

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF

JESSE PARKER SEWELL

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PREFACE

The life of Jesse Parker Sewell--educator, minister, civic leader --has spanned almost a century. Among the churches of Christ he remains one of the few living "pioneers" of the Christian Education movement. His distinguished career is widely recognized in the brotherhood of churches of Christ, while he is frequently honored for his "work's sake."

In an effort to delineate more sharply the contributions which Sewell has made to his brotherhood's educational work, the present study was begun about three years ago. Many have assisted the writer in his research program, and it is a pleasure to recognize indebtedness where it is possible to do so.

Dr. Jesse Sewell has been the indispensable contributor to the study. He modestly and reluctantly consented to the proposed study only after insistence by the writer for its justification. Sewell has made available his files, library and other source materials. He has shared many hours with the writer in recorded interviews. He has likewise given permission to the writer for whatever disposition can be made of this document to promote the purposes to which he has given his life.

Former students, colleagues, church workers have participated in interviews and submitted questionnaires. The elders of Grove Avenue Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas, gave the writer access to the church records where Sewell ministered for nineteen years. President Don Morris and Dean Walter Adams, Abilene Christian College, provided interviews and personal encouragement, and access to the appropriate files of Abilene Christian College for data on Sewell's administrative work.

Special indebtedness is acknowledged to Dr. Homer Knight who has patiently and critically guided the writer since the inception of this project. Appreciation is likewise expressed to Drs. Helmer Sorenson, Richard Jungers and Harry Brobst, other members of the writer's doctoral committee for their assistance.

President James O. Baird, Oklahoma Christian College, granted the writer a special leave of absence from administrative and teaching responsibilities which made it possible to complete the residence requirement and initiate the dissertation study. Dr. Stafford North, Dean of Instruction at Oklahoma Christian College, read the entire manuscript and made valuable criticisms. Dr. Warren S. Jones, Head of the Speech Department at George Pepperdine College, has given constant encouragement during the research and writing. Mrs. Sara Jones, Old Hickory, Tennessee, provided much help in the preparation of the bibliography.

To Geneva--wife, mother of four children, source of constant encouragement--goes the most inadequate acknowledgment of all for this completed project. While bearing more than her share of family responsibilities during the past three years, she has also assisted in typing the earlier drafts of this document.

Acknowledgment is likewise made to Mrs. Richard Reid for her competence and skill in the preparation of the final draft of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses attention on the life and educational contributions of Jesse Parker Sewell, who resides in Abilene, Texas. Sewell, now eighty-five years of age, has been a member of the church of Christ for seventy-five years, and a minister of the gospel in that church for sixty-six years.¹ Although his life has touched many areas of church and community activity, the present research project concentrates on only two phases of his interests and work: (1) the religious education programs of local churches of Christ, and (2) the institutions of higher education owned and operated by members of these churches.

Need for the Study

The churches of Christ have experienced rapid numerical growth during the past three decades, and the best unofficial figures for this religious brotherhood are now set at 2,000,000 members. There are approximately 17,500 churches and 8,350 ministers;² but exact statistics on the churches of Christ are not available. Members of these churches

¹Batsell Barrett Baxter and M. Norvel Young, Preachers of Today (Nashville, 1959), II, 393.

²Thomas F. Zimmerman, "Where Is the Third Force Going?," Christianity Today, August 1, 1960, IV, 16. (The statistics in Zimmerman's article are taken from the 1960 volume of the Yearbook of American Churches, although any figures on the churches of Christ will only be close estimates from church leaders, since there is no official headquarters or organ of the churches of Christ.)

operate a number of publishing houses, orphanages, and colleges.³ A survey conducted by the editor of the Christian Chronicle in 1959 indicated that in 1958-59 there were sixteen junior and senior colleges operated by members of the churches of Christ in the United States, Canada and Japan, with over 7,000 students enrolled. Assets of these institutions total 40.5 million dollars.⁴

Leaders and members of the churches of Christ have given considerable attention to the growth of this religious body, especially to its numerical increase through expanding national and foreign missionary enterprises, and the increase in benevolent and educational institutions. This attention has been, however, primarily in the nature of reports to brotherhood religious journals when various works were started. Editorials and staff articles have served to motivate more activity, while general writings have kept a lay brotherhood informed. Relatively little attention has been given to studying the reasons for the above described growth. The historical roots of this unusual expansion of the churches and their related institutions have not been studied with any degree of penetration.

Although research efforts in the historical background of the educational movement within churches of Christ have been limited, some initial work of significance has been done. Indicative of the research in this field is the doctoral dissertation of M. Norvel Young, now president of George Pepperdine College, on A History of Colleges

³B. C. Goodpasture, "Churches of Christ," 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, 1955), A-K, 253.

⁴James W. Nichols, ed., "1959 Christian Colleges Chart," Christian Chronicle, XVI, (June 16, 1959), p. 1-B.

Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ, published by the Old Paths Book Club, 1949. Several master's theses have been prepared in recent years dealing with the history of individual Christian colleges in this brotherhood, or specific aspects of one college's history.

Illustrative of the literature on the history of churches of Christ is Irvin Earl West's two volume work, The Search for the Ancient Order. Biographical treatises similar to the current study on Sewell would include West's two volumes on pioneer preachers in the churches of Christ, Charles Mitchell Pullias and David Lipscomb. Warren S. Jones, head of the Speech Department, George Pepperdine College, engaged in similar research on the life of another noted brotherhood leader, Grover C. Brewer.

There exists the need for numerous additional studies, however, of the educators and ministers in the churches of Christ and their related Christian institutions. The numerical growth of membership in this brotherhood of churches, with the related growth in missionary activities, benevolent homes, publishing houses and religious journals, and educational institutions seem sufficiently significant to demand historical inquiry and study. The present research focuses attention on one of the leaders who during the past half century has wielded an extensive influence on the the churches of Christ, and whose role and contributions need to be studied and given expression through written document. Such is the justification for this research and dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

This study does not propose to be a definitive biography, but an intensive treatment of one major aspect of Sewell's life. It will

concentrate on Sewell as an educator among the churches of Christ, and the Christian colleges operated by members of these churches. Interrogatively stated, the problem is, What have been Sewell's educational contributions to the religious education programs of churches of Christ, and the institutions of higher education owned and controlled by members of these churches?

The statement of the problem obviously denotes one basic assumption: that a study of Sewell's life and work will reveal his educational contributions to both the church and the colleges with which he has been associated for more than fifty years. That the writer's previous acquaintance with and knowledge of Sewell's work has to some extent entered into this study is not denied. That it has invalidated the objective research required by the problem is denied. The writer believed before undertaking the study that Sewell had made significant contributions to the educational life of the churches of Christ and their colleges. The extent of these contributions, of course, was not known, but it was assumed that they could be more precisely determined by an intensive research program.

Definition of Terms

The statement of the problem includes several terms which must be defined for the benefit of the reader, and likewise for the profit of churches and colleges which could be helped from the conclusions reached and recommendations made.

The first term is "educational contributions." The writer has used education throughout this study in the sense which Sewell defined it in one of his earliest books, as "the process of both instruction

and nurture, all of these processes necessary in order to bring about the development and guidance of Christian personality."⁵ Since the concept of Christian personality will be discussed more extensively in a subsequent chapter, no further attempt to delineate its meaning will be attempted here. By educational contribution, then, is meant all the varied activities and efforts initiated by or engaged in directly by Sewell which have helped to further the concept of Christian personality as the goal of Christian education, whether through the educational programs of local churches of Christ or the work of higher institutions of learning under the control of Christians who are members of these churches.

It is necessary to understand how the term "churches of Christ" is used in this study. West writes that:

Historically, the churches of Christ, claiming to be identified with the New Testament Church, and vigorously advocating a return to New Testament Christianity have the same backgrounds as the 'Disciples of Christ.'⁶

Since 1906, when the federal census first listed the churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ separately, each body has gone its respective way, following the basic principles which each believed essential.⁷ The historical background to which West refers is often called the "Restoration Movement" in England and America, a nineteenth century effort to restore the church of the New Testament in organization,

⁵Jesse P. Sewell and H. E. Speck, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation (Austin, 1933), p. 2.

⁶Earl West, "Churches of Christ," The American Church, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York, 1953), p. 415.

⁷Ibid.

conditions of membership, worship, and life.⁸ The churches of Christ, therefore, in their theological outlook are conservative.

While each congregation is autonomous in its organizational structure, being governed by a body of overseers known as elders, the churches cooperate in broad evangelism programs, benevolent works, and fellowship activities. There is no central or national organization through which these churches are coordinated, although individual Christians within the brotherhood cooperate in the establishment and maintenance of schools and colleges, children's homes, and homes for the aged.⁹

The statement of the problem also includes the term "institutions of higher education" which are owned and operated by members of the churches of Christ. The sixteen institutions of higher education already referred to in this brotherhood offer liberal arts programs within a Christian environment. Degrees offered by the institutions range from the junior college diploma or the Associate in Arts degree to standard four-year degrees. Three of the colleges offer graduate work at the master's degree level, with one school now offering a three year graduate degree in religion.¹⁰ While Sewell's major work was with Abilene Christian College, he has worked in limited capacity with several of the colleges. An effort therefore will be made to determine something of his influence on all these institutions of learning among the churches of Christ.

⁸Earl West, The Search for the Ancient Order (Nashville, 1949), I, 155-159. Also consult West, "Churches of Christ," The American Church, pp. 415-431 for a concise statement of this movement.

⁹Goodpasture, p. 253.

¹⁰Nichols, ed., "1959 Christian Colleges Chart," Christian Chronicle, XVI, (June 16, 1960), pp. 1-A, 1-B.

Method, Procedure, and Sources

The method employed in this study is historical research. With the problem delineated, the writer approached the task of gathering relevant data. The first concern was to identify sources of information which would contain valid and reliable material. The actual procedure focused attention on the following sources: (1) recorded and transcribed personal interviews with Sewell; (2) study of Sewell's writings, including books, articles, editorials, sermons and course syllabi; (3) recorded and transcribed interviews with some of Sewell's childhood and youth companions, former colleagues, fellow administrators, former students, church leaders, and church members who have known and worked with him in varying capacities through the span of his life; (4) Sewell's files, including his correspondence and personal library; (5) church and college libraries, including minutes of business transactions from both church and college official meetings; (6) newspapers and religious periodicals; (7) the public records of the city of Abilene, Texas; and (8) questionnaires sent to approximately fifty persons.

The study is divided into eight chapters. The design has been first to tell the story of Sewell's life, with special attention given those aspects which appear to have had any bearing on his educational philosophy and contributions, followed by the presentation of his philosophy of education. One chapter is devoted to the theoretical aspects of his educational philosophy, while a second chapter is given to the implementation of that philosophy.

In conclusion the writer summarizes his findings as related to the educational efforts of Sewell's life. Based on the findings certain generalizations are then attempted in answering the basic problem of the

study. The study concludes with recommendations for subsequent inquiries, and some implications of this study for future church and college activities.

CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION (1876-1911)

The varied formative factors in the life and philosophy of Sewell may defy measurement by the exactness of scientific standards, but they were, nevertheless, real and present in his life. These influences, moreover, must be considered in any attempt to delineate and evaluate Sewell's contributions to Christian education either through church religious education programs or institutions of higher education. Among these significant factors must be listed the community in which he was born and reared; his family background; educational experiences; and the emphasis on religious values in both the home and the Nashville Bible School. Individuals as well as institutions played an important part in his development, and where it is possible to do so attention will be given those individuals who were unusually influential in his life.

The Viola Community

The early life and educational experience of Sewell center around the old Viola community, Warren County, in middle Tennessee. During his boyhood and youth this rural village and its neighboring farms constituted a thriving community, with business establishments, schools, and churches adding color and vitality to the life of its people. According to Mrs. Martha Mabry Farriss, granddaughter of Ransom Gwyn, one of the original settlers of the Viola site, the community in 1880 enjoyed a prosperous economic life. She wrote:

At one time there were four general stores, a shoe store, a hardware, a drug, and a millinery store, two saw mills, and a lumber plant, two blacksmith shops, a barrel factory, a saddle and harness shop and a shoe and repair shop.¹

Apparently the community was economically stable, with its residents prospering on their farms, small industries, and business establishments. Sewell recalls hearing comments to the effect that there was only one family in Viola who did not own their home.²

The religious needs of the community were met by several churches, one of which, the Blue Springs Baptist Church, organized in 1796, antedated the town itself. After this church ceased to function for lack of members, the building was used for a time as a school house.³ In 1890 Joe Waggoner, a prosperous farmer, donated land on which was erected a building for the Christian Church; and in 1897 a Methodist Church was constructed on land purchased from Mrs. Mary Gwyn, wife of Hugh Gwyn, an original settler in the Viola community.

Two churches of Christ likewise contributed to the spiritual life of the community, one called the Philadelphia Church, about three miles northwest of the town, and the Antioch Church, about one and one-half miles west of the small community.⁴ These two congregations merged,

¹Martha Mabry Farriss, "History of Viola, Tennessee," n.d. (Unpublished manuscript read by the author before the Women's Improvement Club of Viola, Tennessee. While the manuscript is not dated, and the author is now deceased, several life long residents of the community who heard it date it between 1929-1931. Study of the internal evidence definitely places it within the years suggested.)

²Interview with Jesse P. Sewell, March 27, 1959. (Subsequent references to interviews with Sewell will be cited as, Interview with Sewell, followed by the date.)

³Farriss, "History of Viola, Tennessee."

⁴Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

however, and started a new church in Viola on the third Sunday in December, 1895.⁵

The citizens of Viola were not only concerned with the providing for the spiritual needs of the community, but were interested also in the education of their children. It seems that the first teacher in the community was a Miss Mary Stout, educated in Nashville, who taught before the Civil War. After her marriage in 1857 to R. L. Stubblefield, son of the original settler, William Stubblefield, she taught in a vacant store building.⁶ The next school of which there are any records met in the abandoned Baptist church building in Viola, and this educational effort was followed by the opening of the Brown School east of Viola across Hickory Creek.⁷ In 1883 the corner stone was laid for the Viola Normal School and a more durable and serviceable brick building was erected about one-fourth mile east of the business district.

While the religious, educational and economic aspects of the community were matters of concern, social life was not neglected. Viola is remembered by the older residents for its Fourth of July celebrations. The entire community apparently joined in the festivities of the day which was concluded with a traditional barbecue supper.⁸ Some of the elderly citizens with whom Sewell attended school are fond of pointing out that religious meetings also served as social opportunities for the

⁵Record of Members of Church of Christ, Viola, Tennessee, copied from older record of Viola Church, January 1, 1896.

⁶Farriss, "History of Viola, Tennessee."

⁷Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

⁸Farriss, "History of Viola, Tennessee," n.d. (The writer visited the site of the old Viola Normal School, on which now stands a modern junior high school building, maintained nine months of the year.)

young people, and the occasion for older people to keep abreast of community and world news.⁹

Viola, Tennessee, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, appears to have been a dynamic rural community with its two hundred residents.¹⁰ The religious and moral life of its people was high. Industry and thrift characterized many of the residents. Here enterprising men and women could settle, rear their families, and participate in a community which to them, at least, seemed unusual in that day.¹¹ In this middle Tennessee community Sewell was born and reared to manhood.

Family Background

The life and accomplishments of Sewell can hardly be understood and certainly not appreciated apart from a knowledge of his family. David Lipscomb, founder of David Lipscomb College and biographer of Sewell's grandfather, Jesse L. Sewell, made several observations that may be applicable to the grandson. In part he wrote:

It is good to show an appreciation of those who have unselfishly devoted their lives to the salvation of men and to the service of God, and to hold them up as examples worthy of the admiration of the aged, and the emulation and imitation of the young. In this utilitarian age, an age of material development, we are apt to overlook the religious and moral good, and to forget those who labor to spread the religious principles which lie at the foundations of all intellectual and material prosperity.¹²

Lipscomb was writing of those who provided the total cultural background

⁹Interview with R. H. Bonner, July 19, 1960. (Mr. Bonner was a school mate of Sewell in the Viola Normal School.)

¹⁰Farriss, "History of Viola, Tennessee."

¹¹Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959

¹²D. Lipscomb, Life and Sermons of Jesse L. Sewell (Nashville, 1891), p. 5.

in which Sewell was born and reared to adulthood. Among the persons who wielded a formative influence on Sewell was his grandfather, Jesse L. Sewell, whom Jesse P. frequently alludes to in interviews about his early life and training.¹³

Jesse L. Sewell was born on Wolf River, Overton County, Tennessee, May 25, 1818. The Sewell family, of English descent, had settled in North Carolina, and later moved to East Tennessee. A subsequent move saw them cross the Cumberland Mountains and settle in Overton County.¹⁴ Concerning the general characteristics of the Sewell family, Lipscomb wrote:

They possessed but little means, but were industrious and frugal, careful and saving of what they had. They were above average in intelligence and in thrift in providing the comforts of life in the county in which they lived. They never amassed much property, but lived comfortably and contentedly.¹⁵

Jesse L. was from a family of fourteen children, twelve of whom lived to adulthood. He was by nature religiously inclined, and according to Lipscomb, intelligent and thoughtful above those of his years.¹⁶ When about nine years of age he was baptized into the fellowship of the Wolf River Baptist Church, on the third Sunday of December, 1827. From the time of this early religious experience he developed into an obedient and dutiful child, attended church regularly, daily reading the Bible and related books which were available.¹⁷

¹³Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

¹⁴Lipscomb, Life and Sermons of Jesse L. Sewell, p. 40.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 47.

It seemed natural that Jesse L. would become a preacher. Under the guidance and encouragement of his uncle, W. B. Sewell, who was a Baptist minister, he began to preach the gospel. His quest for truth, however, coupled with intensive study of the Bible, soon led him into some sharp differences with his Baptist brethren. Unable to reconcile their divergent points of view, Jesse L. found himself disfellowshipped from the Wolf River Baptist Church on the first Saturday in February, 1843.¹⁸ On the second Sunday in March, 1843, Jesse L. along with several others who had also been excluded from the Baptist Church at the same time,

. . . met together as a Church of Christ taking the word of God as their only rule of faith and practice, excluding all opinion and inventions of men from the faith and service of God.¹⁹

After sixteen years of itinerant preaching through middle and west Tennessee, Sewell moved his family from Overton County to a farm in Warren County, near Viola, in 1858. He purchased this farm that his family might have the advantages of a community like Viola, noted for its emphasis on education and morals, industry, and thrift.²⁰ From here he continued his preaching throughout Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. On this middle Tennessee farm Jesse L. reared his four sons, all of whom were preachers. William A., the second son of the four, was Jesse Parker's father. William remained on the old farm to care for it after the aged grandfather moved to Lebanon, Tennessee, where he served for about ten years as minister of the church in that town some thirty miles east of Nashville.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 85.

²⁰Ibid., p. 103; also interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

²¹Lipscomb, Life and Sermons of Jesse L. Sewell, p. 104.

Jesse L. was not only a preacher in the formal sense, but a deeply religious man in his personal life. Family worship was an indispensable element in the Sewell home. Jesse Parker relates the interesting incident that when he was four or five years old his parents left him at home in the little log house just behind the main farm house while they went to grandfather Sewell's house for worship. Upon arriving without Jesse, the grandfather inquired about the young lad. When told that he was home asleep, the preacher grandfather quickly replied, "Well, go awake him, and bring him over here with you, for this is more important than sleep."²² That incident apparently made an indelible impression on Jesse Parker, and to it he attributes much of the importance of religion as a personal factor in the development of his total religious and philosophical outlook on life.

To note further the unusual impression which Jesse L. made on his grandson, Jesse P. recalls that his grandfather is believed to have baptized between 6,500 and 10,000 people personally during his ministry, most of whom were adults. He still speaks with a depth of feeling about the commitment of his grandfather to the Kingdom of God, and how he was inspired through such an example and personal association with him to give his life to God's service.

The public worship services of the churches of Christ in which Sewell was reared also contributed to his basic religious convictions and life's philosophy. He recalls some of the earliest memories of his life which cluster around the old Philadelphia Church, where his family attended regularly. They also frequently worshipped at the Antioch

²²Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

Church about one and one-half miles west of Viola.²³

Sewell is fond of relating, apparently with accuracy, some of the experiences of public worship. The services were informal but dignified, and characterized by a warm spiritual and evangelistic atmosphere that was impressive on the feelings. Sewell thus had his mind instructed in Christian truth, while at the same time receiving an emphasis on the emotional life that is evident in all his writings, and that to the present characterizes his preaching and teaching.

Viola Normal School

Mention has already been made of the school in Viola conducted in the abandoned building of the Primitive Baptist Church. It was here in 1881 that Sewell, as a lad of five, began his formal pursuit of education. He attended this school only his first year, walking the mile and one-half from the farm into the village. The next year, however, he attended a new school that had been opened across Hickory Creek that had several teachers of excellent repute. Sewell then changed schools again to attend the new Viola Normal where he continued his education until 1894.²⁴

The teachers brought in to staff this new school were from Winchester Normal College, a college established in Winchester, Tennessee for the purpose of training and developing teachers. The teachers sent out from Winchester were young and enthusiastic in their first teaching experience, and apparently Sewell was much impressed with them. He still

²³Ibid., March 27, 1959.

²⁴Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959. (The writer visited the site of the old Brown School in the summer, 1960. The school house no longer stands, but a farm house now occupies the site. The well which supplied water for the school is still in use.)

feels that the emphasis of these teachers on education was formative in his life. He says:

Now I'm sure that this had something to do with fixing in my mind and heart the importance to every community, and to every state and to the nation of good education, and . . . the idea that all people should have an opportunity for an education.²⁵

Sewell was a frail boy while in school, and did not participate in many of the school games except a running game which was then called "Base." The late George S. Ramsey, an attorney who practiced law in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was a school mate with Sewell in Viola Normal. Of him Ramsey wrote:

Sewell was a studious young fellow and ambitious to acquire an education. Although he was frail, the other boys did not impose on him. All the children seemed to respect him. He and I were pals for several years, but I never heard of him having a fight at school or anywhere else. . . . He and I organized a debating society at school and kept it up during vacations, and we were generally on opposite sides of the question debated. We sometimes conducted moot courts. My ambition when a small boy was to study law, whereas Jesse's plan was to become a minister.²⁶

Ramsey observed that Sewell, as a boy and young man, did not know good health. Sickness blighted many of his earlier years. He also called attention to Sewell's studious nature as a youngster, and other school mates likewise have pointed out this trait.²⁷ Important also is

²⁵Ibid., March 27, 1959.

²⁶Letter from George S. Ramsey to Mrs. Zora W. Melton, San Antonio, Texas, April 12, 1939. (Mrs. Melton several years ago proposed a biography on the life of Sewell, and went so far as to prepare and send out questionnaires on him. This letter is in response to such a questionnaire. The biography, however, never materialized.)

²⁷Ibid. Also interviews with Mrs. G. H. Stubblefield and Mr. R. H. Bonner, July 19, 1960. (Both these persons were school mates of Sewell at Viola Normal.)

is the mention of his ambitious desire to succeed in any undertaking - whether to preach the gospel, to head a Christian college, or to serve as president of an insurance company - three areas in which he later entered and proved successful in each. This trait of personal ambition is quite evident in studying his life. Sewell's frailty of body and poor health were apparently more than compensated for by the personal vigor and confidence with which he faced any undertaking which claimed his attention.

Another noteworthy factor in Sewell's immediate family life was the strict discipline under which he was reared. He relates:

My mother was a very strict disciplinarian. She had just one child. I was the only one; but it was thoroughly established in her mind that her child was going to do what she said, and not what he thought. And she did not deviate from that. My father did not give so much attention to it, possibly because he saw that my mother was doing such a good job of it. For he was very different in his temperament from her, and perhaps wouldn't have been as strict a disciplinarian as she was. But I grew up under that kind of discipline in the home all the years of my adolescence.²⁸

It is appropriate here to indicate, however, that while Sewell was reared in a strict atmosphere of discipline in the home, such discipline was not uncommon in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The discipline was not an unkind, purposeless experience, according to Sewell, but a parental firmness coupled with love that he did not doubt, designed in the parents' thinking to develop him into the kind of young man which they desired him to be.²⁹

²⁸Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

²⁹Ibid.

Nashville Bible School

During the early summer of 1892 Sewell's parents, William A. and Nancy, moved from Tennessee to Corsicana, Texas, where his father accepted the ministry of the church of Christ in that west Texas town. Jesse P., however, did not move with his parents to Texas immediately because of a severe eye infection which necessitated special treatment under a firm of doctors in Nashville. After several months with his uncle, L. R. Sewell, he did go to Corsicana to live with his parents intermittently while pursuing his education in the Nashville Bible School.³⁰

The Nashville Bible School, later to become David Lipscomb College, was the realization of the vision of James A. Harding (1848-1922), graduate of Bethany College, and David Lipscomb (1831-1917), who attended Franklin College. Harding and Lipscomb conceived of a school for young people in which the Bible would be the central text, although students would receive additional training in such subjects as to be adequately fitted for life. In the first public announcement of the school which appeared in the Gospel Advocate, Lipscomb wrote:

It is proposed to open a school in Nashville, in September next, under safe and competent teachers. . . . The aim is to teach the Christian religion as represented in the Bible in its purity and fullness; and in teaching this to prepare Christians for usefulness, in whatever sphere they are called upon to labor. Such additional branches of learning will be taught as are needful and helpful in understanding and obeying the Bible and in teaching it to others.³¹

While the institution bore the name of a Bible school, emphasis

³⁰Ibid., March 27, 1959.

³¹David Lipscomb, "Nashville Bible School," Gospel Advocate, XXXIII, (June 17, 1891), 377.

was placed on the fact that it was not an institution primarily to make preachers. In announcing the opening date for the school and its program of studies in 1893 Harding wrote:

The school will open on the first Tuesday in October.
We will teach a full literary and classical course in addition to our Bible work. Four years are required to finish the shorter course; from six to eight years the longer.³²

Harding went on to clarify the nature of the school by remarking:

Remember this school is not exclusively for young men preparing for the ministry. It is called a Bible school because the most important book taught in it is the Bible, and because every³³ student is required to take at least one Bible class.

Harding and Lipscomb were intent on making the nature and program of the school clear to members of the churches of Christ throughout the brotherhood, as well as to the secular community from which they hoped to draw students. Lipscomb wrote in the Gospel Advocate soon after the school began its third year of work:

We state again that we teach a full college course of English, mathematics, the sciences, and the ancient languages. Brother Harding teaches Latin and Greek; Brother Grant, mathematics and the English branches. Dr. Ward, a graduate of Vanderbilt Medical School and Assistant Professor of Chemistry in Vanderbilt Medical University, will teach classes in chemistry, physiology, and such scientific branches as the advancement of students requires. The course will be an extensive and the teaching as thorough as in any college in the state.³⁴

Sewell entered the Nashville Bible School in the fall of 1894. The years spent in this institution were in Sewell's estimation the most significant in the development of his basic convictions and philosophy of any period in his life. The school opened its 1894-1895 session at

³²James A. Harding, "The Nashville Bible School," Gospel Advocate, XXXV, (September 7, 1893), 569.

³³Ibid.

³⁴David Lipscomb, "The Bible School," Gospel Advocate, XXXV, (October 26, 1893), 685.

a new location on South Spruce Street, and in addition to the brick building that was already on the property the college was erecting a men's dormitory. Although the dormitory was not actually completed, it was near enough completion that the boys moved in at the opening date of school. Sewell relates with interest how the building was furnished by members of the churches of Christ in Nashville and vicinity. Christians from all over the city gave miscellaneous pieces of furniture; but no room in the dormitory could lay claim to a suite of furniture. He points out lightly, however, that some rooms did have two pieces alike. Yet, he says, "Their whole heart and soul were wrapped up in it."³⁵

The attitude of these Christians impressed Sewell with the value of generosity especially toward young people, a characteristic for which he has been praised by many former students of Abilene Christian College. According to Don Morris, Walter Adams and Paul Witt, president, dean and head of the Physical Science Department of Abilene Christian College, respectively, Sewell was most unselfish with his money, time, experience and himself in helping young people receive a Christian education.³⁶

During the spring of this first year in the Nashville Bible School, Sewell preached his first gospel sermon. In the month of March he went to what at that time was called "The Palace for the Poor," which was nothing more than a home conducted for old people who were unable to care for themselves, and here made his first formal effort to present a sermon. At the close of the academic year 1894-1895 Sewell returned to Texas, and accompanied both his father and his uncle, C. W. Sewell, to many of their

³⁵Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

³⁶Interviews with President Don H. Morris, March 27, 1959; Dean Walter H. Adams, March 27, 1959; and Dr. Paul Witt, March 27, 1959.

preaching appointments in and near Corsicana, in Roberson County.

The summer was filled with exciting experiences for Sewell as a young student preacher. He relates an interesting incident in which his father asked him to fill a preaching appointment at West Boone Prairie, in Roberson County. At the time he had notes for six sermons, and in his youthful vigor saw no reason why he should not accept this opportunity to preach on Saturday night, and twice the succeeding Sunday. At the close of the Sunday night service four persons responded for baptism. Since they were to be baptized the next afternoon, the elders prevailed upon Sewell to stay over and preach again Monday night. At the close of Monday night's service six adults asked to be baptized, and the baptismal service was set for the next afternoon. This pattern continued every night of that week, and at the close of the unplanned week of evangelistic services Sewell had baptized forty-nine persons. Sewell feels that this was really the beginning of his preaching career, and indicates that after this meeting he never had opportunity to quit the ministry even had he desired. He was kept busy constantly.³⁷

As a result of this evangelistic meeting in September, 1895, and subsequent work which he was called upon to do, Sewell remained out of school until after the first of the year, returning to the Nashville School during the middle of the academic year 1895-1896. At the close of that term he returned to Texas, and during the summer and fall followed the pattern of the previous year in assisting his father and uncle. A general report by Sewell on the Texas churches to the Gospel Advocate showed him working with congregations at Elm Grove, Boone

³⁷ Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

Prairie, Franklin, Round Prairie, and Hearne during the summer of 1896.³⁸

In the same report he pictured the existing needs in that section of Texas where his family lived, by writing:

There are three towns, one smaller and one larger than Hearne, in this county where the gospel has been preached very little, and there are no churches of Christ. Besides these, there are many smaller places and country neighborhoods where the gospel has never been preached. Brethren, we can't afford it; we must make some sacrifices, and have the gospel preached to our neighbors.³⁹

Sewell continued this pattern of school work during the second half of the academic year while preaching during the summer and fall until his fourth year of study, when he entered in the fall and finished without interruption.⁴⁰

Mention has already been made of Sewell's studious nature at Viola Normal, but study also characterized his life at Nashville Bible School. Coupled with an inquiring mind was a zeal that sometimes led him to be a little impatient even with his teachers. During the spring or early summer of 1897 Sewell had exchanged correspondence with Lipscomb. For some reason or other, Lipscomb made a public reply through the channel of the Gospel Advocate to one of Sewell's personal letters, and Sewell wrote a rather pointed response complaining against what seemed to him unfair. To Sewell's letter of complaint Lipscomb wrote an explanatory article in the Gospel Advocate in which he comments on Sewell as a student. He wrote:

³⁸Jesse Sewell, "Texas Notes," Gospel Advocate, XXXVIII, (May 21, 1896), 335.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

Jesse himself was with us in school, and commended himself with esteem and affection to us all by his own Christian deportment and love of the Word of God. I thought he let his ardor carry him farther in setting us older ones aside because we did not come up to the full measure of his zeal than was proper. I wished to correct this for his good. Brother Jesse impressed us all as single-hearted, zealous, a worthy brother that will do much good.⁴¹

Another of the teachers in the early years of the Nashville School, Samuel P. Pittman, confirms this picture of Sewell as an unusually studious young man, constantly questing for more truth and sharper insights. Pittman also observed that Sewell possessed a zeal which sometimes made it difficult to distinguish between his justifiable ambition on the one hand and impatient criticism on the other.⁴²

The old Nashville Bible School had an unusual faculty in many respects. The teachers, according to Sewell, were "strong and vigorous physically, intellectually, educationally, and spiritually,"⁴³ and made lasting impressions which he feels became an integral part of his educational philosophy. Among the individuals who loom in Sewell's thinking as most influential were Lipscomb and Harding, J. W. Grant, mathematics teacher, and Dr. J. S. Ward, physician and science instructor.

The name of Lipscomb is well-known among churches of Christ and the Christian colleges operated by members of these churches. He was one of the best known men connected with the Restoration Movement in Tennessee and in the South at that time, a successful business man and prosperous farmer.⁴⁴ While farming he continued his preaching efforts in middle

⁴¹David Lipscomb, "Brother Jesse P. Sewell," Gospel Advocate, XXXIX, (June 10, 1897), 357.

⁴²Interview with Samuel P. Pittman, July 20, 1960.

⁴³Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

⁴⁴H. Leo Boles, Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers, (Nashville, 1932), p. 245.

Tennessee, especially in the Nashville area. He served as an editor of the Gospel Advocate, one of the oldest and most influential periodicals among churches of Christ. H. Leo Boles, later president of David Lipscomb College, characterized Lipscomb as a calm and deliberate man, with rare wisdom and insight. While being free from impassionate outbursts, he could be firm and unwavering in his convictions. His knowledge of the Scriptures seemed vast to those who studied under him and knew him best.⁴⁵ Such a teacher helped to fashion the life of Sewell.

It appears in conversation with Sewell that Harding, first president of the Nashville Bible School, was the most influential teacher in his life. Harding was enthusiastic and dynamic. He did only what he believed important, and did it with all the ability and energy at his command. Sewell evaluates Harding as:

The greatest leader of young people that I have known in my entire lifetime. He made an impression on the students of the old Nashville Bible School that has resulted in starting and maintaining most . . . of the educational institutions that members of the Restoration Movement have even up to this time.⁴⁶

Sewell's estimate of Harding seems well supported by the evaluation of Boles, who wrote:

An an evangelist, he was enthusiastic and impressive. He had the power to stir men and move them to action. He could do many things well. He was a great teacher and a ready writer, but his greatest power seemed to be as a preacher in the pulpit. His energies were inexhaustible and his earnestness made profound impressions on his hearers. . . . He was a man of strong convictions and indomitable courage. His great faith in God and his Word was an outstanding characteristic of his labors and life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 246.

⁴⁶Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

⁴⁷Boles, p. 366.

One of the pronounced characteristics of Sewell has been his exacting demands on students and others with whom he worked. Whether teaching a Bible course, training students of the ministry in homiletics, or teaching a course strictly academic in nature, Sewell required the very best performance of which his students were capable. He held this attitude toward himself, likewise, as well as toward others. Perhaps this trait was partially instilled in Sewell's life while he studied under Grant, head of the Mathematics Department in the Nashville Bible School. Grant was a scholarly mathematician and an effective teacher, according to Sewell, who impressed his students that their work must be accurate, done to the best of their ability. A graduate of Kentucky University in 1878, Grant maintained an average of 98 during the last three years of his college work.⁴⁸ Sewell respected Grant's ability as a teacher and claims that he was motivated while studying under him to perform at the highest level of his ability.⁴⁹

Already mentioned as being on the faculty of the Nashville Bible School was a young physician named Ward. A graduate of Kentucky University and the University of Tennessee Medical School, Ward had offered from the beginning to teach some courses in science in the college without remuneration.⁵⁰ According to Sewell, Ward's father built for him a little three room apartment where the young physician-teacher might have his laboratories and classroom. Here Ward instructed his students,

⁴⁸James A. Harding, "The Nashville Bible School," Gospel Advocate, XXXV, (December 7, 1893), 771.

⁴⁹Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

⁵⁰James A. Harding, "The Nashville Bible School," Gospel Advocate, XXXV, (December 7, 1893), 771.

stimulated their thinking in the natural and life sciences, and pointed them to God as the source of truth in all areas of life. Sewell feels now that Ward was perhaps a little lax in his demands on the students, especially when compared with Grant, the mathematics professor.⁵¹ But he was able to stimulate student thought, and his kind disposition, his lovable nature endeared him to his students, and made lasting impressions on their lives.

In 1898 Sewell finished the course of study at Nashville. Although he had already made himself felt in the Christian brotherhood, his teachers watched with great expectations as he launched his work in earnest in the southwest.

Sewell Settles in Texas

There were three students from Bonham, Texas, who enrolled in the Nashville Bible School for the 1897-1898 academic year. Sewell had cultivated an unusual friendship with one of the students, a Daisy McQuigg; and upon termination of the spring semester he accompanied this young lady to her home in Texas. While Sewell was interested in furthering his acquaintance with the McQuigg daughter and in meeting her family, he relates that the church in Bonham had extended an invitation for him to visit with them in view of accepting preaching responsibilities. The church subsequently employed Sewell to work with it, and he spent the next two years with the congregation in this small Texas town.

The three students from Bonham referred to above were sisters named McQuigg, and their father was an elder in the Bonham Church of Christ. Daisy, the oldest daughter, was not only enrolled in course work in the

⁵¹Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

Nashville Bible School, but was also studying art in Nashville at that time. She was a graduate of Carlton College, a Christian college of the Restoration Movement, in Texas. The friendship that developed between Sewell and Daisy McQuigg eventuated in marriage in Bonham, June 1, 1899. This marriage lasted almost half a century and Sewell attributes much of his success in both educational and church work to his wife's ability and constant help.⁵² Close friends and associates of Sewell through the years likewise feel that Daisy McQuigg should share extensively in the credit for any accomplishments which the Sewell family may have made.⁵³

About this time Sewell learned that the church in Sherman was having serious difficulty financially, and would in all likelihood lose their building. Taking the initiative in this matter, therefore, he approached the Sherman church with an offer to preach without salary, if they would commit themselves to raise fifty dollars per month on the building indebtedness. While the offer was at first rather frowned upon, he finally prevailed upon the few Christians in the congregation to accept it. Sewell states that he was able to do this since he had succeeded in a mercantile business in Bonham which was adequately caring for his financial needs. The Sherman church indebtedness at this time was about thirty-five hundred dollars, which was soon retired with the growth of the congregation under Sewell's leadership.

Opportunities seemed to await this young minister, and he had no sooner assisted the Sherman church out of its difficulty than he was called to work with the Pearl and Bryan Street Church in Dallas, January,

⁵²Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

⁵³Interview with Mrs. H. E. Speck, June 2, 1960.

1902. Through three and one-half years there the church experienced appreciable growth. The membership increased from sixty-five to about three hundred fifty, and they were able to complete a new building designed to provide adequate space for worship, as well as classrooms for teaching purposes. It should be noted, however, that Sewell was not then stressing the actual teaching program of the church near the extent that he did upon assuming the work at Grove Avenue Church two decades later. His vision at the time was on Christian education within the college setting. He had already developed a strong conviction that his brotherhood needed Christian colleges which would provide educational opportunities for the young people of the churches equal to those of any college or university. This view was not generally accepted among Christians of his brotherhood, and Sewell relates that he was viewed with some doubt by many of his preaching brethren and fellow Christians.⁵⁴

But Sewell was not alone in his desire to see a Christian college in Texas; and in 1904 a situation developed in Denton which gave some assurance that such visions might be realized immediately. A private institution under the name, John B. Denton College, now found itself unable to continue operation, and offered its facilities to the churches of Christ contingent upon their opening a Bible school on the campus. George N. Savage, then editor of the Firm Foundation, in an editorial explaining the relationship of the college to the church, wrote: "The John B. Denton College property, worth \$15,000, was offered to us for a Bible school, provided that we would build one of the first class."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

⁵⁵George N. Savage, "The Southwestern Christian Bible College--An Explanation," Firm Foundation, II, (September 20, 1904), p. 4.

Although the local church of Christ in Denton was not too enthusiastic about the school, Sewell felt that their attitude might change should the institution open and continue for a few years. With confidence that he could contribute to this religious education enterprise, Sewell accepted the position of secretary-treasurer of the board, and, likewise, agreed to teach history and other social sciences.

Before the first academic year was completed, however, Sewell contracted tuberculosis, and under doctor's orders left the school in Denton to find better climate and rest in San Angelo. His wife, who was teaching art in the school, remained in Denton for the school year, as did his parents who were conducting a boarding house for teachers of the North Texas State Teachers College.

While he was unknown to anyone in San Angelo, the Christians there soon learned of Sewell's presence, and knowing of his work in East Texas, they prevailed upon him to assist in some small way with the preaching needs of the church. Within a period of months his health was improving and he found himself getting more involved in the church work, as well as the life of the community. His wife joined him at the close of the school year in Denton, thus giving him new incentive to recover fully and resume a more active role in the church.

Upon arriving in San Angelo, Sewell had ventured into the insurance business, thinking that in this way he could provide a livelihood for the family while also continuing his preaching on a part-time basis. Good fortune turned his direction in this venture, for unexpectedly he was offered half interest in a large agency operated by a Mr. Penrose Hines, successful businessman and insurance agent in San Angelo. The overture by Hines provided for Sewell to purchase half interest without any immediate outlay of cash; rather, he was simply to sign a personal note for

his obligation to Hines, and liquidate it on a time basis. With the town growing rapidly, Sewell indicates that the partnership business boomed, and that he became well established financially.⁵⁶

Sewell not only conducted the insurance agency described, but assisted the church with its preaching needs, and likewise pursued his interest in the state wide prohibition movement. From the time that he returned to Texas a permanent resident in 1898 for the subsequent twenty-five years, Sewell was an active leader in efforts to outlaw the public sale of liquors. He came to be recognized as one of the most dynamic and persuasive speakers among the prohibition forces, and accordingly, was in wide demand for speaking engagements.⁵⁷ He attributes much of his success in establishing churches of Christ over the state to the contacts made and the confidences inspired through his prohibition campaigns. Illustrative of this observation Sewell calls attention to the establishment of the church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, through contacts at first made while speaking for prohibition in that city. Here he met two or three members of the church of Christ, and agreed to return for a future evangelistic meeting. His previous visit in behalf of the prohibition campaign, Sewell feels, laid the ground-work for a successful meeting. Sixty-five adults were baptized a year later when Sewell returned, and the church thus well established.⁵⁸

For seven years Sewell lived in San Angelo, conducting his insurance agency, speaking in prohibition campaigns, and preaching on a limited

⁵⁶Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

⁵⁷Interview with Don Morris, March 27, 1959.

⁵⁸Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

basis for the church. When he began with the church there were thirty-five members; upon leaving, there were four hundred Christians and a new church building. Subsequent to that ministry three additional congregations have been started in San Angelo, and the growth of the churches of Christ in that city seem definitely related to the work and influence of Sewell.⁵⁹ Successful in business, improved in health, gaining in reputation as a preacher and teacher, Sewell soon was to receive the call to another Christian school.

⁵⁹ Questionnaire submitted to Harrison A. Matthews, Austin, Texas, June 5, 1960. (Mr. Matthews, now minister of the University Avenue Church of Christ, Austin, Texas, served the Harris and Irving Church in San Angelo for seven years, and makes his observation on this experience in the same city and same church where Sewell lived and worked.)

CHAPTER III

SEWELL'S WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION (1912-1917)

Sewell's interest in a Christian college in Texas obviously antedated his acceptance of the presidency of Childers' Classical Institute in 1912, as noted in the preceding chapter. While preaching for the church of Christ in San Angelo, Sewell invited A. B. Barrett, a native of Tennessee who had also attended the Nashville Bible School, for a visit to see if the leaders of the church in that west Texas town would be interested in sponsoring a school there. Since interest was not deemed adequate by Barrett, he went to Abilene and met with the leaders of the church of Christ in that city to propose that a Christian school be established there. Barrett, like Sewell, had been saturated with the belief in Christian education acquired in the Nashville Bible School, although the two men differed in their basic philosophy of how such schools should be owned and operated. Barrett believed they should be owned by individuals, and operated like a private business for profit, while Sewell maintained that schools should be placed in the hands of a board of trustees, supported by Christians everywhere, and operated on a non-profit basis.¹

After intensive personal effort Barrett succeeded in convincing the congregation in Abilene of the necessity and values of such a school. In the first catalogue of Childers' Classical Institute Barrett

¹Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

gave an interesting account of the instituting of the school. In part he wrote:

The congregation showed their willingness to do so by subscribing five thousand dollars to the school. Of this amount Colonel J. W. Childers gave \$2,250 off of his home property, which was secured as a site for the school, and he was given the privilege of naming the institute.

We then presented the matter to Abilene's businessmen, who contributed liberally to the school; thence we went to the Christian brotherhood where we found all anxious for the school, and glad to contribute their means to help build it.²

The property for the institute consisting of five acres of land and buildings worth about \$14,000 was chartered, the institute incorporated, and held by nine trustees. The charter of the institute granted by the state pointed out the purpose clearly as ". . . for the advancement of education in which the arts, science, languages, and Holy Scriptures shall always be taught. . . ."³ The members of the board of trustees were required to be members of the church of Christ. The New Testament was acknowledged as the only sufficient rule of faith, worship and practice. Emphasis was placed on the centrality of the New Testament in the curriculum and life of the institute.⁴

On the five acre campus there was an eight-room brick building, and Colonel Childers' former residence, a two-story frame house which was available to the girls as a dormitory.⁵ Guy Scruggs summarizes the six year status of the physical plant in 1912 in rather pointed words.

²Childers' Classical Institute Catalogue, 1906-1907, p. 7.

³Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," November 3, 1906. (These minutes are now held in the Bursar's Office, Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas.)

⁴Ibid.

⁵The Abilene Reporter News, September 1, 1929.

He writes:

It will be observed that in the beginning the school had only the Childers' home and the \$14,000 brick Administration building. During the next five years the plant was not improved in the least, and in 1911 there was only a slight improvement in the Administration building.⁶

The institution experienced its growing pains from the very beginning, and several difficulties faced President Barrett before the school was many months old. There were financial problems, personal jealousies, opposition of Christian brethren who questioned the wisdom of such a school, and other harassing circumstances.⁷

During the first six years of the school's existence it was hardly more than a preparatory or training school. To be sure there were some advanced subjects offered such as college algebra, Latin, composition, Greek, geology, botany, history, geometry, literature, chemistry and sociology. But there were no claims to offer a full college program.⁸

From 1906 through the close of the school year in 1911, the institute had five presidents, one of whom served only a few months due to the unexpected serious illness of his wife. At the close of the sixth year of the school's history there was a shortage of \$1,350 in the year's operating expenses.⁹ With deference to the administrations during the first years of the school's existence, it must be said that the

⁶Guy A. Scruggs, "The History of Abilene Christian College," (unpub. M. A. thesis, Hardin-Simmons University, 1944), p. 46.

⁷M. Norvel Young, A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ, (Kansas City, 1949), p. 173. (Subsequent references will be cited as, A History of Colleges.)

⁸Childers' Classical Institute Catalogue, 1906-1907, p. 4.

⁹Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," April 22, 1912.

institution made little appreciable progress, and according to Young, the academic year 1911-1912 "was a great disappointment."¹⁰

Sewell Accepts the Presidency

As the 1911-1912 academic year wore on, the board of trustees sought desperately for a man who could head the school and lead it to success. They were apparently discouraged in many ways, and the future of the school was not bright. But on April 22, 1912 the board elected Sewell president of the college and Carl A. Gardiner, graduate of the University of Texas, as financial agent.¹¹

The board offered the presidency to Sewell at a salary of \$125 per month. In discussing the condition of the school with him, Sewell recalls that the board members said something like this:

Now, Brother Sewell, we have been losing money every year on the school. As trustees, we've been having to put up money to pay the teachers and to close out debts at the end of the year. We've lost all the money on the school that we're going to lose. We're not going to assume any more responsibility. Now our proposition to you is, that we turn the property over to you. We will back you morally and every way that we can; but you finance it; you do the advertising, and pay the teachers; and you accept the school at your own risk; finance it yourself. And we're going to be telling you in advance that we are not going to make up any losses. Whatever you make, if you make something, it will be yours; and whatever you lose, it will be your loss.¹²

It might be appropriately remarked here that the board looked upon the private Christian school as a profit making enterprise, expecting it not only to pay its way, but to make money. This attitude of the board,

¹⁰Young, A History of Colleges, p. 178.

¹¹Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," April 22, 1912.

¹²Interview with Sewell, March 30, 1959.

however, was to change within Sewell's administration.

To this offer Sewell countered with another proposition--that the board turn the school over to him and Gardiner for a term of five years; and that the two of them would assume all responsibilities for operating the school, getting out catalogues, paying the teachers' salaries and all the operating expenses. But they would have charge of the institution; they would head it. So the board accepted this proposition on a five year basis.¹³

Sewell at the time was living in San Angelo, serving the church in that city, and also engaging in a very successful insurance venture. In 1958 while lecturing at Abilene Christian College, he recalled the conditions under which the presidency was offered. He said:

And when they put Abilene Christian College up to me in that way, fortunately I was in a position to undertake it; and I came and for twelve years my wife and I gave our time without a salary. . . . And when I left Abilene at the close of twelve years, my wife and I both almost worked to death, I had more money than when I went there.¹⁴

Sewell's attitude upon accepting the presidency of an institution with so little apparent hope for the future was certainly important. Morris and Leach, in their co-authored work, Like Stars Shining Brightly, conclude that Sewell:

. . . came to the presidency of Christian College saturated with belief in such institutions, and white hot in his zeal for the future of such, Christian College in particular. He brought with him a wife who was just as sure of the righteous and ultimate triumph of such institutions as he was. The two brought with them the composite of faith, judgment, and

¹³Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," April 22, 1912.

¹⁴Jesse P. Sewell, "The Gospel Preacher, A Man Among Men," (unpub. Abilene Christian College Lectures on Preaching, December 5, 1958).

technical skill that made them just right for Abilene Christian College in the particular period when they took over.¹⁵

Sewell was thirty-six years of age when he accepted the presidency of this institution.¹⁶ Perhaps the vision of another Nashville Bible School gripped the thinking of this youthful minister, who upon assuming the headship of the school repeatedly stressed the moral and spiritual foundations of the college. As Sewell faced the college in 1912, and anticipated its future growth and development, he wrote:

We shall not simply fill the minds of students entrusted to us with facts, figures, dates and rules-information. Ours is a Training School. We shall do our very best to properly train all our students in body, mind and soul. In body, that they may be strong, able to endure life's work and to live long. In mind, that they may think, think accurately and intently. In soul, that they may feel, feel accurately and intently. All this training shall be given from the viewpoint of the religion of Jesus Christ.¹⁷

It is perhaps noteworthy to add that Sewell's mother and father were to join the president and his wife in the work of the institute, and that the older Sewells would serve as house parents for the girl students.¹⁸ The new president, who had failed several years earlier to convince Barrett of the advisability of establishing such a Christian school in San Angelo, now had his own opportunity to head such an institution in Abilene.

Condition of the College in 1912

On September 3, 1912, Childers' Classical Institute opened its

¹⁵Don H. Morris and Max Leach, Like Stars Shining Brightly, (Abilene, 1953), p. 58.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 7.

¹⁸The Abilene Reporter News, March 1, 1912.

doors for its seventh year. The new president had worked hard the previous summer in preparing the catalogue, contacting prospective students, talking to parents, and in boosting the school among Christian people throughout the state, especially west Texas. New interest had been stimulated in the city of Abilene, so that by the opening date many persons were ready to visit the campus and wish the college God-speed for another year. An interesting news account of the opening service read:

By far the largest audience that every assembled at the college was present when President Jesse P. Sewell called for attention and asked that the audience stand and sing, 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.'¹⁹

Persons of note on the program for that occasion included Mayor E. N. Kirby, of Abilene; assistant cashier Free, of Citizen's National Bank, in Abilene; County Superintendent of Public Schools, Professor J. S. Smith; and M. Zellner, president of the board of trustees of the college. Feeling ran high in the city of Abilene as the news report stated. "Never before in the history of the school has there been such an interest shown on the part of the trustees, nor of town friends and citizens of Abilene."²⁰

Physical Plant and Finances

What kind of a school did Sewell face in 1912? The campus consisted of four and one-half acres between North First Street and North Second Street, bounded on the east by Victoria Street, and on the west by Graham Street. The buildings were erected near the intersection of

¹⁹Ibid., September 3, 1912.

²⁰Ibid.

North First and Victoria.²¹ According to Morris and Leach:

The plant of the school consisted of the brick class room building, now finished, thanks to Brother Cox's administration, and the Childers' home. These two were the same buildings of the beginning of the school. Along with the plant, Sewell also inherited that ever present shadow of the private college, debt.²²

Sewell's optimism upon assumption of the presidency, however, is reflected in the catalogue which he had prepared that summer, when he proudly described that one brick building as "A new, modern, well-ventilated, well-lighted structure, two stories and a basement."²³ The building also contained classrooms, and was well equipped with desks and chalkboards.

On December 20, 1912, Sewell called the board of trustees together to discuss ways and means of raising funds for additional buildings and campus improvements which he deemed necessary. The board at this time favored Sewell's proposal to raise \$45,000, with members of the church of Christ to raise \$25,000 and the citizens of Abilene to raise \$20,000. Forty thousand dollars of the proposed \$45,000 were designated for the erection of a new building, while the balance of \$5,000 would be credited toward the liquidation of a debt of some \$4,500.²⁴ The city of Abilene pledged to its half-share of the cost of this campaign, while the board, Sewell and members of the church pledged themselves to raise the other half. Although the campaign inaugurated by Sewell was not entirely successful, the school was in a position to erect a dormitory in the year 1912 at a cost of \$15,000. This was the first addition to the original plant with

²¹Scruggs, p. 10.

²²Morris and Leach, p. 58.

²³Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 10.

²⁴Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," December 20, 1912.

which the school began.²⁵

Board, Faculty, Students

The board of trustees in 1912 numbered twenty-five members, while Sewell was able to gather a faculty of only nine teachers, including Gardiner as dean, and R. L. Whiteside, a Bible teacher in the school, as vice president and head of the Bible department.²⁶ Sewell was intent on improving not only the physical facilities, but the whole institution. Since at that time he could not acquire among members of the church of Christ sufficiently trained men and women for his college faculty, he employed teachers on a part-time basis who were not members of the church, such as Dr. O. H. Cooper of Simmons College, who taught for two years on a part-time basis.²⁷

The college opened in 1912 with 207 students, a striking contrast with the sixty-five which were enrolled at the close of the previous year. While the enrollment dropped slightly in the three ensuing years, a peak enrollment during Sewell's first five years was reached in the academic year 1916-1917 with 212 students.²⁸

Organization and Status of Academic Program

Sewell began in 1912 an ambitious program to develop the school into a junior college. It had heretofore been basically a preparatory

²⁵Scruggs, p. 31.

²⁶Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 19.

²⁷Scruggs, p. 32.

²⁸Scruggs, p. 53. (Mr. Scruggs prepared a cumulative chart from the year 1906 through 1944 showing resident enrollment, graduates each year, numbers of student by correspondence and total enrollment.)

institute. He suggested that the name be changed to Abilene Christian College.²⁹ With Dean Gardiner's assistance Sewell revamped the curriculum into four groupings or departments: the primary, including the first five grades; the intermediate, including the sixth and seventh grades; and the college department, for the last two years.³⁰ Sewell wanted the curriculum to be sound academically, undergirded by the teaching of the Bible to every student on a daily basis.

Although the college was without adequate laboratory facilities or equipment, science courses were to be taught. The president moved immediately to have a fully equipped laboratory erected.³¹ Among the science offerings was a course in meteorology, added in 1912 and taught by W. H. Green, the official in charge of the United States Weather Bureau in Abilene. Green taught the course on a two-day per week basis and made the equipment of the Weather Bureau available to the students.³²

Sewell was keenly conscious of the inadequate library facilities of the institute and worked immediately toward improving this situation. He set the example by making available to the student body his own personal library of more than 600 volumes. He prevailed upon Price Billingsley and J. Y. McQuigg, well known preachers among the churches of Christ, to provide gifts from their outstanding personal libraries. A Book Club was organized that encouraged contributions from faculty members, friends of the college and even students themselves. From many

²⁹Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913. p. 8. (A fuller statement of the name change will be given in Chapter IV.)

³⁰Ibid., p. 19; also consult Young, A History of Colleges, pp. 178-179.

³¹Interview of Guy Scruggs with Jesse P. Sewell, June 20, 1941, quoted in Scruggs, p. 32.

³²Ibid., p. 33.

sources the college received gifts such as encyclopedias and reference books. It is noteworthy that from such meager beginnings in the first year of his administration the college library numbered 3,500 volumes in 1919.³³

President Sewell wanted to excel in every dimension. Concerning the desired quality of academic offerings, he wrote:

We purpose to make our college work as good as the best. We shall, therefore, work in harmony with the higher institutions of learning by offering practically the same courses in our two years of college work as the University of Texas, and other higher institutions of learning offer in the same period. . . . We desire to build our school to the point that it will grant degrees recognized by the University.³⁴

It was this line of reasoning and ambition that led Sewell to discontinue two practices of earlier administrations. Before 1912 a certain number of high school credits of the institute were credited for college work. The college had also granted a Bachelor of Arts degree for only two years' work. He reasoned that this cheapened the degree that had been traditionally recognized as representative of four years' work. He replaced the Bachelor of Arts degree, therefore, with the Associate of Arts degree, more commensurate, he thought, with the offerings of a two year college. Explaining further his reasons for this change, Sewell wrote in the college catalogue:

We do not refrain from giving such degrees because our work is inferior to the work of the average college giving them, but because we do not believe it is fair dealing to grant the degree until the course of study is strictly standard in length. Our college is a junior college, and we give two years strictly standard work on which students may enter the University with two years' credit.³⁵

³³Ibid., p. 34.

³⁴Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 34.

³⁵Ibid., 1914-1915, p. 30.

For the first time in the institution's history, Sewell and H. E. Speck, graduate of the University of Texas who was appointed dean in 1913, included entrance requirements in the college catalogue. Again this shows the president's constant concern for raising academic standards.

Twelve units are required for admission to college courses which are to be counted toward a diploma (provided the remaining two units are made up in the freshman year.) Two and one-half are optional and nine and one-half specified. The specified units are: three in English; two in history; and one and one-half in algebra; one in plane geometry; two in Latin or German.³⁶

For the first time also the president and dean included in the catalogue the basis for granting grades. It was the traditional scale, with A = 91-100; B = 81-90; C = 75-80; D = 70-74 and E = 0-69. Any grade below a 70 was considered failure.³⁷

Sewell's Accreditation Efforts

The small religious college without adequate financial support often fought a losing battle in securing educational accreditation. Sewell faced this problem with persistence and confidence. Within one year's administration he had sufficiently strengthened the institution to the point that the University of Texas agreed to recognize the college's work on a junior college status. Sewell proudly wrote in the catalogue in 1913-1914, "Students finishing our two years' work, and receiving a diploma, may enter the third year classes of the University without examination."³⁸ Then followed an extract from a letter which Sewell had received from John H. Keen, chairman of admissions from other colleges,

³⁷Ibid., p. 33.

³⁸Ibid., 1913-1914, p. 33.

at the University of Texas. He wrote:

My Dear Mr. Sewell: I, therefore, am glad to state that the University of Texas, through the Committee on Admission from Other Colleges, will grant your graduates full entrance into the University of Texas, and in addition thereto, credit for ten college courses toward B. A. degree.³⁹

Graduates of the accredited junior colleges were still not certified as teachers, since the junior colleges in Sewell's earlier years were not looked upon with favor by the four year colleges and universities. Such certification was controlled by the four year colleges which were not eager to share this honor with junior institutions. Sewell viewed this situation as a matter of equal concern with gaining recognition as a junior college.

The president called upon Dean Speck, upon whom he came to rely heavily for academic guidance of the institution, to assist him in writing a bill that would provide junior colleges the right to certify teachers. Sewell pointed out in a personal interview that writing a bill meant the changing of only a few words in the existing certification laws of the State Department of Education. So he and Speck made the appropriate changes.⁴⁰ He then went to Austin where he approached a friend of high rank in the state legislature. The friend assured him that he would be glad to introduce the bill and see it through to passage. This he did for the first two readings, but when another piece of legislation demanded his attention, he forgot Sewell's educational bill altogether. And so the desired legislation failed passage in the 1916 session of the

³⁹ Ibid., p. 33. Also see: Jesse P. Sewell, "High Grade of Work in Abilene Christian College," Gospel Advocate, LV, (December 25, 1913), 1299.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sewell, May 30, 1960.

state legislature.

Sewell however, was not to be denied what he wanted so desperately not only for Abilene Christian College, but for other junior colleges throughout the state. He went back to the next legislative session, and secured the assistance of a different legislator, a young man enrolled at the University of Texas who had been successful in running for the legislature. The young man, whose name Sewell fails to recall, readily agreed to introduce the bill, and persisted in getting it before the legislature until it was approved on third reading. The law was thus enacted which gave junior colleges the right to certify teachers with "first grade" certification, or the lowest in a sequence of certificates granted, valid for only four years.⁴¹

Sewell's vision, persistence and determination worked not only for success in any enterprise, but sometimes engendered opposition. The records are not clear on this point, but in 1915 some students and teachers had brought certain charges against Sewell. Upon receiving these specified charges, which the board did not see fit to record in its permanent record and which Sewell does not specifically recall, the board placed its members under oath, conducted thorough examination, and concluded that the charges were without foundation. The trustees therefore moved to reject the charges and to continue Sewell's five year contract for the remaining two years.⁴²

⁴¹Laws of Texas, XVIII, Senate Bill, No. 9. (The introduction to the bill in the state records is as follows: An act to amend Section 116, Chapter 96, Acts of Regular Session of Thirty-Second Legislature, providing for granting of teachers' certificates and declaring an emergency. Approved February 2, 1917.)

⁴²Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," March 30, 1915.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The president had definite opinions about extra-curricular activities as a part of the college's program. He believed that the total person must be viewed in any educational pursuit. The 1912-1913 catalogue lists the various extra-curricular activities, among which were literary and debating societies, athletic events, the Student Council and the student paper.⁴³ Mondays were given to various recreations and literary and debating societies. Men students were organized into the Webster and Wooster Debating Societies, while the girls were organized into the Tau Epsolom Society.⁴⁴

What was the nature of the recreation which Sewell proposed? The catalogue answer read:

Clean and honest athletics will be encouraged to a moderate degree. We have good grounds for basketball, tennis, baseball and track. But we shall teach the boys and girls the truth that athletics is only a means to an end. We propose to adopt the rules that no one can participate in athletics who does not do good class work, and whose department is not good.⁴⁵

The literary societies apparently became the basis of what today would be called a campus wide intramural program, and furnished the basis for wholesome club rivalry. Sewell wrote in the catalogue, "All of the rivalry in the school will be furnished by the two literary societies."⁴⁶

⁴³Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁴Morris and Leach, p. 63.

⁴⁵Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 53.

⁴⁶Ibid., 1913-1914, p. 19.

Campus Discipline

Sewell believed in strict discipline for every student. The college catalogue stressed emphatically that "no laxness is tolerated."⁴⁷ It was not the intention of the administration that the college should serve as a reformatory for children whose parents were unable to control them at home. The president pointedly wrote in the catalogue to this effect that such students were not welcome or desired who would mar the campus atmosphere and life by their conduct. Mrs. H. E. Speck indicates that such warning in the catalogue had come as a result of several unfortunate experiences which Sewell had had with a few students who apparently were not in sympathy with the discipline and expectations for student behavior.⁴⁸ Evening study hours after 7:00 o'clock were strictly enforced. Leaving the campus for any purpose required permission. The use of tobacco or alcohol was prohibited; and cards, profanity and vulgarity were considered ill-fitted to a Christian college campus.⁴⁹

Re-election to the Presidency

Sewell's first five year term as president of the college convinced the board of trustees that he was the man to give continued stability and assurance of growth to the institution. In this last year of his first term, 1916-1917, plans were being made to set up an endowment fund, although needs to expand the physical plant absorbed the

⁴⁷Ibid., 1916-1917, p. 21.

⁴⁸Interview with Mrs. H. E. Speck, June 3, 1960.

⁴⁹Morris and Leach, p. 105.

money which was raised.⁵⁰ Midway this last year of his first term the board expressed its confidence in Sewell's leadership by re-electing him for another term of five years on the same basis it had initially chosen him. There was one striking exception to the first agreement, however, in that the board voluntarily offered to erect an additional building at an estimated cost of \$10,000, half of which the board personally guaranteed.⁵¹ An intensive campaign was then launched through the brotherhood religious papers in the spring of 1917 in behalf of funds for a boys' dormitory.⁵²

Perhaps the most single outstanding achievement during this first administrative period was the realization that the school was now on a permanent basis. Prior to Sewell's leadership there seemed to be little certainty from one year to another that the school would continue. Under his guidance the board of trustees on March 5, 1916 laid plans to insure the permanency of the growing institution by setting forth these goals: (1) to complete the library and bring it up to standard; (2) to build a new chapel which would seat 500, with music and practice rooms adjoining; (3) to erect a new brick dormitory for men students; (4) to remodel and enlarge the present men's cottage for a girls' industrial home and (5) to set up a \$50,000 endowment fund.⁵³ Little did the board now doubt that the school was a permanent institution.

With Sewell's re-election he could then anticipate total expansion of the college, increased physical facilities and equipment and

⁵⁰Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," May 23, 1916.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., April 12, 1917.

⁵³Ibid., March 5, 1916.

improvement of the academic life of the institution. He could concentrate on strengthening the faculty, enlarging the curriculum and improving the quality of the work offered. As he had said several years earlier, "We purpose to make our college work as good as the best."⁵⁴

⁵⁴Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 34.

CHAPTER IV

SEWELL'S WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION (1917-1924)

With the second term now before him at the midway juncture of the 1916-1917 academic year, president Sewell could set his vision for the future of the college. Don H. Morris, president of Abilene Christian College, believes that Sewell's tremendous contribution during these formative and critical years of the college's history exceeds that of any other man.¹

Expansion of Physical Facilities

"But Sewell pressed for enlargement further,"² went a popular news account recalling some of the college's history under Sewell's guidance. The words modestly described Sewell's ever enlarging vision and persistence in the realization of his goals for the college. While the board of trustees had agreed in 1916 upon the re-election of Sewell to initiate the construction of a new building, it specifically agreed on May 22, 1917, to let the contract for this building which was to be a boys' dormitory. The secretary was authorized at the same time to prepare a certificate guaranteeing that the college would raise its part of the needed money if the city of Abilene would put up its certificate.

¹Don Edward Beck, "A History of Speech Education at Abilene Christian College 1906-1958," (unpub. M. A. Thesis, Abilene Christian College, 1959), p. 28.

²Abilene Reporter News, August 13, 1950.

So the contract was let.³ Although this dormitory, Zellner Hall, was completed according to plans, it was appropriated for a girls' residence hall, while a small frame building was hurriedly constructed for men students and appropriately named "Emergency Hall."⁴

It is noteworthy that in 1918 the Administration building was enlarged and remodeled at a cost of \$40,000. In 1920 the laboratory, originally built in 1917 at a cost of \$1,150 was also remodeled. In this same year a third story was added to Zellner Hall, thus increasing housing facilities for women students. Further improvement of the college's physical plant in 1920 included repair of the "Yellow Cottage" at a cost of \$2,000, and construction of "Shady Dell," the president's home at a cost of approximately \$6,000.⁵

Sewell had succeeded in convincing both friends of the college and the board members that the plant should be enlarged still further. So the board at that time employed O. E. Phillips, son of a pioneer preacher and himself minister for the church in Eastland, Texas, as its financial agent to spearhead the campaign for expansion funds. The agreement with Phillips was that he would receive twenty-five per cent of all funds collected until his personal salary accumulated to \$3,000; then he would receive ten per cent until his salary reached \$4,000; and beyond that amount he would receive five per cent of all funds raised.⁶ In addition, the board was to pay his expenses. While this action

³Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," May 22, 1917.

⁴Scruggs, p. 42. Also Abilene Reporter News, September 1, 1929.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," February 25, 1921.

brought immediate criticism and opposition from some sources, the success of Phillips in raising funds to retire indebtedness from the previous building program tended to minimize the force of such criticism and opposition.

Upon the retirement of the building indebtedness, plans were then made to raise \$40,000 for a men's dormitory. Phillips, working with a committee selected by the trustees, laid plans to solicit "fifth Sunday" contributions from all the churches of Christ throughout the state of Texas. Students were also urged to contribute and write their parents to do likewise. The college appealed to the Abilene business men and the Chamber of Commerce. The drive was not entirely successful, and it was necessary to borrow \$12,500 to complete construction; but the dormitory was erected and named McDonald Hall, in honor of A. F. McDonald, a diligent member of the board of trustees who had died a few years earlier.⁷ Thus when the men students arrived for the 1924-1925 academic year, they moved into a modern three story residence fully equipped. Although Sewell was not present when this building was completed, mention of it is made here since the initiative for it was provided primarily by Sewell and Phillips from 1921 through 1924.

While considering the physical expansion of the college it seems appropriate to indicate something of the financial status of the institution at this time. The official record indicates the college assets at \$386,497 in February, 1923;⁸ while in September of that same year the institution's assets were fixed at \$408,322.⁹ The college was

⁷Ibid., September 23, 1924.

⁸Ibid., February 22-23, 1923.

⁹Ibid., September 1, 1923.

gradually overcoming its perennial plight, lack of funds.

More individuals were now supporting Christian education than ever before in the institution's history; and many were supporting it with larger gifts. But Sewell's own personal generosity also contributed as much as any single factor to freeing the school from its financial plight. The board minutes of February 22-23, 1923, record \$3,991.54 in cancelled vouchers by Sewell, and notation is made that the president asked that they be considered a "donation from him."¹⁰

Christian Education

The expansion of Abilene Christian College included more, however, than erecting buildings, improving old dwellings, and rising free of financial indebtedness. At the very heart of the institution was religion. The basic purpose of Childers' Classical Institute was the ". . . establishment and maintenance of a college for the advancement of education, in which the arts, science, languages, and Holy Scriptures shall always be taught. . . ." ¹¹ Every board member was required to be a Christian, a member of the church of Christ in faithful fellowship. Every faculty member was to be a devout Christian, for here on a Christian college campus young people were to assemble not only to study academic subjects, but the Bible which was believed to be the inspired Word of God.¹²

¹⁰Ibid., February 22-23, 1923.

¹¹"Charter of Childers' Classical Institute," quoted in Board of Trustees of Childers' Classical Institute, "Minutes," November 3, 1906.

¹²Ibid.

On this campus students studied the Bible every day under competent Bible teachers. Evangelistic meetings were conducted two or three times each year by the college church, which at that time met on the campus. Daily chapel was required of both students and faculty members, and twice each week at night men students gathered for special devotions and training in public worship leadership. During the last week of February, 1918, an annual Bible lectureship was conducted and this has become one of the most cherished traditions of the college. Capable preachers of the church of Christ were brought to the campus to deliver theme lectures and teach classes designed to impart knowledge, strengthen faith and inspire more zeal.¹³ These lectures have been published since 1922, and a complete set is available in the Abilene Christian College library.

When asked in personal interview what Sewell considered to be some of his major contributions to Christian education, he replied without hesitation that he felt the impartation of New Testament truth to young lives, the inspiring of young people with the realization that life's basic purpose is to serve God, to follow the teachings of Jesus and to live His Spirit, constituted the number one contribution. Former students of Abilene Christian College number in excess of 22,000 many of whom have had their lives touched by the religious convictions and faith of Sewell who headed the school for twelve critical years.¹⁴ Remove religion from the history of Abilene Christian College, and you virtually remove the college from society.

¹³Morris and Leach, pp. 101-102.

¹⁴"Self-Study of Abilene Christian College," (unpub. Institutional Study, 1961), p. 99.

Building the College Academically

Sewell's perspective was well balanced in that he wanted to build not only the finest physical plant for the college, but also a strong institution academically. He stressed that the academic work in a Christian college must compare favorably with that required in any state college or university. Furthermore, Sewell proposed to parallel the basic college courses as much as might be feasible. He especially desired to offer academic degrees which would be recognized by the University of Texas.¹⁵

It was obvious that building the college academically meant strengthening the faculty. Sewell with determination went about building a faculty that would be second to none. It will be recalled that the school opened with nine faculty members. The academic year 1914-1915 saw the number of teachers rise to thirteen, with faculty committees active in the daily life of the institution.¹⁶ By the 1917-1918 year there were fifteen members of the faculty, with the first faculty member holding a Ph.D. degree added at this time. Two other teachers held M. A. degrees, while the remainder held the B. A. or equivalent.¹⁷ The following year the faculty increased to twenty in number with two men holding the doctorate, three Master's and the other Bachelor degrees or training equivalent to the degree. The catalogue in 1918-1919 declares the faculty to be outstanding in comparison to previous years of the school's history.¹⁸ This trend toward academic improvement continued year

¹⁵Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1912-1913, p. 34.

¹⁶Ibid., 1914-1915, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷Ibid., 1917-1918, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸Ibid., 1918-1919, pp. 3-6.

by year until by the last year of Sewell's administration the faculty totalled twenty-four members. Among these were three holding doctorates, nine with Master's degrees, while the others held the B. A. degree.¹⁹

Although the building of the faculty appeared to be the primary task in stabilizing the academic status of the institution, it is noteworthy that the board of trustees also increased its membership. Beginning with five members in the year 1906, now in 1919 it numbered thirty-six, and also had organized an Advisory Board of Ministers.²⁰ Not only had the board increased numerically, but its basic philosophy toward a Christian college had changed. It is assumed that the first board of the college looked upon the incorporation of the college as a private and profit making institution, and thus they were disappointed when the college not only failed to make a profit, but actually operated at a deficit. This philosophy accounts for the basis on which the board offered the presidency to Sewell in 1912, simply placing the complete responsibility of operating the school in his hands and declaring themselves free from any financial responsibilities. By the year 1920, however, the board apparently realized that it must not only share with the president a leadership role in the formation of policy, but must bear financial support and over-all responsibility for the direction of the college.

Sewell's desire to make Abilene Christian College the best academically was first recognized when the Childers' Classical Institute

¹⁹Ibid., 1923-1924, pp. 34-36.

²⁰Ibid., 1919-1920, p. 4.

became a junior college and was accredited by the University of Texas as a standardized junior institution.²¹ In 1916 the Texas Association of Colleges, which had taken over accreditation of colleges, gave Abilene Christian College an "A" grade as a junior institution.²² With the building of such a well qualified faculty, and the simultaneous development of a sound curriculum, the Texas Association of Colleges in 1917 granted the college an "A plus" rating which at that time was the highest rating that a junior college could receive. Sewell included in the catalog with this "A plus" recognition an excerpt from the letter which he had received from Dean John H. Keen, of Southern Methodist University, to the effect that the Texas Association of Colleges had approved Abilene Christian College's request to be so classified.²³

The catalogue also reproduced a letter from the State Department of Education signed by W. F. Daughy, State Superintendent, placing Abilene ". . . upon the list of junior colleges of the first class. Allow me to congratulate you," continued Daughy, "upon securing this distinction for your school."²⁴

While the step to the junior college level indicated much progress, it was not adequate from Sewell's point of view, since graduates of even an accredited junior institution were not at that time certified as teachers. Sewell's efforts to initiate legislation enabling junior

²¹Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1914-1915, p. 47. Also Jesse P. Sewell, "High Grade of Work in Abilene Christian College," Gospel Advocate, LV, (December 25, 1913), 1299.

²²Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1914-1915. p. 11.

²³Ibid., 1918-1919, p. 8.

²⁴Ibid.

colleges of the state to certify their graduates have already been related. The bill which was introduced in Austin in 1916 (and approved in 1917), referred to in the previous chapter, provided for the granting of teachers' certificates for four full courses in the College of Arts of the University of Texas, any other college or university, and " . . . in any junior college in Texas ranked as first class by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, upon the recommendation of the State Board of Examiners. . . ." ²⁵ The legislative measure recognized the fact that there was no law permitting junior colleges to grant teachers' certificates, and that there was at that time a great scarcity of qualified teachers in the state of Texas. This lack of certified teachers in the state at that time created what the legislators called "an emergency", ²⁶ apparently adding to the justification for the measure which Sewell had initiated. After the bill became law, the president wrote with pride in the college catalogue:

Under the law passed by the legislature last winter, Abilene Christian College will be able to issue through the Department of Education four year first grade teachers' certificates to those students who do four courses of the junior year in the junior college, and one course in Education. ²⁷

The "first grade teachers' certificate" was the lowest in a sequence of certificates granted, and it was valid for a period of four years. By the expression "junior year of the junior college" Sewell apparently referred to the second year of college work at Abilene Christian College, and not what is usually considered the third year.

²⁵Laws of Texas, XVIII, Senate Bill, No. 9, Approved February 2, 1917.

²⁶Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1917-1918, p. 7.

²⁷Ibid.

The College Comes of Age--Senior College

With accreditation as a junior college enrollment increased, graduation classes grew larger, and the demand was soon felt to develop the school into a four year college. During the early part of the year 1919, Sewell learned that with only \$12,500 worth of additional equipment, and one more teacher, the school could qualify as a senior college. Certain of the feasibility of such a step, he led the drive which resulted in the institution's senior college status on September 23, 1919. Sewell related in the catalogue how the school moved to this new status.

Finally we found ourselves face to face with this situation. We lacked only one man of having a faculty meeting in every way the demands for a standard college. We were short only about \$12,500 worth of equipment. Our students and patrons thought the two additional years work of the standard college should be added so these students would not be forced to other institutions to finish their work.

We found the man, and the city of Abilene said they would put up the money. So ACC has grown into a four year college.²⁸

That one faculty member needed was found, but he was destined to be more than just another teacher. He was Batsell Baxter, successor to Sewell in the presidency. Morris and Leach point out that the college is today "... the oldest senior college maintained by the churches of Christ in the world."²⁹

The college had grown steadily and developed along all lines until it was now completely organized and ready for work as a college of the first class. Requirements for the B. A. degree, based on a four year program of work, were included in the 1919-1920 catalogue. There were seven groups of courses in which a student might major. These were:

²⁸Ibid., 1919-1920, p. 14.

²⁹Morris and Leach, p. 101.

classical, English, modern language, philosophy, social science, mathematics and Bible. A plan of courses similar to present day "general education" programs was likewise required of all students. Among these courses were English, foreign language, social science, physical science and mathematics. Another general requirement for the Bachelor's degree was the preparation of a five thousand word thesis in the student's major field. The first four year degree plan offered at Abilene Christian College, then, provided for an area of specialization, a broad educational foundation in the liberal arts, and a research project expressed in acceptable English.³⁰

Mention has already been made of the fact that the name of the institution was changed in 1912 in the catalogue and in popular terminology to Abilene Christian College. However, its chartered name, "Childers' Classical Institute," was not officially changed until the board of trustees voted its change on April 16, 1920.³¹ While there was constant pressure on Sewell from the beginning of his administration to change the name, he did not attempt any official action since he believed this would encounter opposition. The original name had been agreed upon because of a donation of Colonel J. W. Childers in the form of a reduction in the price of his property for the original site of the school. So when Sewell assumed the presidency he did not try any official name change immediately, although the name on publications such as the catalogue and bulletins was frequently Abilene Christian College; and after it became a junior college it was often referred to as Abilene

³⁰Abilene Christian College Catalogue, 1919-1920, pp. 36-38.

³¹Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," April 23, 1920.

Christian Junior College.³²

With increasing demands to change the name the board called a special meeting on April 1, 1920. At this time a committee of trustees was appointed to approach the family of the late Colonel Childers to discuss their feelings about the proposed name change. The committee, composed of L. C. Denman and W. H. Free, visited with the Childers family, and stated that they were authorized to reimburse the family five hundred dollars along with certain property in Abilene to compensate for the donation made by Colonel Childers when the school was named in his honor in 1906. The committee found the family willing to the proposed change and reported favorably to the board on April 16. A motion was entertained immediately that the institution's name be officially changed from Childers' Classical Institute to Abilene Christian College. The board unanimously approved the motion and the secretary was authorized to file the decision with the clerk of Taylor County.³³ Scruggs indicates that this change was made on the state records on November 23, 1920.

Growing Enrollment

While there were many factors which contributed to the growing enrollment of the college, certainly one reason for its continued growth during 1917-1918 and 1918-1919 was its cooperation with the government in a Student Training Program. President Sewell had agreed to establish a Student's Army Training Corps at Abilene and to cooperate with the

³²Scruggs, p. 45.

³³Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," April 23, 1920.

government in the education of these student-soldiers. As Sewell pointed out in an article to the Gospel Advocate in Nashville, students were paid thirty dollars per month and issued government equipment. They were to be under military discipline at all times, while not exempt from the regulations of the college itself.³⁴

The student-soldiers were required to take English, French, German, mathematics, history and government, and allowed to take Bible if they desired. Sewell noted in a subsequent report to the Advocate in October, 1918, that the enrollment in the fall of that year had jumped fifty per cent over the previous year.³⁵ Although the Student's Army Training Corps was discontinued in January, 1919, most of the boys in it at Abilene Christian College stayed on to complete the year. The city of Abilene recognized the college's patriotic cooperation during these years of crisis by granting to the school a five thousand dollar gift.³⁶

Sewell Resigns

While Sewell had been elected at the end of his second five year term for another presidential session, several factors converged to terminate his administrative leadership of the college in 1924. The minutes of the board of trustees indicate that Sewell had twice offered his resignation on December 27 and December 31, 1923. The third meeting, January 1, 1924, was called at Sewell's own request. The

³⁴Jesse P. Sewell, "Students in Training to Get Thirty Dollars A Month," Gospel Advocate, LX, (September 5, 1918), 861.

³⁵Jesse P. Sewell, "Special From Abilene Christian College," Gospel Advocate, LX, (October 2, 1918), 979.

³⁶William Webb Freeman, "Advanced Bible Courses," Gospel Advocate, LXI, (January 2, 1919), 11.

resolution of the board accepting his resignation specified that it was best for the school and for Sewell personally that he be released from the administrative responsibilities of the college at the end of that academic year. Sewell's statement of resignation called attention particularly to the condition of his health and the excessively heavy burdens of the office. It is possible that other reasons contributed to the president's decision to step down, among which might be mentioned his love for evangelistic work, the confining obligations of the school, and the fact that his very strong personality had led him into some sharp differences with the board on frequent occasions.³⁷

The resolution of the board in accepting his resignation, however, is sufficiently noteworthy to include here in its entirety.

We, the members of the board present, after much deliberation and prayer, do this day accept Brother Sewell's resignation at his request, to take effect at the close of the summer school, 1924.

We feel that we owe to Brother and Sister Sewell a debt of gratitude that cannot be paid in money for the untiring service and sacrifice they have made to build this institution. We know that hundreds of boys and girls from many lands too owe much for their knowledge of our Lord, and fitness for life.

Brother and Sister Sewell have done for Abilene Christian College what no one else could do or did do. To give them up is painful and a loss that seems irreparable; but upon the urgency of the request we feel compelled to act now, both in justice to Brother Sewell and the school.³⁸

The summer of that year, 1924, thus brought to a close twelve years

³⁷Young, p. 182. (Scruggs expresses a similar opinion about Sewell's resignation, but of these differences he writes, "There were clashes or differences of opinion between the president and the trustees, but none that caused permanent estrangement)" (Scruggs, p. 54).

³⁸Board of Trustees of Abilene Christian College, "Minutes," January 1, 1924.

of leading a school from a small non-accredited institute to a senior college whose work was recognized as academically sound. By the end of Sewell's administration the extra-curricular activities of the college had been very well established. Daily chapel was a tradition that would continue through the years. Devotions and daily Bible study were an integral part of the college curriculum. An annual Bible Lectureship, begun the last week of February, 1918, had become a definite tradition. An annual prepared by the students, The Prickly Pear, was being published every year; and a student newspaper, The Optimist, had its beginning in Sewell's administration. The college also had instituted intercollegiate athletics, including baseball and football.³⁹

Sewell had accepted a challenge in 1912 from a discouraged group of college trustees. He met the challenge with a vision that twelve years later had been realized. From a non-accredited preparatory status Sewell had led the school to a recognized four year college with an "A plus" rating by the Texas accrediting agencies. He had built a strong faculty numbering almost three times the size of the original staff. The board of trustees had increased in numbers and developed a new philosophy of Christian education. The college plant had expanded from two original buildings to twelve modern structures well equipped for academic purposes; and the value of the campus properties had increased from a few thousand dollars to approximately \$425,000. The enrollment had increased from about sixty-five at the close of the 1911-1912 year to 303 in 1923.

Perhaps the most significant achievement during these twelve years,

³⁹Mrs. E. W. McMillan, "Traditions of Abilene Christian College," (unpub. article, April 19, 1934), cited in Young, p. 183.

however, was not in any of the specific factors enumerated, but rather in the realization of Sewell, the board of trustees, the church constituency of the college, and the Abilene community that Abilene Christian College was a permanent institution. It was here to stay.

CHAPTER V

SUBSEQUENT WORK WITH CHURCHES AND COLLEGES (1924-1960)

When Sewell left the administrative responsibilities of Abilene Christian College, he was not a well man. He recalls in a personal interview how his health completely failed; and that the doctors informed him he could not hope to live even one year if he stayed under that load and strain. He was encouraged to accept some work which would involve less responsibility; and upon this advice Sewell and his wife moved from Abilene to Fort Worth, Texas.

Accepts Fort Worth Church Invitation

Sewell owned a small farm about twelve miles west of Fort Worth, and he felt that here he could rest, relax, and regain his health. Although he had been on his farm only a short time and was just beginning to enjoy the quiet of rural life, the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth invited Sewell to preach for them. His intensive love for preaching was the determinative factor in making this decision; and for about one year he preached regularly for the Southside Church.

Sewell's association with this church was more characteristic of a limited appointment basis than what might be termed a full-time ministerial capacity. Records are not available to indicate in detail the conditions of the church when Sewell accepted the preaching responsibility. The nature of his work was primarily that of preaching publicly and

teaching classes while continuing to regain his health.¹

Back to Corsicana

Sewell was enjoying his work with the Southside Church, however, when another urgent request was made upon him. Friends from Corsicana, his first home town in Texas and where he had subsequently held many evangelistic meetings, came to invite him back to that congregation to work with them. They talked not only of the possibilities for growth of the church in that west Texas town, but they also discussed something else that seemed to intrigue Sewell personally. Later, recalling the proposition made to return to Corsicana, Sewell stated:

While I was enjoying the work at Fort Worth and getting along nicely at Southside, and everything was going well, I just couldn't turn down that proposition to go back home to Corsicana. And their proposition was that 'We want you for the balance of your life; you just come on home and spend your life in Corsicana.' That appealed to me because I didn't like moving.²

Sewell now feels that the decision to leave Fort Worth for Corsicana to live the remainder of his life was a major mistake. From the mature point of view he reasons that it was basically selfish; it appealed to him because he would not have to move, and he would be among friends. There he could quietly retire and live the rest of his life without too much urgency about the heavy responsibilities that were unavoidable in the public ministry of the gospel.³

The Sewells thus moved to Corsicana and assumed work with the church

¹Interview with Sewell, March 29, 1959.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., May 31, 1960.

there. Corsicana, according to Sewell, was unfortunate in its location for one suffering from asthma, tuberculosis, or any kind of respiratory ailment. His trouble was aggravated soon after he arrived. At the end of two years a physician, who was also an elder in the church, plainly told Sewell that he must leave Corsicana. The doctor indicated that as much as the church regretted to lose its minister for a while, that he must leave immediately. The church agreed to continue Sewell's salary while he went further west to regain his health. Following his doctor's advice, Sewell and his wife moved again to San Angelo.⁴

Two Decades in San Antonio

Sewell had not been in San Angelo long before he received an invitation to consider the ministry of the Grove Avenue Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. Accepting the invitation in 1927, he entered into a ministry which lasted for nineteen years.⁵ While at Grove Avenue Church Sewell's health continued to improve and he was able to initiate a dynamic program that seemed destined not only to change that congregation, but to make its impact upon the churches of Texas and the entire brotherhood of the churches of Christ. Because of the duration of his work at Grove Avenue and the importance with which Sewell views it, several aspects of that church's program must be discussed in detail at this juncture.

Prior to accepting the work of the Grove Avenue Church, Sewell had observed the conditions and practices of churches of Christ for twenty-

⁴Ibid., March 29, 1959.

⁵Baxter and Young, p. 393.

five years throughout the brotherhood, especially in the southwest. In a personal interview he recalls that the churches seemed to him without a sense of purpose. He compared many churches to Sunday afternoon motorists, just driving around, going no place in particular, yet expanding unusual energy, money and activity. They gave the appearance of maintaining a vigorous program, but lacked a definiteness of educational purpose, which to Sewell was quite serious. The lack of purpose was one of the major weaknesses in the educational work of churches of Christ, coupled with a lack of organization and necessary implementation for effective teaching.⁶

Sewell believed that the Grove Avenue Church presented an unusual opportunity to begin a ministry of duration wherein he could implement his concept of religious education and actually demonstrate the church as an educational agency for the fulfillment of God's purposes. The membership of Grove Avenue Church in 1927 was about two hundred, with an adequate number of elders and deacons to serve it. While the congregation's accomplishments were perhaps above average, they certainly were not what Sewell believed possible. He saw there in the leadership and the membership in general those who could be led to appreciate his emphasis on Christian education and who, likewise, would be willing to cooperate with him in a dynamic educational program.⁷

Since Sewell was known to be an ambitious personality in furthering his ideas of any work, it undoubtedly took some time for him to gain the confidence of the elders, teachers and other members of the Grove Avenue

⁶Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

⁷Ibid., March 27, 1959. Also interview with Dr. E. K. Halbert, June 2, 1960.

Church. The church records do not reveal any statistics about the growth of the church from 1927 until 1930. Some of the members who were there when Sewell began his ministry indicate that his preaching seemed different and that he began to suggest ideas about the church as an educational agency that they had not heard in the pulpit of the churches of Christ; yet, his sermons were well fortified with Scriptures, his logic seemed sound and reasonable, and his conclusions were convincing.⁸

Indicative of the early response of the members at Grove Avenue to Sewell's preaching is that of Mrs. O. V. Lamb, for many years a public school teacher in San Antonio, who has been personally acquainted with Sewell since 1920. In response to a question evaluating Sewell as a teacher and preacher, Mrs. Lamb said:

. . . he felt it was his duty to impart his talent in preaching the gospel and winning souls to Christ. Brother Sewell believed in education, designed to produce an appreciation of our cultural heritage and to make us free to think independently, and to serve society and to stimulate the imagination. . . . I can truly say that he did much to help me in my work as a public school teacher and as a primary teacher in the church of Christ for many years.⁹

The Church's Educational Purpose

Within two or three years the Grove Avenue Church had initiated a teaching program far in advance of many churches of Christ in Texas and throughout the brotherhood. Sewell argued cogently for a systematic teaching arrangement as a part of the church in distinction from the denominational Sunday School which was an organization separate and

⁸Interview with Halbert, June 2, 1960.

⁹Questionnaire submitted to Mrs. O. V. Lamb, San Antonio, Texas, June 5, 1960.

apart from the church. He believed that the church was primarily an educational agency equipped by the Lord Himself with the proper authority and provisions to teach the gospel to those who were not Christians, and to teach and nourish those who were Christians into a realization of the divinely appointed educational aim. In the Grove Avenue Yearbook of 1931, Sewell summarized the philosophy then being advocated at that congregation and implemented in the teaching program. Its content presented an interesting contrast with the emphasis at that time among churches of Christ on evangelism and church organization. He wrote:

The Grove Avenue Church conducts no Sunday School, but as a church is endeavoring to meet the responsibilities and give the educational service bound on the church by Jesus its Lord.

Education includes much in addition to and aside from instruction. It is the entire process of personality development of which instruction is an important part, but only a part. Education is the directed systematic development of personality, on the basis of tested and proved principles, into the most perfect exercise of all its abilities, the most complete happiness in living and the greatest efficiency in service. Christian education is all of this, given in the Christian spirit and on the basis of Christian truth. Christian education includes the development of the ability to understand, distinguish, believe, feel, decide, select, will and act in the spirit of Christ and on the basis of His truth. It includes the development of the entire person on the basis of Christian truth. The aim of Christian education has not been accomplished until the individuals who are instructed in Christian truth are nurtured and guided into successfully practicing this truth in worship of God and in all the various relations and activities of life.¹⁰

This clear, straightforward statement of the church's educational aim or purpose was new in the churches of Christ. Harrison A. Matthews,

¹⁰Jesse P. Sewell, ed., Yearbook and Directory of Grove Avenue Church of Christ, (San Antonio, 1931), p. 7.

well-known evangelist of the churches of Christ and currently minister of the University Avenue Church of Christ, Austin, Texas, at one time preached in San Angelo, where Sewell had formerly ministered. His observation of Sewell is apropos to the work at Grove Avenue, for Matthews believed "he was ahead of his times in most areas."¹¹ Yet, while Sewell's educational ideas were strikingly new in this religious brotherhood, some of the members of Grove Avenue who first heard him advocate such views apparently did not realize that they were so strikingly different. Mrs. E. K. Halbert, wife of Dr. E. K. Halbert, an elder at Grove Avenue, said in reply to the question, "Did you think his teaching unusual?"

His views did not seem unusually new. He had a way of presenting even new ideas in such a forceful and cogent manner that it seemed we should have been seeing and doing these things all of our life.¹²

Grove Avenue's Organization

Not only did Sewell state concisely the church's educational purpose, but in the Yearbook of 1931 he went on to set forth how the church could and should realize its aim. He wrote:

No church can accomplish this tremendous task by conducting a one hour school on the Lord's Day, participating a few minutes in worship, preaching two sermons, and conducting a 'prayer meeting' each week and holding a 'protracted meeting' a year. However efficient they may be made, these processes are too limited in their scope and possibilities to accomplish such a task. The church must learn to include every day in its educational program. It must conduct classes of various kinds both day and night as they are needed. It must learn to use the home, social, school,

¹¹ Questionnaire submitted to Harrison A. Matthews, Austin, Texas, June 5, 1960.

¹² Interview with Mrs. E. K. Halbert, June 2, 1960.

recreational, business and professional activities of the people as agencies of Christian education. The Grove Avenue church earnestly invites the cooperation of every family of the church and the people of its section of the city, to full participation in her educational work. Study the arrangement of the work presented in this directory. . . . Our desire is to serve.¹³

After Sewell's concise statement of the educational work of the church, followed by above pointed paragraph on the inadequacy of the existing program, the church Yearbook and Directory then gave an outline of the organizational structure of the congregation in order to realize more fully the church's aim. The church had an eldership, or group of overseers, numbering seven. Working closely under the elders was a group of specially appointed men known as deacons, or servants of the congregation. While the number of deacons varied from year to year, in 1931 ten were serving the congregation. The church also had an evangelist, or minister of the Word of God, an associate minister, a secretary, a treasurer, song leaders, and ushers. The standing committees of the congregation included committees on finances, building and grounds, benevolence, evangelism and worship. The city was divided into six zones with a visitation committee heading the work in each zone.¹⁴

The educational work of the church was well planned and directed by the eldership. Working under the elders were two educational directors and two secretaries who adequately cared for the record keeping of the program. Appointed to work under the directors were the departmental directors and the respective teachers. There were nine departments: Home, Cradle Roll, Beginners, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior,

¹³Sewell, Yearbook and Directory, p. 7.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 9.

Young Peoples, and Adult. Each department had its director and three teachers working under the director.¹⁵

In addition to the departments mentioned, the educational work also included Sunday morning and evening training classes, weekday Bible classes from September through May, Tuesday night training classes, Thursday afternoon classes, a Thursday night singing class and a Friday night Bible class. The program also included a Vacation Bible School through the summer.¹⁶ In addition to the departmental organization for formal instruction, there was a Recreational and Guidance Council structured to include beginner and primary, junior and intermediate, senior and young people's groups. There was also a Vocational Council with divisions for boys and girls, and a director for each respective group. Completing the organizational framework for the church's program was a five member Library Committee to build the church library and encourage its usage in conjunction with the educational program. A four member Equipment Committee constantly studied the educational facilities and equipment of the church and made recommendations to the eldership for improvement.¹⁷ According to Sewell, the church building was open daily for the educational work of the church.¹⁸

"Training for Service Series"

While continuing his ministry at Grove Avenue, Sewell gathered

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 9-10.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹⁸Interview with Sewell, March 29, 1959.

around him an unusual staff of competent teachers. He recalls that at one time every teacher on the staff at Grove Avenue held the Master's degree or its equivalent in years of formal educational study.¹⁹ With such an unusually well-qualified staff, several of whom were teachers in the San Antonio public school system, Sewell believed the time ripe to realize a vision which he had held for several years. He wanted to prepare a "training for service series" of books which would be available to the churches of Christ throughout the brotherhood and would set forth in a clear, Scriptural, and convincing manner what he believed to be the church's ideal educational situation. Because of his high regard for Dean Speck's judgment and educational training he consulted him about serving as a co-editor of the proposed series. Speck consented to assist the former college president with whom he had worked in this new project. As the time drew near for the actual preparation of the series, however, Sewell took the initiative and wrote the first volume entitled, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation. While the book bears the names of Sewell and Speck as co-authors, both the men in separate interviews indicate that the book basically is Sewell's work and idea. Speck readily acknowledges that he gave some help to Sewell in organizing the book and perhaps some other assistance of a minor nature; but he insists that the book basically is Sewell's.²⁰

While the proposed series was to contain eighteen volumes, and would be a comprehensive treatment of the church's total educational program, only four books were actually written. First in the series was the title

¹⁹Ibid., March 29, 1959.

²⁰Interview with Dean H. E. Speck, June 2, 1960.

previously cited, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation, published in 1933. Next came The Church and the Children, prepared by Mrs. Lloyd N. Rutledge, Miss Orlene Drennan and Miss Davy Drennan, members of the Grove Avenue Church. Two of the authors, the Drennan sisters, were public school teachers. In the same year Mrs. Zora Melton prepared the third volume in the series entitled, The Church and the Young People. Both Sewell and Mrs. Melton indicate that he outlined this work and wrote the introductory chapter. A fourth work entitled, The Church and the Adults, published in 1935, was the last book written in the series.

The four volumes, published by the Firm Foundation Publishing House, in Austin, were favorably received by many leaders in the churches of Christ, while others viewed Sewell's religious education emphasis with doubt if not disapproval. Omar L. Bixler, who served as assistant minister of the Grove Avenue Church with Sewell, 1935-1936, believes that Sewell:

. . . did more than any preacher and educator to bring better teaching programs into the individual churches in the years before World War II. His series . . . did more for the churches of the west and south than anything that any of our brethren had published up to that time.²¹

While the proposed series was never completed, the four volumes which were brought into print were used extensively and still enjoy wide circulation among churches of Christ.

Religious Education--Learning and Doing

Sewell's educational philosophy embodied the belief that the church

²¹Questionnaire submitted to Omar L. Bixler, Searcy, Arkansas, July 11, 1960.

should not only teach the pupils what to believe and what to do, but also to provide them with opportunities through which they might actually see these truths and activities demonstrated. In the implementing of such a philosophy Sewell feels that the Grove Avenue congregation proved very effective and successful.

Perhaps the most concrete evidence of Sewell's conviction of the success in such a program is seen in the training of young men for Christian service, and the subsequent work which these Christian men accomplished for the church. For example, the young men would be taught from boyhood and youth that the church should evangelize the world, and that the best place to begin in world evangelization was right in their own city. Accompanying this instruction in religious responsibility were classes in public speaking, homiletics and English. Courses on Biblical subjects prepared the young men with the knowledge to preach, while the supplementary program equipped them to speak or preach systematically and forcefully.²²

The elders of the church and Sewell were constantly surveying the spiritual conditions of other communities in San Antonio, the surrounding vicinities and nearby towns and villages. When an opportunity presented itself, the elders would plan a new congregation with several of these well-trained young preachers leading in the work. Sewell recalls that since 1927 the Grove Avenue Church, which has never had membership essentially beyond three hundred, has started twenty-eight other churches of Christ in and around the San Antonio area. The elders who worked with Sewell confirm his observation that this was perhaps one of the most

²²Interview with Sewell, March 29, 1959.

fruitful results of the educational program which he initiated while at Grove Avenue.²³

Sewell states that in establishing these mission efforts and the subsequent work of such congregations, all of the preaching, song-leading and other public leadership work was done by the young men of Grove Avenue who had had no training except that received in the educational program of their home church. While the program which Sewell initiated has been modified through the years since he left, it still continues and produces results. Within the last four years Grove Avenue congregation has started three new congregations in San Antonio, and now two are larger than Grove Avenue itself.²⁴ Reflecting on his Grove Avenue ministry, Sewell said:

. . . this is the kind of educational work that I'm interested in with the local church. I believe that it is possible for every congregation, large or small, to develop a situation that will make it possible for it to do considerable extension or expansion work in its own territory.²⁵

Teacher Training Schools

During his two decades in San Antonio, Sewell began an intensive personal campaign to awaken churches throughout the brotherhood to their responsibility in religious education. Many congregations which he observed were without any consciousness of educational aim, and as a result of this deficiency their programs were poorly organized or not

²³Ibid., March 29, 1959; interviews with Dr. E. K. Halbert and Mr. Lloyd Rutledge, June 2, 1960.

²⁴Questionnaire submitted to A. H. Maner, minister of the Fredericksburg Road Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas, June 2, 1960.

²⁵Interview with Sewell, March 29, 1959.

organized at all. He had given much thought to the concept of Christian education, and as soon as he began his new emphasis on planned teaching among the churches, he was in constant demand. Such organized teaching was new among churches of Christ; for since the days of the Restoration Movement many churches had been apprehensive of any aspect of the church's work which required systematic planning or organization. The church could have no competing organization, such as the denominational Sunday school. Many churches, therefore, had practically no educational program. Sewell was convinced that the church, on the basis of New Testament teaching, must conduct a well organized educational program with a specific aim in mind.

Mention, obviously, cannot be made of the many churches which Sewell visited from 1924 to the present. Only a limited but representative number of the Teachers' Training Schools which he conducted can be enumerated in this particular phase of his ministry. In 1929 and 1930 while Sewell was preaching for the Grove Avenue Church, he returned to Sanderson, Texas and conducted two evangelistic meetings in which considerable emphasis was placed on the teaching program of the church. R. N. Allen, who was a member of the church in Sanderson, recalled Sewell's "earnestness and zeal and the personal effort he put into his work" in these two evangelistic efforts, and the stress laid on the teaching program.²⁶

In October, 1936 Sewell was invited to the Detroit area to conduct a Teacher Training School at the Hamilton Boulevard Church of Christ. While sponsored by the Hamilton Boulevard Church, this school actually

²⁶Personal letter from R. N. Allen to Mrs. Zora Melton, April 14, 1939.

involved most of the churches of Christ in the metropolitan area at that time. Sewell's personal notebook of the school, which includes his syllabus of lectures and other miscellaneous materials, lists nine churches of Christ which were represented in this cooperative effort, and a membership of one hundred thirteen teachers, assistants, or potential teachers officially enrolled. The church of Christ in greater Detroit today numbers about fifty congregations with perhaps fifteen thousand members. Many of the teachers who attended Sewell's school in 1936 attribute such growth to the interest which Sewell aroused through his emphasis on the educational work of the church.²⁷

Sewell continued his educational efforts far and wide. In Tyler, Texas, February 1943 he conducted another Teacher Training School that made a deep impression on the church and perhaps continues to produce good. T. B. Thompson, minister of the West Irvin Church of Christ at that time, wrote Sewell after the school to this effect:

We regard the time spent by you in the series of lectures here as being in large measure responsible for the Renaissance period through which this congregation is passing. It gave us just the thing we needed at that particular time to get us started out in a greater work. The library idea was firmly planted in the minds of the brethren, and you will be delighted to see what we have done along that line.²⁸

In the summer of 1943, Sewell received an urgent invitation to visit New England to deliver a series of lectures at the Brookline Church of Christ in Boston. The elders of the Grove Avenue Church permitted him to

²⁷This observation is based on the writer's three years' ministerial experience with Detroit churches, 1953-1956.

²⁸Letter from T. B. Thompson to Jesse P. Sewell, February 18, 1943. (Now a part of the permanent files of Grove Avenue Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas.)

make the trip, provided his health would permit. They constantly feared, however, that Sewell would tax himself beyond his physical strength, thus terminating his fruitful ministry prematurely. Sewell made the trip to Boston, however, and engaged in his dynamic style of teaching and preaching. Subsequent to that teacher training effort, the minister of the church, Dr. J. Harold Thomas, wrote a letter to the elders of the Grove Avenue Church expressing his appreciation and his belief of the good that had been realized in Sewell's school. In part he said:

Brother Sewell more than justified the expectations of the entire church. His lessons were clear and forceful, and if the smallness of the audiences affected his presentations, it was in no way apparent to those of us here. He displayed a rare understanding and sympathy with the difficulties presented in this field; and he gave lessons to inspire and encourage the congregation to meet the challenge which it presents.

I believe that his coming will be of great value to the Cause in this section, because it gave him a vision of the needs here that he could have received in no other way. His wide influence in the churches of the South will cause them to send additional workers to this region.²⁹

Among the demands for his services came an invitation from the Central Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, to conduct a similar Teacher Training School. Since this was the first such training school that had been conducted by anyone among the churches of Christ in Tennessee, many were dubious about it. The school was open to all congregations; but while there were many churches in the city, only about one hundred persons attended the first night session. Sewell indicates that the attendance began to increase, however, and by the close more than four hundred fifty were enrolled.³⁰

²⁹Letter from Dr. J. Harold Thomas to the elders, Grove Avenue Church of Christ, July 13, 1943.

³⁰Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

In personal interview Sewell related an incident during the training school in Nashville which reflected not only a personal anecdote in his life but also the attitude of many members of the churches of Christ at that time toward his philosophy of Christian education. F. D. Syrgley, an imminent gospel preacher in Tennessee and the southern states, was then editor of the Gospel Advocate. He had his doubts about such training efforts. During the school, however, he called Sewell to his office one day and confided that several weeks earlier when approached by a member of the church of Christ in Nashville about the program, he had lightly brushed it aside as ". . . some more denominational foolishness that Jesse's carried away with."³¹ Unable to attend the various sessions of the school at Central Church, however, Syrgley had sent a personal representative every night who had taken verbatim all that Sewell had said. Syrgley had now changed his mind, and in essence was apologizing for his earlier comment which was derogatory and discrediting to the work of Sewell. Sewell recalled Syrgley in approximately these words:

If we had had what you are trying to do there--if we had had that forty years ago--we would have avoided all the conflict and trouble we've had on the Sunday School misunderstanding. . . . We would be way in advance of where we are in our teaching efforts and teaching program.³²

A study of the permanent records of Grove Avenue Church in San Antonio reveals that Sewell was constantly invited to churches of Christ across the nation to conduct his teacher training courses. It became necessary for his health that the elders of the Grove Avenue Church

³¹ Ibid., March 27, 1959.

³² Ibid.

restrain him from accepting the numerous urgent requests. It was obvious, also, that he could not continue to guide the dynamic program which had been launched at Grove Avenue and be away as much as would have been necessary to answer the many calls.

Edits Graded Literature Series

While Sewell was at Grove Avenue he and the teaching staff had frequently discussed the need of a graded series of Bible study materials for the churches of Christ. "We had reached the point," wrote Sewell, "where it was absolutely necessary."³³ With the teachers of the congregation assisting him Sewell experimented first with a "Through the Bible Series," but concluded that this did not meet the need. Abandoning that material, he and several teachers of the Grove Avenue staff- including Mrs. Zora Melton, Mrs. Inez Dalton, and Mrs. Davy Drennan McLarry- began work on a new series which finally became the present "Gospel Treasure" literature used by many churches of Christ.

The "Gospel Treasure" series was first printed by Eugene Smith, book publisher in Dallas, who approached Sewell himself in 1947 about the right to publish and distribute the material then in preparation. Convinced that Smith was financially able to assume this responsibility, Sewell agreed to the contract which made him editor-in-chief and Smith the publisher. The first printing of the newly graded materials was available to the churches of Christ in 1950. While Sewell's name is still connected with the materials as editor-in-chief, his active role with the series is very limited. Several of the teachers who assisted him in the initial work, however, still prepare some of the books.

³³Letter from Jesse P. Sewell to the writer, January 27, 1961.

Although the exact usage of this material would be difficult to determine, Sewell feels it is one of the most widely used graded series among churches of Christ.³⁴

New Fields

At the end of nineteen years' ministry with the Grove Avenue Church, Sewell felt that both his age and physical condition militated against the heavy schedule that he had established in earlier years. His wife had died in 1944, and he faced a personal adjustment which would have perhaps affected his continued ministry there. Hence, he resigned his work and intended to live the remaining years of his life by holding evangelistic meetings and conducting special teacher training schools among churches of Christ.³⁵

California Calls

Soon after Sewell left the Grove Avenue work he was invited to the West Coast for some special lectures at George Pepperdine College. Most of the Christian colleges operated by members of the churches of Christ conduct an annual Bible lectureship in which noted ministers and Christian educators participate. It was on such a lectureship in 1947 that Sewell delivered the major night addresses and, while there, conducted a short course on "The Educational Work of the Local Church."³⁶

After the series of lectures and termination of the short course at Pepperdine College, Sewell conducted a series of evangelistic meetings

³⁴Ibid., January 27, 1961.

³⁵Interview with Sewell, March 29, 1959.

³⁶Ibid.

for several of the southern California churches. He next accepted an invitation from the Church of Christ in Riverside, California to join with them in the work for one year. The leaders of the congregation made it clear in offering Sewell the work that they had encountered some internal trouble which they believed he could help rectify. With the knowledge of such a situation before him, Sewell structured his approach accordingly. He reorganized the educational work of the church, and likewise saw that every member was given some specific responsibility. His reasoning was that if they were working they would not have time for dissension, while at the same time the educational program would begin to refashion attitudes which might ultimately resolve the trouble. While the church did not experience unusual growth immediately during the year, Sewell indicated that a foundation was laid in renewed spiritual development which contributed to subsequent progress in the total church program.³⁷

During the year at Riverside Sewell married a Maxie Runnels, widow of a former deacon at the Grove Avenue Church, who had known and worked with the Sewells during their extended work in San Antonio. Upon completion of his year at Riverside, the church in Wenatchee, Washington, called Sewell to the Northwest for the special purpose of reorganizing its educational efforts.³⁸ In such a specific call to work Sewell would usually conduct an intensive teacher training class, suggest the appointment of an educational director who could assume the general responsibilities of the work subject to the elders, and carefully study the class arrangements, literature, facilities, and equipment of the church. His recommendations to such churches were usually accepted and made operative.

³⁷Ibid., December 30, -1960.

³⁸Ibid.

Another Christian College

While in Wenatchee Sewell was asked to participate in a church lectureship in Seattle by teaching a course on "The Organization and Administration of a Church's Educational Work." During the week of lectures Dr. George Benson, president of Harding College, was a guest speaker. Benson approached Sewell about teaching on the Bible faculty at Harding for the second semester of that academic year, 1949-1950. Since he was nearing the end of his agreed-upon-time with the Wenatchee Church, Sewell readily accepted, and made the move to the Arkansas college in January, 1950.³⁹

Although Sewell had agreed to teach only one semester, he remained at Harding College seven years.⁴⁰ Sewell taught a total of eleven different courses in religion. Some were textual courses in the Scriptures while others were Bible related courses usually in the area of the educational work of the church and the Christian ministry.⁴¹ Elaborating upon the decision to add Sewell to the college staff, Dean Joseph E. Pryor wrote:

Harding College was interested in employing a Bible teacher who had a number of years experience in preaching, who would be a capable Bible teacher and who would be able to counsel with the young men who planned to devote their lives to preaching. There was also a need for a teacher who would be able to help in the Religious Education courses. . . . He possessed the qualifications of the teacher that was desired. He also had a number of years' experience as President of Abilene Christian College as well as a number of years' experience in preaching full-time for the Grove Avenue

³⁹Ibid., December 30, 1960.

⁴⁰Baxter and Young, Preachers of Today, II, p. 393.

⁴¹Questionnaire submitted to Dr. Joseph E. Pryor, Searcy, Arkansas, December 13, 1960.

Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, as well as at other places. He had written widely in the field of Christian Education and had given a great deal of study to the Educational Program of the Church. . . His qualifications and abilities somewhat complemented those of Dr. J. D. Baies who was then chairman of the Bible department and who is currently Professor of Bible at Harding College.⁴²

As a teacher at Harding, Sewell was primarily a lecturer, according to Pryor, with materials always well organized and easily followed by the students. In class he frequently gave extensive outlines of the subjects presented to the students. His stress fell heavily on the need for improving the educational work of the local church and a more effective work in the Christian ministry.

In student counseling Pryor feels that Sewell was equally effective. He not only filled a needed position in working with students who planned to preach, but, likewise, helped with the personal problems of others who were not engaged in preparation for the ministry. Perhaps his effectiveness as a counselor contributed to the large enrollment in his classes, for Pryor states that, "His classes were popular with the students."⁴³ Not only did he counsel with students, but his advice was sought by other members of the Bible Department. Of his total contribution to the college in both the teaching and counseling areas, Pryor concludes, "The years of experience enabled him to be a very wise and effective counselor. I think he did a very effective job of teaching and counseling."⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., December 13, 1960.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

At Home in Texas

While at Harding Sewell suffered two illnesses which came as a result of heart attacks. After each recovery, however, he returned to his work with enthusiasm and vigor, although the demands for rest and better care of his health were reducing the time he could give the work.⁴⁵ By 1957 Sewell retired from the demands of the college campus and returned to his home in Abilene, Texas.⁴⁶

Since returning to the west Texas city Sewell has lived in semi-retirement. He continues to give lectures, teach short series of courses, write and counsel. The present administration of Abilene Christian College often seeks his wisdom in reaching decisions of unusual importance for the college.⁴⁷ He frequently has ministerial students from the college visit his home, and his continued interest in young people and their problems is felt on the campus.⁴⁸ Perhaps his greatest personal concern now is building the "Sewell Library," a special collection of holdings in the Abilene Christian College library, donated by Sewell and for which he plans to provide after his death. Another keen interest is the annual "Lectures on Preaching" which Sewell delivered in 1958 and for which he hopes, likewise, to provide after his death.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Letter from Dr. Joseph E. Pryor, Dean, Harding College, December 13, 1960.

⁴⁶Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

⁴⁷Interview with Don H. Morris, March 27, 1959.

⁴⁸Interview with Don Beck, Speech Instructor, Oklahoma Christian College, March 25, 1959. Mr. Beck graduated from Abilene Christian College in 1958.

⁴⁹Interview with Sewell, December 30, 1960.

Sewell Honored

Through the years individual leaders among the churches of Christ have paid tribute to Sewell's pioneering work in the field of Christian education. He has been honored on noted occasions, featured speaker on college lectureships, and the subject of numerous editorials and other articles in leading brotherhood publications. Among efforts to recognize his work, however, are the overtures of the two schools which he served--Harding College and Abilene Christian College.

In 1934 the president of Harding College, J. N. Armstrong, wrote Sewell at San Antonio to deliver a special series of lectures at the college which was then located at Morrilton, Arkansas. On the closing night of this lectureship President Armstrong made an unusual tribute to Sewell, and without Sewell's prior awareness conferred upon him in behalf of the college the honorary Doctor of Laws degree.⁵⁰ While Armstrong and the other Harding officials appreciated Sewell's work and had probably given thought already to such a gesture, the initial idea for such recognition came from another observer of Sewell's work, Dr. T. H. Ethridge, then Professor of History and Philosophy of Education, at the University of Texas. Ethridge acknowledged having written Armstrong to the effect that if Harding College conferred honorary degrees he believed Sewell should be so recognized, ". . . because of his great service to Christian Education."⁵¹

Again in 1956 Sewell received similar recognition from Abilene

⁵⁰Ibid., March 27, 1959. Also letter from Dr. W. K. Summit, Registrar, Harding College, July 9, 1960.

⁵¹Letter from Dr. T. H. Ethridge to Mrs. Zora Melton, April 8, 1939.

Christian College. At its Fiftieth Anniversary Commencement, Sewell's contributions in the history of the school were reviewed before an appreciative audience of alumni, students, faculty and administration, and he had conferred upon him again the Doctor of Laws degree.⁵²

But Sewell feels that the most significant recognition of his life and work is demonstrated in the lives of those whom he has helped educate into Christian personality, and who subsequently are guiding others into more Christlike character and useful service in God's Kingdom. He has never exalted the degrees conferred upon him, although deeply grateful for the appreciation which motivated such honors.⁵³

⁵²Abilene Reporter News, May 7, 1956, p. 1.

⁵³Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

CHAPTER VI

SEWELL'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The life of Sewell has been told. For more than six decades he tirelessly taught and preached that which he believed to be eternal in its import. While his thinking has undoubtedly been modified and matured through years, many of the basic beliefs and values which he held in the spring of 1896 when delivering his first sermon remain an integral part of his fundamental philosophy of Christian education. For sixty-five years Sewell has studiously quested after truth concerning God's will for His creatures and has made a determined effort to systematize his thinking on the basis of truth acquired. This and the subsequent chapter will be concerned with: (1) delienating the theoretical aspects of his educational philosophy; and (2) presenting the practical methodology which he believed necessary in implementing the theory.

Concept of Christian Education

The published writings of Sewell and the numerous unpublished manuscripts are replete with references to Christian education. What did this expression mean to Sewell? In an address delivered at Abilene Christian College Lectureship in February, 1929, on "Christian Education," he said:

By education I do not refer alone to the processes of instruction, but to the entire process of development by which the human being is equipped to live his life in such a manner as to achieve the greatest amount of success, to enjoy the greatest happiness, and to give his fellows the broadest and most useful service. Any process through which the youth of

the world may be carried which does not thus prepare them for life does not deserve to be called education, regardless of the physical, mental and cultural development it may give. This education can only be given in such a way as to accomplish its service in the finest and noblest living when it is given from the view point of Christianity.¹

From this statement it may be seen that education to Sewell involved aim and process, controlled by a philosophy oriented from the Christian revelation.

Thirty years later Sewell, discussing his philosophy of Christian education, said:

. . . if we are going to have a sound philosophy of Christian education we must have a sound philosophy of education as a whole. And, of course, there are many definitions of education. But the one that I have liked and still like pretty well goes something like this: 'Education is the introduction of control and experience or activities.'²

Sewell continued his observations by noting that in view of this definition even the lower animals can be educated, that is, they can be led to certain performances often enough until they will respond to certain behavior patterns as expected. This, however, may be more precisely defined as training than education.

The education of human beings, Sewell believed, involves the introduction of control into experience on the basis of thinking or rational response. Religious education, according to Sewell, would then be:

. . . the introduction of control into the experiences of the individual on the basis of religion. And Christian education would be the introduction of control into experiences of individuals on the basis of Christian truth and Christian spirit.³

¹Jesse P. Sewell, "Christian Education." (Unpublished lecture delivered at Abilene Christian College Lectureship, February, 1929).

²Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

³Ibid.

A broad analysis of these points of view stated on Christian education would include: (1) a controlling philosophy rooted in the Christian faith; (2) a definitely understood and agreed upon aim; (3) immature individuals who need guidance toward the realization of this aim; (4) a process of development through which the immature persons become more mature; and (5) a developmental process within certain controls. Each aspect in this analysis will be subsequently discussed.

Centrality of the Bible

Even a cursory acquaintance with Sewell's writings, preaching and teaching will reveal the numerous references to such expressions as "Christian truth," "Christian Spirit," "the viewpoint of Christianity," and "Christian ideals." These and similar expressions obviously point to a source of such truth, spirit, ideals, or view points, which to Sewell was final. He believed without any doubt this source to be the Bible. From the guidance of a devoted Christian mother, the example and teaching of a godly grandfather, and the challenging educational experiences at Nashville Bible School, Sewell had had this belief indelibly stamped upon his sensitive mind.⁴

Sewell did not think of man apart from his relationship to the Creator. Neither did he separate God from man in education, for true education, that is, Christian education, is ultimately designed to bring man into a fulfillment of divine purpose. Thus he wrote:

There has never been a time when man in his relationship to God has been permitted to act on the basis of his own wisdom and authority; God has revealed himself and his will through Jesus Christ. A record of that revelation is contained

⁴Ibid., March 27, 1959.

in his word, the Bible. 'But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation which is in Jesus Christ. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.'⁵

Sewell saw in this passage the claim of Scripture itself as authoritative, as containing that which is able to perfect (mature) the man of God, and equip him for service in God's kingdom. His commitment to this point of view was without doubt one of the constants in his philosophy which may be traced through the years. This belief in the authoritative and all-sufficient nature of the Bible is further seen in his trenchant words:

We are limited to the Bible for our knowledge of God and of his will with reference to human life. He has revealed to us in his word everything that is needed for all the pupils of his church, from the little child to the child of God made perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work.⁶

But Sewell distinguished between what is authoritative and final, and what is relative and subject to change. He continued in the same context:

However, the Bible is not a textbook, with the materials for the different ages and stages of mental, cultural and spiritual development gathered together, and arranged in proper lesson form for each age. In fact, it is the source-book of Christianity. There is no other. Materials may be brought from other sources for the purpose of illustrating and impressing the materials of the Bible, as Jesus did constantly in his teaching, but these materials are not authori-

⁵ Jesse P. Sewell and H. E. Speck, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation, (Austin, 1933), pp. 174-175. The quotation includes a Scripture passage, II Timothy 3:14-17, King James Version.

⁶ Ibid.

tative. The Bible stands alone in this respect.⁷

With this fundamental orientation toward the Scriptures, it is obvious that Sewell found in these writings what he believed should be the church's educational program, the aim of Christian education, the content of the curriculum, the role of the teacher and the place of the pupil. It should be noted, however, that while Sewell's basic commitment was to the Bible as central, he was not oblivious to extra-Biblical knowledge as sources of educational value. He was thoroughly acquainted with the history of education, current educational philosophy and the techniques and skills in methodology.⁸ But such knowledge he used wisely within the framework of Biblical revelation.

Aim of Christian Education

Sewell's intensive study of Scripture, especially the New Testament, led him to an understanding of the aim of Christian education which was not commonly held by members of the churches of Christ several decades ago. While most of the preaching and teaching of Sewell's boyhood and early life centered around the doctrine of heaven as the Christian's goal, Sewell concluded that heaven would be the ultimate destiny of those who had attained or realized the aim of Christian living, namely, a mature, well-developed Christian personality.⁹

⁸Any reader will be impressed with the bibliographical listings found at the close of chapters in Sewell's most significant work, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation. His writings evidence a thorough acquaintance with current philosophical controversies in education at various periods of his life. Sewell may have been rather strongly influenced by the writings of the idealist, Herman Harrell Horne, although he would reason that where he and Horne agreed it was because both had studied the same source, namely, the Bible.

⁹Interview with Sewell, March 27, 1959.

Sewell believed that the importance of ultimate aim in Christianity could not be overemphasized. While the unpublished articles relating to this element in his philosophy are abundant, a typical reference was made in a sermon preached at Russelville, Arkansas, April 13, 1952. In part he said:

A current understanding and a proper appreciation of a church's supreme and controlling aim are necessary in order to scriptural and efficient procedure in any congregation. . . . A church's supreme purpose must be defined, understood and accepted in order that its activities may be scriptural and efficient.¹⁰

Years earlier, while at Grove Avenue, Sewell had pointed out the basic reasons, as he saw them, for the church having a clearly defined and accepted educational aim. Without aim the intelligent selection and wise use of materials in educational procedure would not be possible. He cogently reasoned:

Each church needs a clearly defined aim in her educational work in order that she may be able to select and direct properly the materials and methods to be used in this procedure. . . . Often a church has in her mind no definite objective. As a result, her procedure is largely without direction or control. The selection of her materials and methods is accidental, determined by varying circumstances and facts from time to time. Each individual worker proceeds on the basis of his own ideas. There is no controlled, correlated, continuous program. The results are necessarily accidental, and in a vast majority of instances unsatisfactory.¹¹

Sewell was fond of illustrating this point by referring to a hunter who might go out in the woods to hunt. While using much energy and time, and creating quite a noise, without deliberate aim he would kill little game except by accident. Such results even then would likely be undesirable. Sewell continued:

¹⁰Jesse P. Sewell, "A Church's Supreme Purpose," (Unpublished sermon manuscript, Russelville, Arkansas, April 13, 1952.)

¹¹Sewell and Speck, p. 53.

Many churches are using up a great amount of valuable time and energy and making considerable noise as they proceed; but they obtain only uncertain, indifferent, and meager results, because they have defined for themselves no definite aim.¹²

Churches need to define clearly their educational aims so that they might select and use wisely the necessary materials and methods in educational procedure.

A second reason Sewell set forth in his rationale for the church's clearly defined educational aim was that the results of such activity might be measured. Without aim it is not possible to measure the results and determine the amount and quality of success the church is achieving in its educational program. While some churches would evaluate success in terms of increased attendance, Bible reading contests, contributions or similar achievements, Sewell concluded that none of such achievements is "inclusive and final enough to constitute" the aim of Christian education.¹³ The lack of clearly defined aim, Sewell felt:

. . . accounts for the loose, aimless, disjointed, undirected, conflicting educational procedure found in so many churches, and for the constant doubt and uncertainty as to whether anything of real value is being accomplished.¹⁴

Again Sewell reasoned on the necessity of educational aim in order that the church have an incentive to study, improve, and progress. He wrote:

In order that the church may have an incentive to progress and a field for study and improvement, it must fix for itself a definite aim, and this aim must not be limited and incidental. It must be all-inclusive and final in its nature. A gap must constantly remain between the achieved results and

¹²Ibid., p. 53.

¹³Ibid., pp. 54-55.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 55.

the objective in mind, or there can be no incentive to progress.¹⁵

That some churches were satisfied with their activities and accomplishments educationally Sewell readily admitted; but such satisfaction he felt roots in ignorance of the potential educational goals or aims to be achieved. Unaware of such aims, churches had little incentive to progress, and for them there was no definite field for study and growth.

After having presented Sewell's rationale for the church's educational aim, attention must be focused on the nature of this aim. Just what is it that the church should be trying to accomplish in its educational activities? The answer to this question Sewell believed two-fold: (1) the ultimate aim; and (2) the immediate aim. The first aim, the development of Christian personality, extends itself through life and is only completed in eternity; while for the second aim constant efforts are exerted at given age levels and maturity levels to the realization of the ultimate goal.

Christian Personality Defined

Perhaps the most frequently used passage of Scripture in all of Sewell's writings and lectures is found in the fourth chapter of Ephesians. Since frequent subsequent references and allusions will be made to this passage, it is quoted here in its entirety.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the structure of the fullness of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and

¹⁵Ibid., p. 56.

fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.¹⁶

From this statement of Scripture Sewell drew many conclusions relating to the educational work of the church. He saw there an elaborate organizational structure outlined, and this will be discussed subsequently. This extensive educational machinery in the church was designed for the "perfecting of the saints," until these Christians in the process of maturing should develop ". . . into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."¹⁷ Sewell then concluded:

On the basis of this statement, we are going to say that the aim of Christian education, the objective of the educational activities of the churches of Christ, is the development and guidance of Christian personality.¹⁸

While numerous other passages of Scripture were at his command in discussing Christian aim, Sewell quoted frequently from the Colossian Epistle, which refers to "Christ . . . whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."¹⁹

Sewell realized that in one sense the human personality is a unity which must be viewed as a whole. Nevertheless, like other educators and students in the field of human behavior, he studied the varying aspects of personality carefully in relation to the Biblical aim of Christian

¹⁶Ephesians 4:11-16.

¹⁷Sewell and Speck, pp. 60-61.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁹Colossians 1:28.

personality or Christian maturity. Christian personality, according to Sewell, is one that partakes of God's nature.²⁰ Again he calls upon Scripture authority from the Second Epistle of Peter, which reads, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."²¹

Such a personality partaking of the "divine nature" is a re-created character, made in the image of Christ. Sewell quoted from the Epistle to the Romans, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."²² From yet another Pauline Epistle he found Scripture bearing on the new nature of Christian personality. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."²³ Christian personality is indwelt, mastered and used by Christ for His purposes.

Continuing his analysis of the nature of Christian personality Sewell reasoned that such personality includes an intellect thoroughly instructed in Christian truth.²⁴ The favorite Scripture from which he drew this observation is John 6:44-48 containing Jesus' words:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

²⁰Sewell and Speck, p. 61.

²¹II Peter 1:4.

²²Romans 8:29.

²³II Corinthians 3:18.

²⁴John 6:44-45.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.²⁵

He often coupled with this passage the words found in the Great Commission recorded in Matthew's Gospel, which reads:

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.²⁶

Christianity in Sewell's understanding was a taught religion, in which the intellectual capacity of the Christian became saturated with the truth revealed by Jesus.

Not only must the intellect be trained in Christian truth, but "Christian personality includes emotions fixed on God and the things of God."²⁷ Sewell here frequently cited the teachings of Jesus on the greatest commandment, namely, that to love God with all one's being and his neighbor as himself constituted the greatest duty of man to God or his fellowmen.²⁸ Sewell brought to bear a favorite Scripture concerning affections from the Apostle Paul:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For . . . your life is hid with Christ in God.²⁹

Other Biblical exhortations to this effect he found in the Johannine writings, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

²⁵John 6:44-45.

²⁶Matthew 28:19-20.

²⁷Sewell and Speck, p. 62.

²⁸Matthew 22:37-39.

²⁹Colossians 3:1-3.

If any man love world, the love of the Father is not in him."³⁰

Pressing his analysis of the Christian personality further Sewell suggested that such character includes ". . . a will, lovingly and gladly submitting to the will of God."³¹ The will, he believed, to be that volitional, determinative element of personality; it is that in a person which moves him to act upon his knowledge. Jesus' will was submitted to the absolute will of God, and Sewell believed that mature Christian personality must, likewise, involve a commitment of one's will to do God's will.³² It was this unreserved devotion to God's will which led Jesus to the ultimate sacrifice; and to Sewell the same surrender of volition must find itself present in Christian maturity. He was fond of quoting the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, when the Lord concluded, "Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."³³

While much of this phenomenon called personality is spiritual in character,³⁴ Sewell realized that it could not be separated from the corporal body in which one lives. His concept of Christian personality, therefore, included ". . . a body kept pure as a dwelling place for God and for his glory."³⁵ He believed that the body should be viewed as

³⁰I John 2:15.

³¹Sewell and Speck, p. 62.

³²Ibid.

³³Matthew 7:21.

³⁴That is, not subject to the corporal senses; spiritual is here used in the idealistic sense.

³⁵Sewell and Speck, p. 63.

sacred, for it houses the Spirit of God. God works through the Christian's body; it is the instrument of God's activity. Therefore, it should be properly cared for as God's dwelling place. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."³⁶

The last element in Sewell's concept of Christian personality was a dynamic life used actively in God's service. "Christian personality includes a life used in working out the purposes of God among men,"³⁷ Sewell wrote. Jesus, he believed, revealed what such a life should and could be. It was not theory when Jesus said, "I must do the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work."³⁸ The apostle Paul's view of this vigorous type of life was to be ". . . steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."³⁹

Here, then, is Sewell's understanding of Christian personality. It is personality that partakes of the divine nature, that is recreated in the image of Christ. It includes an intellect instructed in Christian truth, and emotions fixed on God and the things of God. It embodies a will submitted to God's will, a body kept pure as the dwelling place of God's Spirit, and a dynamic life used in realizing the God's purposes. Such a person, in Sewell's thought, would be nearing what the Apostle called in Ephesians a "fullgrown man," approaching ". . . the measure of

³⁶I Corinthians 6:20.

³⁷Sewell and Speck, p. 63.

³⁸John 9:4.

³⁹I Corinthians 15:58.

the stature of the fullness of Christ."⁴⁰

This was no unrealistic goal or aim to Sewell, no ivory tower philosophizing. He wrote in the Grove Avenue Yearbook and Directory, to the same effect and then mapped out a program which he felt would contribute significantly to its realization. In part he said:

Education is the directed systematic development of personality, on the basis of tested and proved principles, into the most perfect exercise of all its abilities, the most complete happiness in living and the greatest efficiency in service. Christian education is all of this, given in the Christian spirit and on the basis of Christian truth. Christian education includes the development of the ability to understand, distinguish, believe, on the basis of His truth. It includes the development of the entire person. . . . The aim of Christian education has not been accomplished until the individuals who are thoroughly instructed in Christian truth are nurtured and guided into successfully practicing this truth in the worship of God, and in all the various relations and activities of life.⁴¹

Sewell was aware that his concept of Christian personality as set forth frequently in lectures, sermons and classes, but most clearly and cogently in his volume, The Church and Her Ideal Educational Situation, might be subject to criticism on the same basis as the old faculty psychology. In response to anticipated criticism, he wrote:

Personality cannot be divided into sections, such as intellect, emotions, and will; the intellect to be educated for a while, the emotions for a season, and then the will for a period. The old faculty psychology has been largely discarded. The personality is a unit. The intellect, emotions, and will are so interrelated they must be instructed, inspired, guided and fixed, all along together, at the same time.⁴²

The entire person, Sewell reasoned, is to be Christianized through

⁴⁰Ephesians 4:13.

⁴¹Sewell, Yearbook and Directory, p. 7.

⁴²Sewell and Speck, p. 64.

the process of Christian education. This is the aim of the church's educational work, the ultimate goal toward which all planning and procedure must be directed. While there are immediate aims to be sought at the various levels of development from childhood to adulthood, this is the ultimate aim of the church for its individual members.

Sewell may have profited from his study of the idealist, Herman Harrell Horne, even if he would not agree that he received too many initial ideas from him; for he calls upon a quotation in Horne's, The Philosophy of Education, to express the ultimate realization of Christian perfection. Horne wrote, and Sewell apparently gave credence to the belief, that:

Education means that the origin of man is God, the nature of man is freedom, and the destiny of man is immortality. . . . Education is the eternal process of superior adjustment of the physically and mentally developed, free, conscious, human being to God, as manifest in the intellectual, emotional, and volitional environment of man. Through education the individual becomes in time what he eternally is. Never-ending life is God's education of man in his own likeness.⁴³

Sewell's concluding judgment on the church's educational aim is that, "A church that is Christian cannot be satisfied with anything short of the Christian education of the complete man."⁴⁴

⁴³Ibid., pp. 63-64. (Quoted from Herman Harrell Horne, The Philosophy of Education, pp. 285-286.)

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 64.

CHAPTER VII

SEWELL'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

Since God has revealed a supreme purpose or aim for the Christian, Sewell reasoned, then there must be divine concern for the realization of that aim. God would not place such a challenge before man without likewise providing guidance in attaining it. From this intensive study of the New Testament Sewell concluded not only the aim of life, but also what he believed to be God's desired agency and process for its realization.

The Church-God's Educational Agency

From Ephesians 4:11-16 Sewell understood that God had placed apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers in the church for a specific reason.¹ Having listed the offices, the Biblical writer then used the preposition "for" which denotes the purpose toward which such offices when functioning must contribute. A subsequent preposition is used twice in the same verse, likewise translated "for," and advancing the idea of church offices and organization as existing for the accomplishment of definite purposes. The adverb "until" is then introduced modifying the verbs which describe the Christian purpose. This ultimate purpose has already been identified as Christian personality, and the

¹Ephesians 4:11.

nature of that personality has previously been discussed.²

Elaborating upon this passage Sewell wrote, ". . . Christ, in establishing his church and providing for its perpetuity, set up extensive educational machinery in the church itself, not in some adjunct organization."³ Apostles, he believed, were to testify God's revelation of truth and salvation to man. Prophets were to speak by the inspiration of the Spirit to the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church. Evangelists were to proclaim the good news of God's forgiveness, while pastors (elders) were to feed, watch, lead and protect the church as the shepherd does his sheep. Teachers were to instruct and nurture all ages and classes.⁴ Of the adequacy in such an arrangement Sewell wrote:

This set up is complete and adequate, even from the viewpoint of the most exacting demands of modern scientific methods of education. It includes ample provision for instruction. It provides bountifully for the participation of the pupils in life situations, that they may, under proper guidance, test and learn to use the formulas of living received in their instruction.⁵

Sewell saw in the individual function of each office enumerated and all the offices collectively an extensive and adequate educational machinery. Such an institution as the church, with this elaborate organization, was surely intended to be an educational agency; and this is precisely what Sewell believed the church to be.

The church organization does not exist as an end in itself, but as a means. Whether the church acts in a worship experience, benevolent,

²Sewell and Speck, p. 60.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

teaching or evangelism activity, the controlling purpose is the same, according to Sewell's thinking.⁶ That purpose, expressed in Biblical terms, is ". . . the perfecting of the saints. . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."⁷ Thus the aim of Christian maturity or Christian personality is to be realized through God's educational agency, the church.

Since its beginning the church has functioned as an educational agency, dividing its teaching into two types. First, there was teaching designed to prepare people for church membership, which included instruction in the life of Christ, basis of discipleship, principles of Christian conduct and worship. The second type of teaching was designed primarily for developing leaders in the church who would be adequately trained to oversee and guide the church in its entire program or work and worship.⁸ Sewell believed that the early church conceived of itself as a teaching or educational institution, and that it sought to accomplish its mission in this respect.⁹

Sewell was saturated with a knowledge of Jesus' teaching ministry, and convinced that He, as the master Teacher, intended the perpetuation of the Gospel through education. Thus he concluded:

It is utterly inconceivable that Jesus, who understood the underlying principles and the techniques of education and who used its processes as he did for the accomplishment of his purpose, should then establish his church to continue his work, without providing for the perpetual use of these same principles. This he did not do. The church is intentionally and essentially an educational agency. When we

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

⁷Ephesians 4:12, 13.

⁸Sewell and Speck, p. 29.

⁹Ibid., p. 34.

fail to make it such, we fail to make it a genuine New Testament church.¹⁰

Supervision and Direction

While the church is God's educational agency, Sewell felt that effective educational work must have proper supervision and direction. The expenditure of money and energy, coupled with activity, do not necessarily assure success. There must be purpose in activity, and then there must be supervision and direction to realize the effective utilization of sources, techniques and skills. Viewing the process of Christian education in a comprehensive manner and the need for direction, Sewell wrote:

There can be no proper and essential order, system, and cooperation in the church's educational activities without supervision and direction. This work involves all teachers and their assistants, whether they teach classes on the Lord's Day, week day classes, morning or evening, in homes, in the church building, or out. It involves all pupils. . . . It involves all activities included in spiritual development, teaching, inspiration, guidance, encouragement, control, worship, service, play, social intercourse, professional, business, and the domestic procedure. Any work which involves so large and varied numbers of people and so many and varied activities cannot be successfully done without the closest and most intelligent and efficient supervision.¹¹

If Sewell was convinced of the imperative need for supervision and direction, he was equally clear in his understanding that God had provided the fulfillment of this need in his educational program. Consequently he wrote: "Christ has bound no functions upon his church without providing the machinery needed for its accomplishment."¹² In each church

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹² Ibid., p. 73.

God has placed or designated a group of men to oversee the total church functions. These men, known variously as elders, bishops (overseers), and pastors have the authority and "responsibility to supervise and direct all of the activities of his church."¹³ To support this conclusion Sewell arrays numerous Scriptures denoting the functions of these men in the church, and the divine authority by which they are to perform such functions.¹⁴ The eldership then, ". . . must oversee, supervise, or direct the educational activities of the church just as it must direct in all other activities of the institution."¹⁵

From both reason and practical experience, however, Sewell realized that the elders as a group cannot well supervise or direct the actual educational program of a church. While a group can determine policies, principles, and general procedure, only an individual can most effectively execute these policies, principles and procedures into action. If there is to be effective administration of policy, there must be an administrator who is given that responsibility, and who realizes in accepting such responsibility the person or group of persons to whom he is amenable. With such reasoning Sewell concluded:

Elders may select one of their own number, if one is qualified or capable or willing to qualify, as superintendent or director of education. They may select some other member of the congregation, including the minister. If no one in the church is qualified or capable and willing to qualify, then elders may select a qualified man from outside the congregation when necessary. They may appoint the one selected and delegate to him the authority necessary that he may successfully do his work. Christ has made them

¹³Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁴Acts 20:17, 28; I Timothy 3:1, 4, 5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17; I Peter 5:1-3. (Cf. Sewell and Speck, pp. 74-75).

¹⁵Sewell and Speck, p. 75.

responsible for the proper performance of this task, and this responsibility they cannot shirk.¹⁶

The Educational Director

Sewell viewed the significance of the educational director in the church as equal to that of any other service. Not even the work of the preacher surpasses or provides opportunities for bringing people to Christ more frequently than does the work of the educational director. Couched in this position are unseen possibilities for increasing and improving the moral and spiritual character of the church and the community. The work of such a person in the church has not been taken seriously, reasons Sewell, because churches of Christ have not attached proper significance to the church's educational mission.¹⁷

The duties of the educational director are carefully delineated in Sewell's writing. He must administer the policies, plans, principles and processes fixed by the elders. The director must exercise personal initiative, however, coupled with creativeness, and leadership;¹⁸ he is responsible for planning and systematizing the teaching efforts of the congregation. His position, therefore, requires a ". . . definite knowledge both of the Scriptures and the principles of personality development."¹⁹ He must actually direct the program. As a director:

¹⁶Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 77-78.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 80.

He must be free from details and routine work to use his time and energy for study, thinking, planning, advising and counseling with reference to all the many problems involved.²⁰

Sewell realized that his strong emphasis on the educational program, especially the need to identify aims and to employ educational directors who were well trained, was new among churches of Christ. While his vision was far reaching, he likewise realized the need for the director to be patient and understanding of the church members who perhaps were not quite ready for such ideas. So he wrote of the director:

If he is to realize the highest possibilities in his field, he will be compelled to do much careful, painstaking, clear, patient teaching of the average church. Such is the case, because the average church has a very limited knowledge of the duty, possibility, or problems of its educational task. This is not because the churches are inferior in faith, love, loyalty, or intellect. They have been busy in other fields. The conditions under which they have lived and worked have compelled the concentration of effort and thought elsewhere. So far their educational work has been largely incidental and largely accidental as to conduct, method, and supervision.²¹

The director, according to Sewell, must be alert to the need for evaluating results in the teaching program. He must emphasize among the teachers and superintendents of the various departments working under him the importance of enrollment statistics, percentage of attendance, quality of work done in all the classes, worship attendance, guidance work, and the percentage of those who become Christians through his teaching program of the church. He must point them to the need for planning new goals, new projects, and new methods to accomplish the goals. Sewell concluded that to realize ". . . the highest success there must be an exact knowledge of results in everything all along the

²⁰Ibid., p. 80.

²¹Ibid., p. 81.

way."²²

Having mapped out the necessity for adequate direction and the responsibilities of the educational director, Sewell then delineated the qualifications which he felt essential for such a position. First, the director must be thoroughly Christian. He must be personally committed to Christ, and possess a Christian attitude. His leading must not be out of an authority of position, but as ". . . a result of his larger knowledge, better understanding and contagious enthusiasm."²³

Secondly, the director must be an administrator. He must be able to accomplish far more than he can do individually. He must direct in such a manner that the departmental supervisors, teachers, assistants, and pupils perform at their best. He must have the ability to enlist others, and inspire them to perform highly. The good director must avoid overzeal. He assigns tasks with confidence, expects results, and manifests proper appreciation when they are obtained.

In the third place the director must be a man with vision. It is his responsibility:

. . . to see clearly what are the obtainable goals of the church in which he serves, and to be able to know how best and how fast to undertake to attain them. It is his task to bring to the entire church this vision; and lead them to the attainment of their highest possibilities.²⁴

Gradation

When Sewell first began to advocate strongly his educational views

²²Ibid., p. 81.

²³Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴Ibid., p. 86.

about the work of the church, little attention in churches of Christ was being given to thoughtful classification of children, young persons or adults. While some churches had for many years been dividing their pupils into classes, at least for the Sunday morning Bible study, the divisions were often carelessly made and the results far from what the standards of Scripture would require.²⁵ Sewell noted that "... too often classification is based on competition between teachers or classes, or on the whim of the pupil."²⁶ Although such poor classification might be better than trying to teach all the pupils in one heterogeneous group, churches needed to provide for adequate classification in their educational program.

Sewell believed that churches which gave diligent attention to their educational procedure will be discontent with mere classes. If the law of Jesus is to be accurately interpreted and practiced in the churches, that is, "They shall all be taught of God,"²⁷ there must be proper classification of pupils on the "... basis of their natural and God-given grading."²⁸ Teaching and nurturing can only be effectively practiced when pupils are graded according to nature. Sewell realized that classification in the final analysis is not an arbitrary act of man, but the work of nature, or the work of God. In this context he wrote:

The church does not grade the pupils; God does that. If the church would successfully teach and nurture the pupils,

²⁵Ibid., p. 144.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷John 6:45.

²⁸Sewell and Speck, p. 141.

it must search out and discover the grade of each one and put those of the same grade into the same class, and it must fit its educational procedure to the needs and possibilities of each class.²⁹

Not only is the proper gradation of pupils essential, but the ideal educational situation in a church demands that there be the proper classification of materials, teachers, aims, and activities correlated with correct grading.

Graded Persons

Assuming that persons are graded by nature, Sewell then concluded that the needs of any given level of development vary from those of other levels, and the possibilities for response and accomplishments differ; and according to Sewell's thinking, the church that would develop its pupils into mature, Christian personalities must understand these different developmental periods and the laws of human growth and development. On the basis of this understanding the church then must determine its classification, instruction and nurture.³⁰

Sewell stressed in this connection, the need for church leaders and educational directors to understand more fully the varying needs and possibilities of the child at different levels of development. The neglect of these aspects of personality growth in the educational work can mean the degenerating of such efforts into mere intellectual training.³¹

The individual experiences three broad levels of growth, Sewell believed: childhood, youth and adulthood. The traits, needs and

²⁹Ibid., p. 142.

³⁰Ibid., p. 143.

³¹Ibid., pp. 143, 144.

possibilities differ distinctly in each of these broad divisions, while within each division of development there are varying characteristics and needs.³²

Childhood development, according to Sewell, can usually be traced through at least three or more distinct phases which he characterized as early, middle and later; early ranging from birth to about six, middle from six to eight or nine, and later from about nine to twelve or thirteen.³³ Adolescence, he believed, falls into at least three or more distinct periods, early ranging from about twelve to fourteen, middle from fourteen to about seventeen or eighteen, and later from the close of the teenage period through twenty-four or twenty-five, sometimes even longer.³⁴ Adulthood is not static or fixed, Sewell reasoned, but also has distinct periods evidencing particular needs which the church should and must note if it is to fulfill its educational mission most adequately.³⁵

While a formal study and analysis of this gradation by nature seems arbitrarily clear-cut and pronounced, Sewell was aware that these distinctions cannot be drawn with scientific precision or accuracy. One period moves into another without too obvious changes in the transition period; and there is often the difference in age lines dependent on sex. But, Sewell reasoned:

The characteristics and needs and possibilities of each period suggested are distinct enough . . . to require

³²Ibid., p. 144.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 144, 145.

³⁵Ibid., p. 145.

different materials, different methods of instruction, different aims, and different activities if successful educational work is to be done during each period.³⁶

Graded Materials

With this analysis of the graded nature of persons, Sewell next reasoned for graded materials to teach effectively any level of development. While the Bible is the sourcebook of divine truth, the material in this book must be studied and properly graded to meet varying needs. The Bible itself refers to "milk" and "meat" in discussing appropriate materials which a Christian should study in his moral and spiritual advancement.³⁷ It is the responsibility of the church to make available to its pupils Biblical truth commensurate with their personal development.

Sewell kept his perspective concerning graded materials by constantly recalling the church's controlling aim, the building of Christian personality. The same contribution to this aim cannot be made at every age level, he concluded, since the basic characteristics differ at each level of growth. The educational work of any given department or class, therefore, must be planned accordingly.³⁸

Sewell believed that materials appropriate for one level of development might be inappropriate or even injurious for another. Not all of Jesus' parables were of the same grade level. The wise use of Biblical material as it is designed to meet varying development needs is the mark

³⁶Ibid., p. 145.

³⁷I Peter 2:1; Hebrews 5:12, 14.

³⁸Sewell and Speck, p. 150.

of a mature teacher.³⁹ Sewell was convinced that the Scriptures must be used discreetly to fulfill God's purpose for in meeting human needs. He appealed again to the Apostle Paul who wrote:

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.⁴⁰

If the Scriptures are able to make the "man of God" complete or mature, and to equip him to use his life fully in God's service, then Sewell concluded, they must contain adequate materials to meet all the varying spiritual and moral needs of the human personality. Thus he wrote:

The Bible contains all of the divine material needed for all periods of spiritual development from babyhood to complete maturity in Christ. But just as it is the task of the church to understand its pupils and to classify them on the basis of their natural grading. . . , it is the task of the church to understand the material and to classify it on the basis of correct grading that may be used where it will be needed and will accomplish the desired results.⁴¹

The fact that material is Scripture does not guarantee that it will be helpful and will meet the needs of particular age groups unless it is carefully selected and used with needs in mind.

Graded Teachers

Sewell reasoned that effective teaching implied that the teachers must be graded, or that gradation of teachers by virtue of natural endowment and educational background be appropriately recognized. Not

³⁹Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁰II Timothy 3:16, 17.

⁴¹Sewell and Speck, p. 148.

all teachers are equally adept in dealing with the needs of all ages. Teachers may vary on the basis of temperament, training and experience. It is very possible that a teacher might succeed eminently with pre-school children but miserably fail in teaching high school young people. There are differences in personal needs which demand varying activities, different teaching methods and different materials. Immediate aims are different at various levels of personal development. Thus Sewell concluded that all these differences demand:

. . . teachers for each grade who are equipped by nature, preparation, and experience for the particular work of that grade. Much good teaching is completely lost and many pupils permanently injured because these principles are not observed.⁴²

Sewell felt that churches frequently followed the practice of using a certain teacher because 1) she seemed to be a good teacher and willing to work; and 2) because a need existed in some class for a teacher. Such procedure is inadequate, he felt, for it considers neither the pupils' needs nor the teacher's particular temperament, preparation and experience for a given level of teaching.⁴³

Graded Aims

While the development of Christian personality remains the basic aim of all Christian education, according to Sewell, the same contribution cannot be made to this aim during each period of human development. Rather, he wrote, ". . . the contribution which can be made is different during each period of development."⁴⁴ There must be controlling

⁴² Ibid., p. 145.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 149, 150.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

aims at the respective growth levels which when reached will add significantly to the realization of this ultimate purpose.⁴⁵

During the years of early childhood, including ages three to six, Sewell believed that children should be led to belief in the Fatherhood of God; belief in the person of Jesus, with His unique concern for children; and to love and trust God with the desire to do His will.⁴⁶ In middle childhood these beliefs can be strengthened and their content enlarged. In this period the child should be assisted in forming constructive habits which will help in implementing the formal truths he is acquiring.⁴⁷ Later childhood, inclusive of the ages from about nine through twelve, is unusually significant, Sewell reasoned, because the pupil is preparing ". . . to weather the storms of adolescence safely."⁴⁸ At this level the aim should be to help the pupil make an intelligent decision in acceptance of Christ; to be guided into a fuller understanding of the meaning of commitment to Christ.⁴⁹

As the child develops he reaches the well known level of adolescence. Sewell saw the adolescent characterized by a spirit of independence, wrestling with decisions, and seeking to relate his value pattern to the world around him. It is a period of multiple and complex needs which must be met with well conceived educational aims.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 150, 151.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 152.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 154.

During the middle years of adolescence the pupils finish high school, and either enter college or begin work. For many this is the first experience of leaving home after almost two decades of family association. New experiences pour in upon them. Sewell believed that the immediate aims of the church's teaching program at this juncture should be to assist those who are not Christians to accept Christ; and to help the adolescent see in his Christian faith and convictions a relevance to his many problems and concerns.⁵¹

From adolescence into adulthood is a critical period of transition, Sewell felt, and the church's educational program must meet the unique needs of these years. Persons at this time are either in college or getting settled in their life's vocation, and simultaneously establishing their own homes. Through these years, Sewell wrote, young people:

. . . seriously need the instruction, guidance, and assistance of a wise, devout, and deeply spiritual church. Many during these years lose their Christian faith because of a lack of wise, intelligent guidance. Many choose their vocations foolishly or fail in getting properly started because of a lack of sane guidance, counsel, and advice. Many improper marriages take place that could be avoided by an alert, wise, and interested church. Many homes go on the rocks which could be saved by the church.⁵²

Sewell suggested that for this group the church must provide guidance as they establish their respective church and community positions. An understanding of the basis for true happiness in marriage and the family is essential. The church which is alert, Sewell believed, could render invaluable service in meeting these needs.⁵³

⁵¹Ibid., p. 155.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 155, 156.

⁵³Ibid., p. 156.

Beyond the adolescent is the adult which the church has often, in Sewell's judgment, ignored in its teaching program. He felt that the church should assist adults in continued study of Biblical truth on a more advanced and challenging level, providing at the same time more intensive experiences toward fuller growth and service in the Christian life. This twofold purpose or aim might well be implemented through special Bible courses in teacher training, church leadership, training for service classes, marriage and family, and worship appreciation.⁵⁴

Graded Activities

Essential to the educational processes of the church are varied activities, the more significant ones from Sewell's viewpoint being instruction, worship, service, recreation, fellowship and personal experience. Here Sewell appeals to reason based upon the previous discussion of the pattern of growth and development to demonstrate the need for careful grading and guidance in activities.

Formal instruction appropriate for one level might be entirely inappropriate and even injurious to another level. Worship experience for a primary group might not only lack appeal for senior students but actually be resented by them. Sewell sharply criticizes the general "opening" and "closing" exercises of the average Sunday School as complete failures. Pointedly he wrote, "They contribute nothing of any value to any one in an educational way."⁵⁵

The need for gradation is present, Sewell held, in developing the trait of service in Christian character. The usual sermon from the

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 156.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 158.

pulpit discussing Christian service is oriented from the adult point of view and perhaps contributes little to the needs of childhood groups in the church. In given class situations teachers must interpret the concept of service at the departmental level, and adequately illustrate and demonstrate it so that there is an appeal to helping others and working for God.⁵⁶

Sewell placed unusual stress upon the need for graded recreational activities among pupils of the church. Here he met and answered a common criticism among members of the churches of Christ that the church should not be in the entertainment business, by writing:

On the basis of entertainment, as such, and for its own sake, the church is not interested in social and recreational activities. But, from the viewpoint of the educational effect of these things, it is vitally interested. Perhaps no activities contribute more either to the development or the destruction of the spiritual being. The church cannot stay out of this field and leave it entirely to the devil and his group and hope to succeed in the highest way in development and guidance of Christian personality.⁵⁷

Sewell contended that the church in respect to recreational activities must seek to extend its educational concern to the home, classroom, and other spheres of endeavor to assure that maximum good is being realized from such activities in the development of Christian character.

Fellowship and personal experiences of varying nature are essential to wholesome Christian development, Sewell reasoned, and the educational program of the church must embody opportunities for such experiences. He believed that Christian living is a process of growth and development toward a desired end. Life is not a sequence of disconnected or isolated events and acts. The church must provide experiences for all age levels

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 158.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 159.

and needs, and attempt to interpret these experiences in terms of life process, relevant to each other, and moving toward a real while nevertheless somewhat distant goal.⁵⁸

Teachers in the Church

While Sewell felt that aim, direction and supervision, departmentalization and gradation were significant in the educational program of the church, he believed that the place of the teacher could hardly be over emphasized. In an unpublished sermon entitled "Teachers in a Church," preached at numerous places during the years 1947-1948, Sewell declared, "When Jesus established his church, he placed teachers in it."⁵⁹ This affirmation Sewell found in abundance in the Scriptures. He quoted the Apostle Paul who wrote that God, ". . . gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."⁶⁰ From a different Pauline passage Sewell quoted, "And God has set some in the church, first apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers."⁶¹ Teachers are in the church by the authority of Jesus just as are elders, deacons, and evangelists. They are authorized by God, Sewell believed, and commissioned with a specific task in the on-going of His church.

Not only do the Scriptures provide for the existence of teachers in the church, but they equally authorize the church to develop good teachers. In another of the training for service books Sewell wrote:

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 160.

⁵⁹Jesse P. Sewell, "Teachers in a Church," (Unpub. sermon ms.), n.d.

⁶⁰Ephesians 4:11.

⁶¹I Corinthians 12:28.

The church has no right to use poor teachers. It is the responsibility of the church to develop good teachers. The teacher in the church should be thoroughly Christian, well trained, deeply interested in the pupils, and willing to spend and be spent in this great service.⁶²

Writing with intensity Sewell claimed, "The teacher in the church, as the preacher in the pulpit, stands in Christ's stead, and by his authority, and in obedience to his command."⁶³ Given the best equipment and materials with a poor teacher, failure is certain; while a normally good teacher with poor equipment will get good results; and a good teacher with good equipment will achieve much in the work of the church.⁶⁴

Sewell preached that the church should be a training agency for teachers. He wrote:

When Christ assigns to his church a service, and designates a group of people in the church to perform that service, then it becomes the duty of the church to seek out, teach, to train and inspire those who are best suited for it. It becomes the duty of each church to find and develop teachers.⁶⁵

Sewell brought several arguments to bear on this affirmation that the church should itself be a training agency. First, Jesus trained and sent out the most successful generation of teachers the world has yet known.⁶⁶ That the apostles were inspired to perpetuate what Jesus taught while in person, Sewell believed; but he did not hold that inspiration invalidated the necessity for inspired men to be trained as Jesus wanted them to carry on the work of teaching the untaught.

⁶²Mrs. Lloyd N. Rutledge, et al., The Church and the Children, ed. Jesse P. Sewell and H. E. Speck (Austin, 1935), p. 15.

⁶³Sewell, "Teachers in a Church," (Unpub. sermon ms.), n.d.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Jesse P. Sewell, "The Model Teacher," (Unpub. sermon ms.), October 13, 1946.

Second, Sewell also reasoned that Jesus left the church an example.⁶⁷ The Lord taught his disciples to be teachers. He showed them how to teach by teaching before them. He trained them in the art of teaching, and impressed his apostles that teaching Christianity is the most honorable and important work possible to men and women.⁶⁸

Third, the church is Christ's body on earth, and is, therefore, created to carry forward and accomplish the purposes for which Jesus came, worked, and died. Thus Sewell concluded, "It is the duty of each church to find, teach, and train teachers, and to impress them with the glory and importance of their service, as did Jesus."⁶⁹

In defining the essential characteristics of the teacher, Sewell assumed that the first was for the teacher to be thoroughly Christian, not alone in profession and name, but in character and life. He wrote:

All of the knowledge, culture, training and skill in teaching that can be crowded into any individual cannot justify the use of such an individual as a teacher in the church if he is not genuinely Christian.⁷⁰

What a teacher is, Sewell felt, is vastly more important than what he might say or the methods he might use.⁷¹

While the teacher must be thoroughly Christian, Sewell also believed that he must be completely prepared for his special teaching function. This implies a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Since the Bible to Sewell was the source of all Christian truth, teachers must

⁶⁷Ibid., October 13, 1946.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Sewell and Speck, p. 105.

⁷¹Sewell, "The Model Teacher," (Unpub. sermon ms.)

have their minds saturated with its contents, and be able to motivate their students to both learn the Biblical truth and to live it. He reasoned that a teacher should not be tolerated in the church who fails to possess a dependable knowledge of Christian truth, and who is not constantly increasing his knowledge of such truth. The good teacher of Christianity will constantly quest for material from all sources which help him in the realization of his aims. As Sewell noted:

Nothing of value to his pupils will escape his eyes in literature, history, science, philosophy, or the Bible. . . . The entire realm of knowledge will be his storehouse, and he will constantly be finding and bringing from it to his eager and impressionable pupils things both new and old.⁷²

Knowledge of the Bible and related fields, however, does not assure the teacher of effective performance of his task. The teacher must know the pupil. Of Jesus it was said that he had no need that any one should tell him of man, for his understanding of man was perfect.⁷³ Sewell believed that the Christian teacher, like his Master, must learn the laws of growth and development attached to personality, and that these laws must be respected along with the needs and possibilities of pupils at all levels of development. Lack of knowledge at this juncture results not only in failure and waste, but may result in permanent harm. Forcefully emphasizing this point Sewell wrote:

To compel a child to sit still in a church building and listen to something that he does not and cannot understand, and cannot use in his life, can have but one result, and that is to turn the child against the church and all Christian teaching.⁷⁴

⁷²Sewell and Speck, p. 107.

⁷³John 2:24-25.

⁷⁴Sewell and Speck, p. 108.

Knowledge of the Bible, coupled with the knowledge of human development, is not adequate, for the teacher must know how to teach. A knowledge of the best methods of pedagogy coupled with a grasp of Christian truth and a thorough understanding of human behavior enable the effective teacher to guide his students into an experience of the truth presented them.⁷⁵ Methods must be viewed, however, as only a means to a desired end. Sewell warned that it is easy to become so deeply engrossed in the mechanics of education as to lose sight of the objectives themselves.

Sewell likewise believed that the teacher in the church must be devoted to his pupils. The end of educational effort is not the mere teaching or impartation of knowledge; it is not the display of methods. It is the development of persons. The true teacher in the church, according to Sewell, sees the needs and capacities of his pupils as paramount. This perspective enables the teacher to see in the young, ignorant, foolish, or even delinquent potential personalities partaking of the divine nature.⁷⁶ The teacher is devoted more to his own pupils than to his own convenience and comfort. Paraphrasing Jesus' words pertaining to discipleship, Sewell reasons that, "The teacher gladly loses his life that his pupils might be saved."⁷⁷

Teaching in the church is a demanding task. The functions of a Christian teacher are such that the characteristics must obviously be high, but the rewards for effective teaching are immeasurable, Sewell

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 109.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 110.

⁷⁷Luke 17:33. Also Sewell and Speck, p. 111.

believed. When Christian teachers commit themselves not only to teaching, but to the task of thorough preparation which such teaching demands, the reward is the basic satisfaction of seeing their pupils develop into the likeness of Christ.

The Pupil

When Sewell defined the aim of Christian education as the development of Christlike personality, he recognized four basic assumptions; and within these four assumptions is found the framework for his view of the pupil. (1) He assumed the existence of persons who are immature and that these persons possess a native capacity which can be developed into mature Christian personality for the service of God.⁷⁸ (2) He likewise assumed that there are two levels of life, a higher and a lower, and that the higher is to be followed rather than the lower.⁷⁹ (3) Similarly, he assumed the existence of spiritually mature persons, who as the result of study in Christian truth and experience in living and service, have developed in Christian maturity, and are prepared to instruct and nurture the less mature in their spiritual development.⁸⁰ (4). Consequently, Sewell assumed that there are processes which the spiritually mature may guide and assist the less mature in the development of their natural religious capacities into the highest and most complete character, conduct, and service.⁸¹ Within the framework of these four

⁷⁸Jesse P. Sewell, "A Philosophy of Christian Education," (Unpub. sermon ms.), n.d.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

basic assumptions is found Sewell's philosophy of human nature.

In developing the first assumption Sewell stated that Christian education ". . . assumes that the religious capacity is universal, and that all individuals possess it by nature."⁸² He believed that every normal person is equipped by nature with capacities which when properly developed enable him to live in fellowship with God, and to perform a part of the world's work while living in harmony with his fellowmen on the basis of Christian ethical standards.⁸³ The end of Christian education is not realized when pupils are simply taught the content of Bible truth, but when they develop in their total pattern of life the likeness of Jesus. As Sewell succinctly wrote:

It is only realized when the pupils are brought to live consciously and intentionally as Jesus directs. To lead the pupils to know the life, personality and will of Jesus is not the final task of the Christian teacher, but he must guide the pupils into consciously and intentionally thinking, feeling, willing, and acting as Jesus directs.⁸⁴

The assumption here obviously is that persons have the capacity to develop in their intellectual, emotional, volitional, and behavioral aspects. Christian education, therefore, is the systematic development of personality on the basis of tested and proved principles into the most perfect exercise of the person's inherent capacities, and into the most complete happiness in Christian living and efficiency in Christian service.⁸⁵

⁸²Sewell and Speck, p. 124.

⁸³Ibid., p. 127.

⁸⁴Mrs. Zora Melton, The Church and the Young People, ed. Jesse P. Sewell and H. E. Speck (Austin, 1935), p. 15. (Sewell outlined and wrote the introductory chapter.)

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 16.

While the pupil is viewed as the immature person with native capacities to be developed, Sewell also believed he is constantly changing. The pupil is not the same at any two periods in his developmental process. The constant change in the pupil's needs must be understood by the effective teacher. Personality is a development in an orderly, continuous manner on the basis of natural law. Any educational procedure which fails to recognize not only the native potential of the pupil but also the changing and varying needs of the pupil, cannot but be inadequate. "The pupil himself," concluded Sewell, "is the measure of the success of the church's educational work."⁸⁶ This success is viewed in terms of the desirable changes which have been made in the lives of the pupils, the knowledges acquired, the understanding they have developed. From the Christian viewpoint, Sewell reasoned that their consciousness of God must be awakened, and their responsiveness to the teachings of Jesus made more alert. They must achieve the spirit of reverence and a growing appreciation of worship. Granted the assumption that the pupil is capable of such growth, the church has a motivation before it to stimulate educational planning and effort.

The idea of Christian education likewise assumed that there are higher and lower, desirable and less desirable ways of life.⁸⁷ Sewell saw in this assumption the ability of the pupil to discern between two major approaches to life. He believed that Jesus taught this idea in the words:

The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light;

⁸⁶Sewell and Speck, p. 13.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 127.

but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.⁸⁸

The individual faces decisions which must constantly be made. He has choices to make which determine the course of his life; and these choices are made on the basis of education. Christian education is designed to assist the pupil in making such decisions which will contribute to his maturing Christian personality.⁸⁹

Sewell believed that life means being confronted with problems to solve, decisions which involve conflict, and the choice of the individual to walk in one of two ways. Since the individual will make his decision on the basis of educational experience, the kind of education he has received is of infinite importance.⁹⁰ Christian education, Sewell reasoned, enables the pupil to make his decision on the basis of values derived from God. "The Christian idea is," he concluded, "that education is not complete until the complete person is included, and is by it, enabled to live and serve in the Christian way."⁹¹

Sewell also assumed that there are spiritually mature persons, who through their experiences in the study of Christian knowledge, Christian living and service, possess knowledges, appreciation, attitudes, and skills which enable them to instruct and nurture the less mature toward Christian fulfillment.⁹² Mature persons are educators, reasoned Sewell, whether they intend to be or not. Christian maturity will invariably

⁸⁸Matthew 6:22-24.

⁸⁹Sewell, "A Philosophy of Christian Education."

⁹⁰Sewell and Speck, p. 129.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 130.

⁹²Ibid., p. 131.

lead to the sharing of one's experiences with the less mature. This is the very nature of maturity itself. In a very fine sense, Sewell wrote:

. . . a genuine Christian education . . . is God himself working in his children for the proper development of the immature of the race. God works in the child through his religious capacity and tendency, and upon him through the instruction and nurture of his children. The very idea of Christian education presumes the existence of these mature persons.⁹³

Sewell's fourth assumption in the concept of Christian education pointed toward process by which the spiritually mature may guide and assist the less mature in their progress toward spiritual stature. Since Sewell discussed the concept of process more fully in his treatment of curriculum, no further discussion of this assumption will be given here.

Sewell's view of the pupil, then, embodies a belief in immature persons who have native capacities in need of development. The development of these capacities is the responsibility of the mature Christians in the church, the Christian home, and in Christian education institutions. Faced by the constant problems to be solved and decisions to be made, the maturing pupil makes his decisions based upon the kind of education he is receiving. Christian education concentrates upon progress in the likeness of Christ.

The Curriculum

The previous section focused attention on mature and less mature persons. Christian education, Sewell believed, also embodies a process by which the mature seek to develop in the immature certain esteemed knowledge, appreciations, attitudes, and skills. The process through which such knowledge, appreciations, attitudes, and skills are

⁹³Sewell, "A Philosophy of Christian Education."

developed is an integral part but not the whole, of what Sewell meant by curriculum.⁹⁴

Curriculum is both process and content. While aware of the difficulty in defining this term, Sewell reasoned that it is:

. . . the content of the educational processes of the church. It is what is put into the teaching and nurturing procedures of the church. It must include the course of study, the materials to be taught. It must include also the nurture and guidance of the pupils through such experiments of fellowship, worship, service and recreation as to develop such persons as are thoroughly Christian in all of the activities of life, as well as in knowledge. The curriculum of the church is not an end in itself; it is a means to the accomplishment of the aim of Christian education.⁹⁵

In further refining this comprehensive statement, Sewell contended that curriculum is a series of experiences designed to change the immature members of the society into members whose ways of thinking and living fit harmoniously into the ways of the group. The curriculum of the church's educational program then would be those experiences which are designed to change immature pupils into persons who in their thinking and behavior fit harmoniously into the Christian group and the community around them. Pointedly Sewell wrote:

When we think of the aim of the educational processes of the church as the development of Christian personality, functioning through the church of Christ, in the spiritual reconstruction of human life, then we must think of the curriculum of the church as including all the experiences of the pupils as they undergo enrichment, interpretation, and control in terms of Christian truth and on the basis of Christian ideals and purpose. This will include proper materials, the Word of God, efficient instruction in this material and proper nurture and guidance in the experience of fellowship, worship, service and recreation.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Jesse P. Sewell, "What Shall Our Pupils Learn?" (Unpub. sermon ms.), n.d.

⁹⁵Sewell and Speck, p. 169.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 170, 171.

Adequate curriculum involves subject matter, and the church's educational curriculum involves knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, in which Sewell believed is found the knowledge of God.⁹⁷

While man may learn something of the nature of God from various sources, he is limited in his knowledge of God as a person and of God's plan for human life to the content of the Scriptures. Sewell affirms:

He has revealed to us in his word everything that is needed for all the pupils of his church, from the little child to the child of God made perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work.⁹⁸

Sewell did not believe, however, that the Bible is a textbook merely for the memorization of content. Such a subject matter point of view he would not accept. The Bible must not be worshipped as a book; it is the sourcebook from which man must learn about God. The concept that curriculum is primarily subject matter, or the teaching of the Bible, is inadequate in Sewell's philosophy of Christian education.⁹⁹

From the pupil's study of Scripture he may acquire knowledge about God and the way of God. Sewell defined knowledge as, "A familiarity with facts, events, and principles."¹⁰⁰ Elaborating on the concept of knowledge, he pointed out that the student must learn the actual content of the Bible; he must know the specific teachings of Jesus, and the inspired apostles. He should likewise know extra-Biblical materials,

⁹⁷Ibid. Sewell cites numerous Scriptures at this point to support his belief, among them: Hebrews 1:1,2; Deuteronomy 18:17-19; Matthew 1-5; John 12:49, 50; Acts 3:22-26; II Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 175.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 175-176.

¹⁰⁰Sewell, "What Shall Our Pupils Learn?" (Unpub. sermon ms.), n.d.

such as the history of the church, the present status of the church in the world, and the nature of human needs. Subject matter content as described is important, according to Sewell, so that the pupil might have an adequate background out of which to face and solve life situations as he daily confronts them. Content in the curriculum must be functional.

The developing pupil must learn appreciation. Sewell defined appreciation as the "ability to correctly assign value."¹⁰¹ Maturity implies the ability to make value judgments. The mature person must fix upon a scale of values which then, in effect, enable him to make decisions. Without the trained capacity to discern critically and assign value, Sewell thought, one can hardly be called educated or mature.

Curriculum involves the development of attitudes. Sewell defined attitude as "an habitual way of thinking and feeling about persons, relations, and things."¹⁰² Maturity implies the capacity to think critically and to feel deeply. It enables the pupil to orient himself toward God, toward his fellowmen, and toward himself. It enables him to make the choices which are inescapable.

In the fourth place curriculum includes the development of skills. A skill, according to Sewell is, "the ability to perform acts with ease and accuracy. Correct attitude, knowledge and appreciation will be of little value with out skill."¹⁰³ Sewell illustrated the relationship between knowledge, attitude, appreciation and skill through the experience of conversion. Desire to be a Christian, he reasoned, is the proper

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

attitude. The understanding of what is involved is proper knowledge. Knowing the value of sonship to God in Christ is proper appreciation; but, Sewell concluded:

. . . all of these without the ability, the skill to overcome the devil, the flesh, and the world and to do the things involved, would be of little value. The same is true of everything in the Christian life.¹⁰⁴

Curriculum, then, is that process between the mature and the immature wherein the developing immature person acquires the necessary knowledge, appreciations, attitudes and the skills whereby he may put in effect his own life the will of God.

In order that curriculum as defined above might be most effectively implemented, Sewell felt that theory was inadequate. Formal instruction is important, but alone it is insufficient. Teaching must be coupled with activity. He believed the maxim, "We learn by doing."¹⁰⁵ Sewell appealed once again to Scripture as the source from which he derived this belief, quoting the Epistle of James:

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgeteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deeds.¹⁰⁶

Sewell affirmed that the adequacy of curriculum in the educational program of the church implies both subject matter and activity. Again he wrote of the church's responsibility:

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Sewell and Speck, p. 176.

¹⁰⁶James 1:22-25.

It is not enough that it teach the pupils Christian truth; it must also guide and nurture them through the experiences of life in such a manner as to enable them to live in the Christian way successfully.¹⁰⁷

Through the nurture and guidance of the mature teacher the pupil is confronted with life situations, and has experience in the analysis and disposition of such situations. His choices are made on the basis of Christian truth learned and the principles acquired. Since curriculum includes both instruction in truth and the experience of activity, the church must carefully and intelligently plan a program of activities in instruction, fellowship, worship, service and recreation. At this point Sewell was critical of the many churches in his brotherhood who were failing in this respect.¹⁰⁸ While churches have consistently worked at formal teaching, they have neglected the experiential phase of the curriculum.

Sewell appealed to the example of Jesus who did not call His pupils into a formal class room and depend upon the teaching of abstract truth for the accomplishment of His aims, but who led them with Him into the varied experiences of life, and based their development as much upon activity as upon formal instruction. Sewell continued:

Jesus led His pupils to interpret their experience in the light of His teachings, and to see what they meant on the basis of the ideals and purposes He presented. The church must do the same for its pupils, or many of their most important experiences will be passed without understanding from the viewpoint of Christian ideals and purposes. . . . The educational work of the church must be judged at least by the extent to which it enables its pupils to use their Christian knowledge and ideals in controlling their lives in the Christian way.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Sewell and Speck, p. 179.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 180, 181.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Re-enforcing his own observations on this point, Sewell appealed to the idealist, Herman Harrell Horne, who wrote:

Doing is not so easy as seeing what ought to be done, because perceiving the truth is easier than the more energetic act of willing the truth. The failure to draw this distinction led the wise Socrates to slip in his famous dictum that knowledge is virtue, to whom it did not seem possible that a man should know what is best for him to do and not do it. Knowledge is indeed a means to virtue, but it is possible for a man to see the light, and to turn from it and walk in darkness. The theoretic comprehension of truth solicits, but does not compel, obedience.¹¹⁰

Sewell suggested four areas in which the church must provide activities in its teaching and nurturing program. The first activity is fellowship. The early church was a closely knit band of disciples who enjoyed the intimate fellowship of Jesus. As the church expanded it gave attention to maintaining fellowship among the various members as well as fellowship with God. Sewell reasoned that:

If the church is to guarantee the continuance of this fine and blessed experience of fellowship within, it must put into its curriculum those fellowship experiences for the students of every age and stage of development that are essential that they may be guided and nurtured into this manner of living.¹¹¹

Life in the Christian fellowship is not accidental; it cannot be developed by instruction alone. Training for such a life should begin with the pre-school child, and adequate provisions made for its continuance through each period of growth.

Worship is a significant activity, Sewell felt, in the development of Christian personality. Jesus taught His disciples the nature of worship; but He also led them into worship experiences. He focused

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 181, quoted from Herman Harrell Horne, The Philosophy of Education, p. 15.

¹¹¹Sewell and Speck, pp. 182, 183.

attention upon true worship when He said: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."¹¹² With the proper knowledge of God as Father, pupils can be taught to reverence, love and serve Him. The church must provide both instruction and nurture for its pupils which will enable them to see God as a reality, to appreciate His nature, and to feel His presence in their own lives.

Sewell was critical of many churches of Christ for making no provision for the younger children to worship at the level of their particular development. He felt that worship planned for the adult membership often is tragically negligent of the needs for nurture and guidance of children in worship. Sewell advocated that each department within the Bible school organization meet separately for worship at its own level of understanding. The young persons themselves should be used in the leadership of this worship. Through such planned and controlled activities the developing child would better understand the meaning of worship, appreciate it as a value in his life, and be able to develop appropriate patterns of worship which are personally meaningful.

Christianity, in Sewell's thought, is pre-eminently a religion of service. Jesus' life and ministry are the only evidence necessary to establish this point. Christians must not only be taught the truth theoretically, but must be guided into activities where the truth becomes real. Jesus looked upon human needs as a definite call to service. He not only taught His disciples to minister to such needs, but set them a perfect example. The church, likewise, must instill in its developing pupils the readiness to respond in service. Each church should put into

¹¹²John 4:23, 24.

its curriculum a plan of service activities for each group of its pupils. These activities to be of educational value, must be constant, regular and systematic. They must be graded and thus suited to each group's interest and capacities. Formal instruction, worship experience, and service opportunities must all be correlated at the same level of development. Each pupil should have a clear understanding of what is being done, and why it is being done. The teacher should make clear to his pupils the good results which may come from his service.¹¹³

Sewell understood that an important part of the child's life is play. Older youth and adults, likewise, must experience wholesome recreation. These activities were not unrelated to the curriculum of the church's educational program. They must be viewed as an integral part of Christian development; therefore, the church cannot shrug its responsibility in guiding the recreational activities of its children and adults. Again Sewell was quite critical of churches of Christ in this respect. He felt that they often branded recreation, amusement, and relaxation as either un-Christian or anti-Christian, and that their attitude was wholly negative. An effective well-planned curriculum in the church's educational enterprise requires that time, thought and effort be exerted in the provision of wholesome recreation within the framework of Christian values and truth. From the theoretical consideration pupils should be called upon to evaluate, critically discern various types of recreation. They must be able to see clearly why some activities would be good, while others would be detrimental. In this field nurture and guidance are especially needed.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Sewell and Speck, pp. 188, 189.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 190.

Sewell concluded that in this area of activity the church and the home must cooperate in their educational work. The church must not evade its responsibility, nor can the home blame the church for its own failings. Paraphrasing the Apostle Paul, Sewell wrote: "You must bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."¹¹⁵

Activities are not an end in themselves, but must be seen as means to greater ends. Sewell summarized his treatment of activities as they relate to curriculum by writing:

Through them the spirit and practice of fellowship, cooperation, self-control, courtesy, kindness, honesty, self-expression, fairplay, unselfishness and all the desirable traits of character may be developed, and under proper guidance will be developed.¹¹⁶

The program of activities should be carefully and definitely planned, and skillfully guided on the basis of clearly defined and thoroughly understood aims. The ultimate aim toward which all instruction and activities must point, which is the unifying theme of Sewell's philosophy of Christian education, is the developing of personalities in ". . . the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 191.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 190.

¹¹⁷Ephesians 4:13.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem with which this study has been concerned focuses on the educational contributions of Jesse Parker Sewell to the religious education programs of churches of Christ and the institutions of higher learning owned and controlled by members of these churches. While all available data on Sewell's life were gathered by the writer in the research efforts exerted, the problem as defined has necessitated careful selectivity of the materials presented. No claim is made for definitive biography in this study; but when the total picture of Sewell's life is studied, there appear to be few accomplishments not related to his educational interest and work.

From the body of data related in the text it is clear that one of the major contributions which Sewell made to the religious education programs of churches of Christ was the systematic statement of the church's aim in Christian education, the organization essential to appropriately realize this aim, and his clearly delineated methods through which such an educational program might best be implemented. This is all the more remarkable since at the time which he first set forth his systematic concept of Christian education there was strong brotherhood feeling against any formal statement of convictions. This is not to conclude that Sewell thought he was writing a new creed for the churches of Christ, or providing any authoritarian guide for all the churches to follow. He did speak courageously, however, about what appeared to be

one of the most serious weaknesses among his brotherhood.

The concept of Christian education depicted by Sewell contained a definitive statement of the aim as developing Christian personality, and Sewell's thinking in this respect has been set forth. Emphasis on maturity or perfection "in Christ,"¹ rather than the traditionally repeated goal of heaven was indeed new among churches of Christ. Sewell believed in the reality of heaven, but this other-worldly promise to the Christian did not blur his vision of the immediate and distant goals or aims of the church's educational program. It is hardly necessary to point out that he met with opposition in heralding these views.

During Sewell's early life the churches of Christ were immersed in religious controversy involving the denominational Sunday School practice on the one hand and the educational program of the church on the other. Sewell did perhaps more than any other person in his brotherhood to think through and logically state the basic difference between the denominational Sunday School and the educational work of the churches of Christ. In essence he said that the New Testament authorized the church to teach; this was one of its specified functions, and it had the responsibility to plan effectively and administer such an educational work. The denominational Sunday School, as Sewell saw it, was an organization separate and apart from the church itself, and often in competition with the church proper. After this distinction had been set forward to his brotherhood, the churches of Christ began more intensive educational efforts.

The present status of religious education efforts among the entire brotherhood of churches of Christ, and especially in the southwest, owes much to Sewell's work in the early decades of this century. The plans

¹Colossians 1:28.

of many churches, including implementation through educational directors, departmentalization, use of graded materials, setting of goals, and the recognition of achievement may be seen stated in Sewell's writings dating back to the 1930's. What caused bitter criticism and sharp reaction to Sewell thirty years ago, is today accepted among this same brotherhood as that which is essential, reasonable, and soundly rooted in Biblical revelation.

The initiation of a new series of graded Bible School literature under Sewell's editorship in 1950 was a major achievement for the churches of Christ. While some work had been done in this field among the churches, nothing had been undertaken which approximated the scope and dimensions of Sewell's plan. While subsequent series have been attempted, none seem to have embodied the aims and quality evident in the "Gospel Treasure Series." Its extensive use among churches of Christ today witnesses to its quality and benefit as an aid in the educational programs of local churches.

Sewell's work among the churches in conducting Teacher Training Schools is noteworthy. While the influence of such work through several decades cannot be measured with scientific exactness, the fact of such influence and continued benefits cannot be reasonably denied. The geographical extent of his work and influence is far-reaching. The subsequent history of churches' growth numerically and spiritually after such schools were conducted point toward this same conclusion, that among Sewell's brotherhood contributions educationally, the Teacher Training Schools were indeed significant.

While Sewell's work with institutions of higher learning among churches of Christ was primarily with one college, Abilene Christian, his contributions and influence have not been limited to that school.

The academic status of Abilene Christian College today, and to some extent the high academic quality of all these Christian colleges in performing at a level which merits accreditation from the respective associations, may be traceable in part to Sewell's early emphasis on high scholastic standards. When Sewell first became president of that institution, he was thinking in terms of a Christian college where young persons might receive an education commensurate with that in any higher institution of learning, but in addition to such secular learning they might also acquire sound instruction in the Bible and live in a Christian atmosphere while pursuing their education. This concept of education and of a Christian college pointed toward the need for accreditation; but Sewell's brethren were generally opposed to such attainment and recognition. It was argued that the accrediting agencies would control the curriculum, selection of faculty, and the actual instruction of students. It would be surrender of the Christian colleges to worldly educators; accreditation was tantamount to compromise with unbelieving educators. But Sewell's thinking was clear on this issue, and his persistent efforts won accreditation not only for Abilene Christian College, but an acceptance of educational accreditation as a most desirable goal among most brotherhood colleges today.

The pattern of Christian college organization which prevails today among churches of Christ is that the college is owned by a purpose, agreed upon by its clientele, and that the physical properties of the institution as well as the policy making decisions are held in trust by a board of directors or trustees. But this pattern did not prevail when Sewell began his work in Texas. In fact, when he was first approached by Barrett about the need for a Christian college in Texas, Barrett's idea, representative in that day, was that the college should be

privately owned by an individual or individuals who would invest personally, and then operate the institution as a private business for profit. This accounts for Sewell's refusal to work with Barrett in the initial founding of Childers' Classical Institute. The wisdom of Sewell's thinking in this essential of college organization is evident today by the growing number of Christian schools among churches of Christ which are organized on a sound economic as well as theological basis.

Sewell's dynamic leadership and personality have been used to advantage by many Christian colleges other than Abilene Christian. His work at George Peppardine and Harding Colleges reflected the confidence and appreciation which college administrations held for his ability. His sound judgment was sought in the establishment of North Central Christian College in Detroit in 1959, and the Northeastern Christian Institute, Philadelphia, the same year. While exercising no official voice in the present affairs of Abilene Christian College, his wisdom is still welcomed and his influence on the campus is a reality. The very concept of Christian education among churches of Christ and their related Christian colleges is in many areas of this brotherhood synonymous with the name of Sewell.

The implications of this study are perhaps far-reaching. While Sewell has made unusual contributions in his own unique way, there are other men of equal stature whose lives deserve similar study. Historical process tends to clear the perspective held of any person, and this is especially true of men in the course of religious struggle and effort. The writer would encourage other studies of men such as Sewell who have reached the pinnacle of their efforts, or who have even gone on in death. Without doubt there are other personages of stature in the churches of Christ, whose life and work, if studied, would add immeasurably to the

services and efforts of these churches to extend their mission in the world.

The writer desires to make the findings of this study available in an extensive manner to all the churches of Christ. While there has been an awakening in the educational efforts of some churches, many congregations in this brotherhood have yet to realize their own mission and potential. If the study, made available to such churches, will serve to stimulate some new thought and perhaps some activity, one of the writer's purposes in this project will have been justified.

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Personal Interviews. Interviews with the following persons were taped and transcribed during the period from March 25, 1959 through December 31, 1960. Tapes and transcriptions available, Oklahoma Christian College Library, Oklahoma City.

Dr. Jesse P. Sewell; Dr. Don Morris; Dr. Walter H. Adams; Dr. Paul Witt; Dr. E. K. Halbert; Mrs. E. K. Halbert; H. E. Speck; Mrs. H. E. Speck; Don E. Beck; R. H. Bonner; S. P. Pittman; Lloyd Rutledge; Miss G. H. Stubblefield; Mrs. Zora W. Melton.

Questionnaires. A two-page questionnaire, Appendix A, was submitted by the following persons: Omar L. Bixler; Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter; Mrs. Dena McDuffie; Mrs. Reta Scott Garrett; Mrs. O. V. Lamb; A. H. Maner; Harrison Matthews; Dr. Joseph E. Pryor. Questionnaires in possession of the writer.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Doctoral Study

on

JESSE PARKER SEWELL

* * * * *

Name of respondent: _____ Address: _____
 (Street)

Position or Occupation: _____
 (Street)

* * * * *

1. How long have you known Jesse Parker Sewell? _____
2. In what capacity did you know him? (i.e., minister, school administrator, personal friend, etc.)

3. What specific factors in Sewell's early life do you know about which you feel were formative influences in his character and life's work?
4. Do you know of any personal incidents related to his life at Viola Normal School or Nashville Bible School which will shed light on his adult convictions and vision?
5. When did you first hear Sewell preach?
6. What is your evaluation of Sewell as a preacher? As a Christian teacher?

7. Were you ever a member of a congregation which Sewell served as preacher? _____
Where? _____
How long were you there? _____
8. What factors do you think prominent in the development of his own concept of "Christian personality?"
9. How effective do you feel that he was during his active ministry in convincing churches of the need for better planned and more effectively supervised teaching programs?
10. What do you consider to be Sewell's major contributions to the educational work of local churches?
11. Did you attend Abilene Christian College during Sewell's presidency?
_____ If yes, dates attended: _____
12. What were your impressions of Sewell as a college administrator?

13. What do you consider to be his major contribution to the Christian college movement among members of the church of Christ?

14. Additional Observations: Please feel at liberty to insert any additional observations or evaluations you care to make about the life and work of Jesse Parker Sewell.

15. Are you willing for your answers to these questions to be used (either as direct quotations or for general reference) in this doctoral study? _____

Signature: _____

VITA

Joseph Ferdinand Jones

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF JESSE PARKER SEWELL

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born near Williamston, North Carolina, July 25, 1924, the son of James McGilbert and Mattie Abelia Jones. Married Geneva Sadler, Nashville, Tennessee, November 22, 1951. Four children: Ronald, Terrell, Deborah, Danny.

Education: Attended grade schools in Hopewell, Virginia and Jamesville, North Carolina; graduated from Hopewell High School, Hopewell, Virginia, 1941; received Junior College Diploma, David Lipscomb College, in 1944; received Bachelor of Arts degree from George Pepperdine College, with a major in Bible, in June, 1946; received the Master of Arts degree from George Pepperdine College, with a major in Historical Christian Doctrine, in June, 1948; attended Vanderbilt University School of Religion, 1948; attended Butler University School of Religion, 1952-1953; received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Michigan, with a major in history in June, 1954; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in August, 1961.

Professional Experience: Served as minister for churches of Christ since June, 1942, including churches in Virginia, Tennessee, Indiana, Michigan, California and Oklahoma; instructor in Greek and Comparative Religions, Michigan Christian Academy, Detroit, 1953-1954; dean, Central Christian College, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 1956-1957; dean of students, Oklahoma Christian College, Oklahoma City, since 1957; member of Phi Alpha Theta, American Society of Church Historians, Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Oklahoma Conference of Deans and Counselors of Men, National Education Association, Association for Higher Education, and Oklahoma Educational Association. Minister, Cherokee Hills Church of Christ, Oklahoma City.