima was a small child. Her mother, Coralie Yentzen, daughter of Henry Yentzen, who was born near Hamburg, Germany, in the Grand Dutchy of Michlenburg, having already died, left several older girls and one boy. The children were reared by an uncle who moved to Washington, La., St. Landry Parish, where Ultima met Adolphe Stagg. They were married in 1856 in the Catholic Church at Opelousas. No more important event occurred in his life than this, unless it was his religious experience. The cases are rare where any man has made a mark worthy of notice who was not supported by a persevering wife.

It was more common in those days than it is now for girls of the tender age of fifteen to marry. Like many young girls she was modest, timid, and submissive to the wishes and even whims of her husband. Adolphe was more fortunate than his brother Etienne in this respect for his Catholic wife was less considerate of her husbands desires, opinions, and convictions with regard to religious affairs. When Etienne became a Baptist Christian, his wife was mean to him and hard-hearted to the extent of hiding and threatening to burn his clothes to keep him from going to church. On the other hand Adolphe's wife joined and encouraged him in the eager search for the truth. Nobody knows or ever will know how great a part she played in his life, arousing in him hope and ambition to carry on even when the way was dark and the light dim. While she was not a lady of literary attainments to point out his errors and correct

them, she was a woman of good sense and quite keen intuition. Had he married a wife who was not pious and sincere she would have served to injure his reputation and undermine much of his work. She was a beautiful woman. I heard that tribute paid her when I was a small child by my relatives and friends. Of course I thought so, and she became more beautiful to me as the years went by, because I could more appreciate her beautiful character.

She was the mother of fourteen children. Six died in infancy, three others in childhood, while the remaining five reared large families and reached ripe old age, with one exception. My brother John passed away in middle life. The writer is now the last survivor. Converted from the Catholic Faith to the Baptist at the age of twenty-eight, she lived a quiet, devoted Christian life, enduring many trials and tribulations, suffering from ill health and many privations, with little comforts in life. She bore with unusual patience the absence of my father while away from home in the Army serving his country for four years, or away on business, or politics, or preaching the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ to the bewildered French people.

As it was not customary for women to pray in public, I never heard my mother pray except to repeat the Lord's Prayer, but I know she prayed often for us, and on Sunday afternoons she would call us children in from play and read to us passages from the Bible, stories, and sometimes one of Spurgeon's sermons, the first written sermons I knew anything about.

My dad never wrote a sermon during his whole life. In after life I became fond of Spurgeon's sermons, and in reading them I thought of my dear mother and of childhood days, how the tears would stream down her fair cheeks, for she was very tender-hearted. I wondered then why; now I know. Some times she would invite neighbors to visit with us and sing in a simple way the gospel songs and hymns of praise. One of her favorites was, "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy." On one occasion among the visitors was a French Catholic lady who expressed her thanks and appreciation by saying, "It was good past-time." I heard her tell of an incident when father came

home from the Army on a few days furlough. She emptied his knapsack, and finding a piece of moulded bread threw it to the dog. The dog looked at it, smelt it, and refused to eat it. So she had a big cry. She even shed tears while telling about it years later.

We had hard times, often going for weeks without any flour bread, forced to eat corn-bread and potatoes, but thank the Lord they were not moulded. If my father and mother ever quarreled they did it while I was asleep or absent from home. I heard them discuss problems but never dispute over anything. Father was naturally rough but never treated mother unkindly. They cooperated in disciplining the children. Mother was strict, and dad was stricter, but both seemed fair in administering justice.

Mother was industrious and economical in what little she had in administering the affairs of the home. She did everything, scrubbing with a home-made corn-shuck mop, washing with wooden rub-boards, ironing with hand smoothing irons, sewing by hand using whip-stitching or back-stitching, cooking on fireplace or cast-iron stove, often in a kitchen with a dirt floor separate from the main dwelling. There was little machinery. She was middle-aged before she even had a sewing machine. All work was drudgery then. Those were "Good old days." Yet there existed love, joy, and happiness.

During the last months of her illness I was with her much of the time, and she often remarked, "Oh, I am so tired!" She did not say so, but I know she longed for the rest of those who sleep in Jesus. On January 6, 1901, at her residence on the highway between Eunice and Acadia Academy, she fell on that sleep from which none ever awakes to weep. Her body lies in the cemetery of Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church beside that of Adolphe.

During the last two years of her life she was happy to have me as her pastor. For the funeral we secured the services of Floyd Vaughn, then pastor of First Baptist Church at Crowley, La.

CHAPTER VII

The Death of the Righteous

In his retirement period during the last decade of his life until four months before his death Adolphe's general health was unusually good for an old man. He was fortunate in having good eyesight. He could see to shoot squirrels, which he did occasionally. He spent most of his time reading and studying his Bible and current religious literature. He never lost interest in the welfare of his country and government. He was a careful student of the history leading up to the First World War, which occurred in 1914-1918.

He spent most of his time during the last two years of life studying and reviewing a book, "Faith of Our Fathers," written by Cardinal Gibbons, which had been given him at the deathbed of a brother by a nephew who was a priest, already mentioned. He visited quite a lot and preached some. He loved company and was especially delighted to entertain his brethren, particularly preacher friends, and even strangers. His generosity was sometimes imposed upon by fakers claiming to be preachers. He abundantly observed the injunction, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." He fed many tramps but always dismissed them with a lecture.

He was a great entertainer. I asked my son, W. L., Jr., what he remembered most about his grandfather, and his reply was, "As an entertainer; keeping us awake until midnight every time he visited us." I remember that he loved jokes so long as they were not on him.

Late in life when he had proved his loyalty to his conscientious convictions and showed his attitude toward sin of all kinds and his approval of righteous deeds of all kinds, the spirit of persecution and prejudice on the part of his relatives changed to that of admiration. As an indication of this change, when he visited one of his brothers who was sick and on his death-bed, it was reported that his brother's daughter remarked, "What a

beautiful spirit my Uncle Adolphe showed. Would he not have made a wonderful priest?"

On Christmas Day he was called to celebrate a marriage ceremony in the town of Eunice some six miles away. He made the trip comfortably in his buggy, though it was very cold. Wishing to eat Christmas Dinner with his children and grandchildren, he excused himself from the wedding festivities and returned home. The lateness of the hour caused him to be very hungry. He, perhaps, ate too much, and suffered acute indigestion from which he never fully recovered.

Suffering almost continually for four months he patiently endured the pain. During the severe paroxysms he would earnestly request us to pray for the Lord to take him out of his misery. When he would find some respite he would converse freely, being fully aware that the end was near, often saying, "I have fought a good fight and I am still fighting the devil who tells me yet to give up, but God's grace still enables me to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "I have never regretted that I have served my God so long and I know whom I have believed. If I have any regret it is the thought of separation from loved ones and that will not be too long."

His last hours were spent in unconsciousness, but the few days previous to his death were marked by an impatience to be "Absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." At the memorial service held by the Louisiana Association in his honor, Dr. E. O. Ware, one of his co-laborers, said of him, "Adolphe Stagg was every inch a man, and the greatest fireside preacher I have ever seen." He lived above reproach. Not a stain ever darkened his reputation.

In all the private relationships of life, as a husband, father, brother, master of slaves, employer, neighbor, citizen, and officer of the government, he was governed by the word of God, which he delighted to study. As a Christian and minister he spent over forty years in service and could always bear testimony to the faithfulness of the Divine Redeemer. He is gone but he lives in a Godly life whose example is set before us for our imitation. He lives, too, in the life and labors of a beloved son who followed him into the ministry. He also lives in other

sons, whose sons and son's sons are today preaching the Gospel; others are active Christians and deacons promoting the kingdom of our Lord.

Herchel H. Stagg, a grandson, was for many years pastor and teacher in Louisiana and Texas; then missionary of the Home Board serving in California, now Superintendent of Evangelism in California. He was graduated at Baylor University and the Baptist Seminary at Berkeley, California. Another grandson, Harry P. Stagg, who pioneered in Western New Mexico for several years as a missionary pastor at Gallup, has been Executive Secretary of the Mission Board of that state since 1938. W. L. Stagg, Jr., a brother of Harry, is now pastor of the First Baptist Church, Moss Point, Mississippi, after having served as pastor of several churches in Louisiana; Covington, Glenmora, Bossier City, Lake Charles First, and Elizabeth. And for two years president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Myron H. Stagg, son of a grandson, Hayden Stagg, is a graduate of Louisiana College and the Golden Gate Seminary, and has served as pastor of several churches and is now serving as chaplain in the U. S. Army, located in Michigan. Two grandnephews, grandsons of his much loved brother Etienne, are Baptist ministers: Dr. Frank Stagg, Professor of New Testament in the New Orleans Seminary, and Leonard Stagg, pastor in Virginia and a World War II chaplain. Another grandnephew and cousin of Frank is Dr. L. A. Stagg, Jr., at present pastor of First Baptist Church of Houma, Louisiana.

Adolphe was not naturally emotional but rather stout hearted, rarely giving expression to his feelings. The first time I heard my father cry was when my brother, who was two years older than I, died at the age of ten years. While he was earnest in preaching he was rather argumentative, seldom showing any emotion; but in his declining years he became more tender and loving in his manners. On one occasion when he visited my family I asked him to preach. He reluctantly consented. He was quite feeble and in describing his joy that one experiences in soul-winning he related an incident which occurred while he was serving in the State Legislature. Carrying out a custom that it did not matter what

he did during the week or where he was, he would attend service on Sunday and would also preach if circumstances and providence allowed. On invitation he preached at a country church near Baton Rouge in 1892. Some fifteen years later, only a short time before he related the incident, he met a man about one hundred and fifty miles from the place where he had preached. The man reminded him of the occasion and declared that the sermon led him to accept Christ as Saviour. Filled with emotion, it was with difficulty he finished his wonderful story.

Not long after this, on April 17, 1914, his prayer was answered when the Spirit which for nearly eighty years had animated the body of Adolphe Stagg separated from its mortal encumbrance until the Resurrection Day. He has gained, and we have lost. He has triumphed and we are still warring.

His body lies in the cemetery of Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, ten miles from Eunice, Louisiana. His funeral was conducted by W. J. Westberry, pastor of the church at that time.

CHAPTER VIII

Some Observations Made by Adolphe Stagg During His Long and Useful Life

You can always tell how welcome you are in a home after visiting it a few times by the way the children in the home treat you. At some homes the children would run out to open the gate for me to drive in. At others they would run and hide from me. On one occasion while holding a revival I was staying in the home of a deacon who with his family entertained me very cordially until the close of the meeting. There being only a few days before I was to hold another meeting nearby, and being a long distance from home I just visited in the community from house to house as I thought according to the Scriptures. One afternoon I visited back at the home where I

had been entertained during the revival. On entering I was met by some of the small children who informed me that when their mother saw me coming she said she wished daddy would hitch up the buggy and take her away. You may guess how I felt and what I did.

Discussing with a man the question of becoming a Christian the man remarked, "Well, Mister, whenever I find a pure church I will join it." I replied, "Sir, I do not think you will ever find such a thing, but granting that in case you should and you join it, at that moment it would cease to be pure."

An old Frenchman who was a good carpenter hired a boy to help him. On checking the boy's work he said, "George, you put the nail too close apart." The same man being in trouble with a client about some work, not knowing how to speak good English and having heard the expression used when one wants to show his independence "Just go ahead and crack your whip," got mixed up and said, "If you are not satisfied just go ahead and whip your crack." He may have been the same Frenchman who had a young man to help him thresh pecan trees. The young man up the tree thought it fun to pester him by hitting him on the head with pecans. After several complaints he finally shouted, "Hey, you up that tree, you may be twice my tall and half my old, but you unclimb that tree, I give you satisfy."

In my days with no railroads and highways, much travel and transportation was by steamboats which plied the rivers and large bayous. Palatial steamboats carried many passengers from other states down the Mississippi River through Louisiana to New Orleans. Traditions about the Cajuns were among the topics of conversation among the travelers. One was about names. A man on a boat said, if you meet a Frenchman down here call him Francois, and if he doesn't answer just change it to Bateece (Baptiste) and he will surely respond. At Morganza the boat landed. People were gathered on the bank nearby. A passenger decided to try out the suggestion he had heard about names. So he called out, "Hello, Francois" A man on the bank responded, "Who dat know me?" The man on the boat then asked, "How is Bateece?" "Poor Bateece dead," was the answer.

Trying to instruct a man in Christian giving he retorted, "Salvation is free; I have been a church member for twenty-five years and it cost me only twenty-five cents." I replied, "The Lord have mercy on your stingy soul."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

Chapters

I. Childhood and Education	Page 11
VII. Young Manhood and Citizenship	17
III. Religious Experiences	23
IV. His Preaching	29
V. His Missionary and Pastoral Labors	33
VI. Mrs. Stagg and Her Trials	55
VII. The Death of the Righteous	58
VIII. Some Observations by Adolphe	61

Pictures

Adolphe Stagg	3
William L. Stagg, Sr.	4
Mrs. Adolphe Stagg	15
Mrs. W. L. Stagg, Sr.	16
Calvary Church	28
W. L. Stagg, Jr.	39
Harry P. Stagg	40
The Old Guard	53
Mount Vernon Church	54