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# A Biography of Z. T. Sweeney

Robert E. Reeves

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A BIOGRAPHY OF Z. T. SWEENEY

by

Robert Earl Reeves

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
Department of Church History

Division of Graduate Instruction  
Butler University  
Indianapolis  
June, 1959

## PREFACE

Zachary Taylor Sweeney was one of the more popular and influential preachers of the Christian Church during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century. He built the largest congregation of his brotherhood during his lifetime. He was one of the leading spokesmen for the conservative element of the Disciples during a very troubled period. Outside of church affairs he became prominent in political, governmental, chautauqua, and business circles.

S. S. Lappin and Frederick D. Kershner had both planned to write a biography of Z. T. Sweeney. They were close friends and associates of Mr. Sweeney and either of them would have written an excellent sketch. Unfortunately, circumstances prevented them from completing their projects. Subsequently much of the primary source material has been lost. And many of the persons with first-hand knowledge of Sweeney and his work have died.

Zachary Taylor Sweeney was familiarly called "Zack" (sometimes spelled Zach) Sweeney. More formally he was known as Z. T. Sweeney. Almost never was his full name used.

For the sake of historical objectivity, a number of terms that had a special meaning to Sweeney and his contemporaries in the Christian Church will be placed in quotation

marks. Such terms include "New Testament Christianity," "Restoration Movement," "Jerusalem Gospel," and "denomination." This does not indicate any prejudice against, or for, these terms by the writer. This device is used to show that an attempt has been made to use this nomenclature as Z. T. Sweeney would have used it.

Dr. Ronald Osborn's vivid portrayal in a class lecture of Z. T. Sweeney as one of the most colorful men of his period is responsible for the selection of this thesis subject.

This biography has been treated topically and in some chapters a number of somewhat related topics have been grouped together with the title derived from one of the subjects of that chapter. A deliberate attempt has been made to avoid the usual academic style of writing common in theses. Instead the effort has been directed toward making Z. T. live, a style that is now popular in historical writing.

Z. T. Sweeney died two years before the writer was born. As only the briefest biographical sketches have been written, primary sources have been used extensively. The most valuable source has been the contemporary religious periodicals of the Christian Church. The Sweeney files, most of which are on microfilm, are stored in the vault of Union Sales Company, Columbus, Indiana. Unfortunately for the biographer, none of Z. T. Sweeney's personal or professional files or records were kept. The only items of his that were saved were the letters written to other members of the family and which

were preserved by them.

Many persons have been helpful in securing and supplying information in the research. Miss Elsie Sweeney and Mr. Irwin Miller graciously gave their consent for a total stranger to invade the privacy of their family records. The late Dr. O. L. Shelton deserves credit for securing the permission of the family to write about Mr. Sweeney. Dr. Henry Shaw, Christian Theological Seminary librarian, and Dr. Claude E. Spencer of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society assisted with suggestions and in securing obscure material. Many letters and personal interviews as noted in the footnotes and bibliography helped confirm details and add color.

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E. T. was passing through Columbus from a visit in  
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The flow of the life-fluid in the genealogical

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Miss Klisie I. Sweeney, March 10, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>E. T. Sweeney's father, J. E. Sweeney, preached at  
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 ascertain the date of his ministry there but it is possible  
 that he was the one who informed E. T. of the vacancy at  
 Columbus.

## CHAPTER I

### ROOTS AND BRANCHES

Zachary Taylor Sweeney's early morning knock was answered by a pretty twelve-year-old school girl holding the back of her yet unfastened dress. Linnie Irwin was the daughter of the leading businessman of Columbus (Indiana) and chief "pillar" of the local "Campbellite" church. When the young preacher saw the winsome and artless lass open the door of the Irwin mansion that morning he almost forgot his mission. For "Zack" it was love at first sight. Right then and there he determined that she would someday become Mrs. Z. T. Sweeney.<sup>1</sup>

Z. T. was passing through Columbus from a visit in Kentucky which he had made for his health and was now returning to the church in Paris, Illinois. At Columbus he heard that the small Christian Church was without a preacher<sup>2</sup> so he went to the home of Joseph Irwin to inquire about preaching for them the following Sunday.

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<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney's father, G. E. Sweeney, preached at Jetts Schoolhouse near Columbus. It has been impossible to ascertain the date of his ministry there but it is possible that he was the one who informed Z. T. of the vacancy at Columbus.

trees of the Sweeney and Irwin families was long and eventful before that day it converged in Bartholomew County, Indiana.

### Sweeney Roots

Z. T.'s great-grandfather, Moses Sweeney, was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1735 but emigrated to America early in life.<sup>1</sup> He settled in Virginia with his wife and the three sons who had immigrated with them. Three other boys were born in America. The third of his six sons, Job, moved in 1786 to Crab Orchard Springs, Kentucky, where he began preaching in the Baptist denomination late in the century. He later moved to Liberty, Casey County, Kentucky where for fifty years he divided his time between hotel-keeping and preaching. It was here that G. E., Zachary's father, was born. Prior the age of twenty G. E. entered the Baptist ministry, but before a year had transpired the "Current Reformation" guided by Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone and others had caused a fraction in the Baptist denomination.

The Campbells, unwilling to be cut off from Christian fellowship, and equally unwilling to form a new denomination, found themselves under the necessity of uniting with the Redstone Baptist Association when they were severed from their ancestral Presbyterian ties because of their insistence

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Harmon in John T. Brown's Churches of Christ gives Charles Sweeney as the great-grandfather. However, there is no confirmation of this in any other record. The family genealogical records give Moses.

that biblical baptism is immersion. From the beginning, however, the affiliation with the Baptists was tenuous. Alexander's paper, The Christian Baptist, called for the restoration of "The Ancient Order of Things." Soon there resulted widespread controversy over the relation of the law to the gospel, the validity of creeds, "textuary" preaching, human names, and Calvinistic interpretations.

Both of the preaching Sweeneys, father and son, decided in favor of "New Testament Christianity" and left the Baptists. At the age of twenty-one G. E. married Talitha Campbell<sup>1</sup> to whom four sons and five daughters were born. Zack's father was a successful revivalist and was endowed with a magnetic disposition, "a soul responsive to all good," and a musical voice. He bequeathed to his sons certain mental and spiritual qualities that made them prominent leaders.

All his sons have been men with clear cut and sharply defined ideas. They have always had something to say and were neither ashamed nor afraid to say it. People have often gone away from their ministry without agreeing with them, but they have always made it impossible for intelligent people to say, "I did not understand him."<sup>2</sup>

Zack's mother had little formal education, but was a woman of strong devotion, religious conviction and love for

<sup>1</sup>There is a tradition that Talitha Campbell was a relative of Alexander Campbell but this cannot be confirmed. She was born February 12, 1809, the year that Alexander came to America, and was the daughter of John and Talitha Apperson (Epperson?) Campbell who emigrated from near Aberdeen, Scotland. If any relation exists, it would necessarily be quite distant.

<sup>2</sup>H. H. Harmon, "The Sweeney Family," Churches of Christ, ed. by John T. Brown (Louisville: John P. Morton and Co., 1904), p. 466.

truth which she was able to impart to her children. All the daughters were active in the church and the four sons all became preachers of the Restoration Plea.

William G., Z. T.'s oldest brother, like his father, divided his time between business interests and preaching. He spent most of his life in Iowa where he followed business pursuits, governmental positions and preaching. President Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, appointed him as Collector of Customs at Dubuque, Iowa, which position he held until his death in 1897. Although his large financial interests prevented giving his full time to the ministry, he had several successful pastorates, notably Dubuque, Iowa, Winchester, Illinois, Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Hannibal, Missouri. His large physique was matched by his mental acumen, and he was often compared to "the little giant," Stephen A. Douglas. His personal magnetism and fiery speech inflamed the emotions of his hearers.

John S., the second son of G. E. Sweeney was largely self-educated. But of him Z. T. said, "I owe about everything I have to John."<sup>1</sup> J. S. began his career as a school teacher in Illinois and while teaching showed his innate logical mind and ability as a debater. Weekly debates on theoretical topics were held as the social entertainment of the day. John was known to have won debates on both sides of the same question. His arguments on "Which has the greater right to

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with William E. Sweeney, September 17, 1958.

complain of ill treatment at the hands of the white man -- the Indian or the negro?" stirred up a storm that took months to subside.

By 1854 John had prepared himself to practice law and that fall began his legal career in Greenfield, Illinois. He showed promise of being one of the leading lawyers of the West when certain events changed his course. Sweeney was residing with Judge Short, a member of the Methodist Episcopal church. At that time the doctrines of Alexander Campbell were stirring up the religious leaders of the frontier and as there were few "Campbellites" and no preachers of the "Restoration" in this Illinois community the Protestant preachers were having a field day attacking Campbellism. Judge Short, not knowing Sweeney's religious affiliation, invited him to hear an "M. E." preacher review Campbellism. The preacher proclaimed that Mr. Campbell "could take the vilest sinner into the water and bring him out a saint." When the opportunity to ask questions was presented, Sweeney asked where that could be found in Campbell's writings. The preacher replied, "Have you come to break up my meeting?" Judge Short, a fair minded man, interjected, "No, Bro. Powell, it is a fair question and one I should like to know." Immediately, Sweeney was approached by the brethren of the community to set forth fairly the Restoration Plea. A schoolhouse was procured and John S. Sweeney preached his first sermon at the close of which a number responded to the invitation. A meeting followed with one hundred baptisms, including some, if not all, of the

Judge's children. John was launched on his ministerial career!<sup>1</sup>

His disposition and experience as a lawyer admirably equipped him for religious debating, a common practice in that day. A short time later he held his first religious debate with the Rev. Mr. Pallet of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the proposition "That we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." In the course of his ministry he held over one hundred debates on almost every conceivable religious topic ranging from atheism to soul-sleeping. Frequent were his debates with Methodists, Baptists and many of the other religious groups which were present on the frontier. He held pastorates in Winchester, Lincoln, and Chicago, Illinois, and Cincinnati, Ohio. His longest and most significant ministry, however, was at Paris, Kentucky where he remained for thirty years.

The Honorable G. W. Cooper, congressman from Indiana's fifth district, said,

In listening to preachers--especially those who have had no polemic training--I often feel that much could be said on the other side of the question, but when Mr. Sweeney is done with a subject, I feel that the best has been said on both sides and the issue is fairly made. In short, no gaps have been left down.<sup>2</sup>

The style of the brothers' preaching was quite

<sup>1</sup>A deacon, "Life of John S. Sweeney," Sweeney's Sermons (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

different. John's specialty, like that of J. H. Jowett, was in the effective and proper handling of words.<sup>1</sup> John, with a lawyer's mind, had the ability to penetrate sophistries and see the basic facts and truth. Zack had the faculty for presenting his discourses in a logical orderly way that would win conviction. But whereas Z. T. would spend hours preparing a message with an oratorical style and would not permit even the slightest slip of the tongue, John's great force lay in his simplicity in telling just what the Book said. This difference in temperament is further seen in the fact that John would not "waste fifteen minutes" writing such a book as Under Ten Flags.<sup>2</sup>

John was eminently successful as an evangelist. During his five years as evangelist for the Illinois Christian Missionary Society he is reported to have baptized two thousand believers.<sup>3</sup>

Like all his brothers, John had broad interests. His were chiefly political. He was Auditor of the state of Kentucky for eight years and was Postmaster at Paris for a number of years.

His two sons, William E. and Edwin S. both became ministers of the gospel, continuing the family heritage.

The third brother of Z. T. Sweeney was George W.,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with William E. Sweeney, September 17, 1958.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24. However, his biography in New Testament Christianity gives but two thousand two hundred for his whole ministry.

who was graduated from Eureka College in 1869 and held pastorates in Charles City, Iowa, Millersburg and Louisville, Kentucky, Chicago, Illinois, New Orleans, Louisiana, Memphis, Tennessee, and Oakland, California. While he was serving at Oakland he suffered a nervous breakdown and toured abroad extensively to recover his health to no avail. He soon entered semi-retirement, preaching and lecturing only occasionally. He had to leave the ministry at his prime. He was regarded as an orator of the first rank and might have become as well known as John or Z. T. if he could have remained active.

Like John who was editor with Elijah Craig of the Bible Advocate which was published in Jacksonville, Illinois and which was later subsumed in the Christian-Evangelist, George had his day with the pen. For a time he was editor-in-chief of the Christian Independent, a California paper, and was co-editor with A. H. Martin of The Truth, published in San Francisco.

#### Irwin Roots

At the age of twenty-two Joe Irwin walked into Columbus with thirty cents in his trousers pocket. When he died, sixty-four years later, he was reputedly the richest man in Indiana, being worth approximately five million dollars. Frugality, integrity, and vision were the characteristics which made Joseph I. Irwin wealthy and prominent.

Frugality was the first rung in Irwin's ladder of success. When he left his farm home near Edinburg to seek

fame and fortune in the thriving neighboring county seat of Columbus, Joe's mother gave him thirty cents for car fare. While waiting for the train it occurred to him to walk the ten miles to town and save the fare.<sup>1</sup> At the end of three years of employment as a clerk in Snyder and Allen's general store he had saved \$150.<sup>2</sup> Almost entirely on credit he was able to make the initial payment on part interest in thirty acres of land bordering Columbus. He then divided the plot into lots and as he sold them he was able to make the payments on the remainder of the land.<sup>3</sup> This small but profitable beginning was a portent of what was to come. At one time Irwin owned nearly all the land North of Fifth Street and Mechanic Street and all East of it.<sup>4</sup>

On the first day of 1850, just three and one-half years after his inauspicious arrival in Columbus, Joseph Irwin set up his own business, a mercantile store. As a clerk for Charles O. Allen and now in his own store his reputation for honesty became the second rung in his climb to prosperity. Several times he was known to have walked many miles to return a few pennies in change owed to a customer because of an error in calculation, or to return

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<sup>1</sup>"Joseph I. Irwin," unpublished typescript. The authorship of this valuable document is unknown. It is probably a product of the pen of Hugh T. Miller, however. Mr. Miller took a strong interest in genealogical matters and this paper was found filed with other biographical and historical drafts by H. T. Miller.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

merchandise which had been purchased but forgotten and left at the store. Always these debts of honor were paid before nightfall. Joseph Irwin believed strongly in "owe no man anything."

Soon after his store was opened Irwin purchased a safe and his reputation for unsullied integrity brought many asking for permission to place their valuables therein. This led, after the Civil War, to the establishment of a private bank in his store. Within a short time the banking business was the tail that wagged the dog and it was moved to a special building. It continues today as the Irwin Union Trust Company.

The period of Irwin's lifetime was one of a remarkable mushrooming of the American population and of mechanical inventiveness. Irwin quickly and profitably saw the possibilities of better living for more people. He had taken his son, William, to New York on a business trip and the boy begged so hard to see the circus advertised on the huge red, white, and blue posters that Mr. Irwin changed his business plans and took him to the circus. While there he saw Alexander Bell's new contraption, the telephone. Irwin visualized the commercial possibilities and on April 10, 1878, the first telephone in Indiana began a new era for Columbus.<sup>1</sup> In August of that year "long distance" service was inaugurated to Hope, Indiana. Having nothing to guide them in establishing

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<sup>1</sup>"Indiana's First Telephone Was Operated In This City By Joseph I. Irwin in 1878," The Evening Republican, March 10, 1926.

rates but the telegraph, they charged 15¢ for the first ten words and 10¢ for a ten word reply. Additional words were 1¢ each.<sup>1</sup>

Other evidence of Irwin's adaptability was his construction of the first toll road in Bartholmew County (eventually he owned most of the turnpikes in the county). He began the erection of the Indianapolis, Columbus and Southern Traction Line when he was seventy-five years old -- an age when most men would have hesitated to begin such a large new project. He was also the first in Columbus to use gas and possessed the first time lock.

Joseph I. Irwin's interests were not limited to his business, for he was a devout charter member of the Christian Church in his adopted town and was one of the founding members of the Republican Party when the Whigs dissolved. An editor of a rival political party said,

It was only in politics he showed a harsh exterior, and this arose more from his earnestness, his insistence in his partisan energy than from any warped attribute of his head or heart.<sup>2</sup>

He gave liberally of his time and money to political causes and was a personal friend of many national figures of his day. His home was the scene of many informal gatherings of the leading politicians of that period. Doubtless it was his friendship with President Benjamin Harrison that carried some of the weight of the appointment of Z. T. Sweeney as Consul-General to Constantinople. Harrison would have made

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Editorial, Martinsville Democrat.

Irwin the Treasurer of the United States but he refused it as he did not want to leave Columbus and his business.<sup>1</sup>

The Irwins, like the Sweeneys, had had long association with the movement to restore "New Testament Christianity." He was responsible for organizing the Sunday School and reorganized the prayer meeting which continued through his lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Z. T. Sweeney reported that when he came to Columbus Joe Irwin was contributing twenty percent of the church's income.<sup>3</sup> His home was a preacher's hotel and such prominent men as Burnett, Challen, O'Kane, Errett, Jameson, Goodwin, and Hopkins were entertained there.<sup>4</sup> He also gave substantially to Butler University and other church institutions. When Ashley S. Johnson was in tears over the loss of the main building at Johnson Bible College, Irwin is reported to have told him to go back and build a new building of brick, adding, "Here's \$2,500."<sup>5</sup>

Joe Irwin's faith was the sheet-anchor of his life. In the closing days he wrote,

I am waiting the call of the grim monster, not knowing when nor how it will come. "Be ye always ready"

<sup>1</sup>"Joseph I. Irwin," unpublished typescript.

<sup>2</sup>Funeral Typescript of Joseph I. Irwin.

<sup>3</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>"Joseph I. Irwin," unpublished typescript. This anonymous author also lists "Campbell" as one of Mr. Irwin's guests. Presumably he refers to Alexander Campbell. Although Campbell visited Columbus during Irwin's lifetime his itinerary does not mention visiting with Irwin.

<sup>5</sup>Funeral Typescript of Joseph I. Irwin.

is a good motto to think of and die by. That it will surely come is known to all of us.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph I. Irwin's grandfather, Joseph Irwin, emigrated from Londonderry, Ireland, to Pennsylvania circa 1780. He served under General Anthony Wayne in the Indian War in the Northwest Territory. Later he settled at a place subsequently known as Cave Spring, Kentucky, where John Irwin was born in 1798. John removed to Bartholmew County, Indiana, at twenty-two to join members of the family who had moved North earlier. Here he married Vilinda Fenley and moved again, this time to neighboring Johnson County which was the home of Joseph I. Irwin until the day of that fateful walk to Columbus.

The Irwins had a passionate love for their family, and like a patriarch, Joseph I. Irwin would not permit any of the children to leave him; his home was gradually enlarged until at the time of his departure it housed three families. When Sweeney was asked how it was possible that two families could live together in the same house he replied, "The only reason I can give is that I had a father and mother-in-law that made it possible."<sup>2</sup> A popular story that circulated about this unique family arrangement also illustrates something of Joe Irwin's concern for trivial financial matters. As rumor has it, a shoe cobbler returned a pair of Z. T.'s shoes to the door. Joe Irwin answered and when he was in-

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<sup>1</sup>Unfinished letter found on his desk. Editorial, Columbus Evening Republican, August 16, 1910.

<sup>2</sup>Sweeney, loc. cit.

formed the cost was twenty-five cents replied, "They're Zack's shoes, let Zack pay for them."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Irwin's influence was so widespread and profound that evangelist James Small reported many years later he saw pictures of Irwin in homes about the county and was told repeatedly, "Oh, we could not keep house without that picture."<sup>2</sup>

#### Branches

"Old Rough and Ready," an obscure regular army officer had been rocketed into fame and national popularity by his successes in the Mexican War. Although General Zachary Taylor had not been an outstanding tactician or strategist he had demonstrated that he was a courageous commander of men. Without the genuine support of President Polk and with the open differences of Chief-of-Staff, General Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor in one year fought four general engagements with the Mexican forces and drove the enemy back five hundred miles although he was always outnumbered by them. The press began to mention "Old Zach" as a presidential candidate after his being hailed as a military genius at Palo Alto and Buena Vista. His "underdog" relation with the administration probably did not hurt his popularity with the masses. Furthermore, the slavery question was reaching the

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Lewis Prichard, November 13, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>James Small, The Old Days, the Old Ways and Old Friends. (For the Bartholomew County Christian Missionary Association, 1928), p. 8.

boiling point and Taylor, a Southern slave-holder and Northern military hero was thought to be capable of national support. And so, without making a speech and having written only a few letters, General Zachary Taylor became President.

It was nearly a month before Kentucky's son was inaugurated<sup>1</sup> that his namesake, Zachary Taylor Sweeney became a Kentuckian near Liberty in Casey County.

It is not known just which of the characteristics of President-elect Taylor the Sweeney's admired so much as to name their youngest son after him. It must have been a strong attraction, however, for G. E. Sweeney was opposed to slavery,<sup>2</sup> and Taylor was one of the largest slave-holders of that time. In 1850 only one-half of one percent of the slave owners had more than one hundred slaves. Taylor had one hundred twenty-seven on his plantation that year. While Zack was still a child ~~Guinn~~ Sweeney loaded his family and few household possessions on a river boat and floated down the Ohio to St. Louis where he loaded them into a wagon pulled by a team of horses and drove them to their new home at Alton, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> This move was made so his sons could

<sup>1</sup>Although Zachary Taylor was born in Virginia, his parents moved when he was about six months old to that part of Virginia that became Kentucky.

<sup>2</sup>Some biographers state the Sweeneys were abolitionists. A grandson maintains G. E. was anti-slavery but not an abolitionist. (Interview with W. E. Sweeney, September 17, 1958.) This Sweeney philosophy was not always so. A major item in the will of Moses Sweeney was the disposition of his slaves. (Sweeney genealogical records.)

<sup>3</sup>Interview with W. E. Sweeney, September 17, 1958.

have the privilege of being educated in free schools and of growing up in a society relatively free of race prejudice.

Z. T. recalls one of the earliest memories of his childhood in his Illinois home:

Well do I remember the day that my sister Mary started to college. She was the first of my sisters to take this step. Though sixty-five years have passed since then, I can vividly recall the scene. I can see my father seated in the old family buggy with 'Old Bald,' the family horse, in the shafts, the little trunk, covered with pig skin, was strapped behind, while the rest of the family were bidding (Mary' a tearful farewell. I was not old enough to realize why mother and the older children were crying, but I cried in sympathy with them. It seemed to me doubtful if I should ever see 'Mary' again. True, the journey was only twenty-one miles, but it impressed me more than a trip around the globe would now.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem on first appearance that the marriage of Zachary Taylor Sweeney and Linnie Irwin was doomed to failure. He had been reared in virtual poverty, his father receiving the typical pay of preachers in the nineteenth century, and she in a home of affluence and plenty. Further, there was ten years difference in their ages and she was but a child bride on their wedding day on March 10, 1875. In fact, the Irwins opposed the marriage insisting that Linnie was too young. Zack insisted too. And so the wedding was postponed until after her sixteenth birthday, but not much longer, for two weeks later they were married. Another obstacle to a successful marriage was Linnie's inexperience and lack of knowledge of housework. She had grown up in a

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "The Walter Scott Russell Crisis," Christian Standard, February 10, 1923, p. 539.

home with servants, and Mrs. Irwin had not taught her even the rudiments of housekeeping. In fact, by the time of her wedding day she had never even combed her own hair!<sup>1</sup> Surely such a person would never do as a minister's wife. But she did. In fact, her very disinterest in housekeeping made it possible for her to devote much time to visiting the constituency of the church and to other church affairs. For twenty-nine years she was the sponsor of a young men's class.

Sweeney had been serving the Columbus congregation for four years and was a highly successful and popular young preacher when the Irwins finally gave their consent and blessing to this union. It would not be easy, it might not even be possible for such a popular public figure to marry a home town girl and make a success of both the marriage and the church. An invitation from the Augusta, Georgia church came at just the right time to allow the newlyweds to establish their new home and get on their marital feet in unfamiliar surroundings. It was with mixed happiness and sadness that Columbus watched the train take Mr. and Mrs. Z. T. Sweeney to their new home and work for a year's leave of absence from their own city.

In spite of all that might seem to have been against Linnie's success as a pastor's wife, she was an overwhelming victor from the beginning. Fifteen years later an Augusta attorney wrote to Z. T.,

I don't know that I ever knew any two persons no kin to me that I love more than you and your excellent

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie I. Sweeney, March 10, 1958.

companion. When you first brought her among us, at Augusta, she was a mere girl of sixteen summers, and yet, she deported herself with so much self possession such personal dignity and with such unvarying thoughtfulness, and propriety, that our surprise at so youthful a bride having been chosen by a minister of the Gospel already renowned as a Pulpit orator, was soon changed into profound respect and love for a noble lovely Christian woman entirely suited for a Preacher's wife. . . . Soon all concerned in the one fixed and cordially maintained opinion, that our Bro. Sweeney, in the Matrimonial Lottery, had drawn a first class prize, in all those element of womanly sweetness, strong good sense and modest Christian demeanor which ever characterize the true lady.<sup>1</sup>

The roots of the Sweeney-Irwin family tree went back into the common soil of Ireland. Three branches result, Nettie, Elsie, and Joe.

On the day after Christmas, 1900, the older daughter, Nettie, married her French and history professor at Butler, Hugh Thomas Miller. After his entrance into the family he took an interest in banking and became quite active in politics. Hugh fit into the family religiously too. The Millers had been active proponents of the "primitive gospel" about as long as the Sweeneys and Irwins. Hugh's father, John Chapman Miller of Nineveh, was one of the leading preachers in South Central Indiana.

The other daughter, Elsie, was musically inclined and studied piano in Berlin as well as in America. She continues her musical interest and is currently serving on the National Council of the Metropolitan Opera. Both of the

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from James S. Hook to Z. T. Sweeney, January 18, 1891, Sweeney family files, Columbus, Indiana.

girls were quite active in church work. Nettie, along with her husband, daughter and sister, helped edit a hymn book, Christian Hymns, a hymn book widely used among the Christian churches and Elsie beginning in 1914 taught the Young Men's Class of the Tabernacle Church which her mother sponsored for so long. She is currently teaching a ladies class there. Both of the daughters have served actively on the Christian Foundation and other brotherhood enterprizes.

"Try to find my boy! Try to find my boy!"<sup>1</sup> Z. T.'s voice was enshrouded in pathos as it had never been on the lecture platform. "I'll give one thousand dollars to the person that will find my boy in time to be saved."<sup>2</sup> Zack was thrashing around in White River at "high bank" on the end of Fifth Street in Columbus along with dozens of other men looking for his son who had disappeared in the shallow water.

Joseph Irwin Sweeney, not quite twenty years old, after spending the day in his grandfather's bank had gone swimming with some of the fellows to cool off that hot August day. Clarence Ping cried, "Here he is -- I've found him."<sup>3</sup> But it was too late. Joe was an excellent swimmer and had dived into only four feet of water but a slight concussion, perhaps from striking a sunken log, and stomach cramps producing unconsciousness nullified his ability and made rescue

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<sup>1</sup>"Sad Drowning," Evening Republican, August 14, 1900.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

impossible.

Letters came to bring sympathy and understanding from all over the world and from such notable persons as Benjamin Harrison and Hilton U. Brown.

Joe, the only son, had at the same time brought high hopes and grim tragedy to the Sweeney home. He was a handsome lad, endowed with a brilliant mind, a musical voice, a winsome personality, and jovial spirit, and was a leader in every venture he undertook. Just before his senior year at Butler College he had informed his father that he was fully decided in his mind to be a minister of the gospel. I "could do more good in that sphere than in any other walk of life,"<sup>1</sup> he said. On another occasion he said, "When I die I want to be able to feel that I have helped someone."<sup>2</sup> Doubtless, he would have been another great preacher in the long line of Sweeney pulpiteers. Perhaps his announcement came as a surprise to some. His zest for life, acquired naturally from his father, led him into performing many pranks. But as a friend said in a letter to the family at his passing, "with all his love for pranks, Father said he was the very soul of honor."<sup>3</sup>

At Rushville, Indiana, a chatauqua speaker failed to

<sup>1</sup>James Small, "Joe Sweeney's Departure--Its Lesson," Christian-Evangelist, October 18, 1900, p. 1334.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Clara Hawkins, Sweeney family files, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from Gertrude Scovil Butler, Sweeney family files, Columbus, Indiana.

show up for the program and the chairman asked Joe to fill in. His impromptu speech relating his experiences in Constantinople so captivated the audience that when the scheduled speaker arrived in the middle of Joe's discourse he would not let young Sweeney stop.<sup>1</sup> While yet a freshman in college he was given the unprecedented honor of being selected by the students of all the colleges of Indianapolis to serve as chairman of the annual Washington's Birthday celebration at Tomlinson Hall. The Indianapolis Journal gave a full column to report his address on that occasion.<sup>2</sup>

As a memorial the Sweeney family gave in 1951 \$60,000, the largest single gift, to Joe's fraternity, Sigma Chi, for the erection of a house on the Butler campus.

Joe's death was shock from which, it is said, that his grandfather never recovered.<sup>3</sup> And it ever left its scar on Z. T. S. S. Lappin tells of his first meeting with Sweeney some time later,

I sat that day on a park bench, my thirteen-year-old son with me. Sweeney came by. His eye, that missed so little of real human interest as he passed through the world, rested on the boy. He was a lover of boys. He paused and sat there briefly with us under the shade of maple and elm. I remember his parting sentence. Rising to go one of his hands rested caressingly on the lad by my side and he said, 'I had a boy and lost him. . . .the only boy I ever had. . . . he got drowned.' There was a tone of deep sadness but no tremor. He had mastered the great sorrow.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie Sweeney.

<sup>2</sup>"Sad Drowning," loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>"Joseph I. Irwin," loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>S. S. Lappin, Zachary Taylor Sweeney--Christian Commoner, unpublished typescript, pp. 3-4.

## CHAPTER II

### TABERNACLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Columbus, Indiana

"Lock the doors!"

The church building was crowded with people and the minister had just delivered a strong sermon. It was a strange command for a preacher to give but Z. T. Sweeney was capable of using bizarre methods effectively. When the door was locked and the key brought to him he announced,

Brethren, we must have \$10,000 today as a start for a new church home; it will take only a little time to get it, and then you may go. The door will not be opened until the amount is given.<sup>1</sup>

A new building was desperately needed. The Columbus Christian Church was only twenty-six years old and it seated only four hundred and fifty. That was plenty when it was erected in 1853 but Zack Sweeney had been preaching there for seven years and it was now inadequate. The year before this dramatic plea for a new building was made it was reported during the revival that the house of worship was filled half an hour before services were to begin and it was not uncommon to turn one hundred to two hundred people

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<sup>1</sup>"Tabernacle Church of Christ, Columbus, Ind.,"  
Christian Standard, September 22, 1906.

away for want of room.

The new building, "The Tabernacle," was erected on Lafayette Avenue, then Mechanic Street, in 1878<sup>1</sup> at a cost of \$23,000.<sup>2</sup> This was said to be one of the most handsome of church edifices in Southern Indiana and drew admiring crowds from throughout the state.

Although Z. T. brought Tabernacle church into national prominence, the congregation had its beginning with the pioneers. When the first settlers came to Bartholomew County in 1820 and 1821 they soon sought the religious fellowship of those of "like precious faith." A number of believers formed Hope Baptist Church and soon raised a log cabin on the farm of Benjamin Irwin,<sup>3</sup> the uncle of Joseph I. Irwin. Two years later Alexander Campbell began publishing the Christian Baptist (1823-1830), a monthly periodical which he sent to all the Baptist preachers whose subscriptions he could secure. Joseph Faussett, minister of Hope Baptist Church, was one of the recipients. He was soon won to the Scriptural position of Campbell and began preaching "New Testament Christianity" so effectively at Hope that the White Water Baptist Association in 1829 appointed a committee to investigate. They reported to the association in September that the Hope church should be required to submit a more detailed view of their

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<sup>1</sup>Small, The Old Days, pp. 11-12. The dedication was conducted by Isaac Errett on February 9, 1879. This date is confirmed by Hugh T. Miller, Tabernacle Church of Christ (1940), p. 6. The erroneous date of 1877 in "Tabernacle Church of Christ," op. cit., has no confirmation.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

position in place of the vague reference to being based on the Bible or else be expelled from the association. The Hope delegates returned home with the message and the next Lord's day the congregation voted to drop the Baptist name and position. Only one family refused to go along with the new organization.<sup>1</sup> In 1841 a frame building was erected in Columbus and services were held alternately between Columbus and New Hope for the convenience of their membership which was now becoming located in two centers. This building burned in 1853 when the brick building was erected. The congregation, however, did not become a separate organization until July 22, 1855<sup>2</sup> when a charter membership of about sixty persons was enrolled. Joe Irwin was one of them, as his father and uncle had been charter members of the New Hope church. A brother of Benjamin and John Irwin, William Irwin, who resided at Nineveh tried to convince his brothers of the error of "Campbellism" but after several days was converted himself. When he returned to his home he preached the simple primitive gospel with such force that about half of the Baptists of that community followed him in the establishment of the Christian Church in Nineveh.<sup>3</sup> It was here that the Miller family was to be introduced to "New Testament Christianity," a family line which was to unite with the Irwins and Sweeneys later.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Martha C. Riggs, History of the Nineveh Christian Church, unpublished typescript, March 1939, p. 5.

The New Hope Church was among the first four congregations in Indiana to sever Baptist ties and unite with the Restoration Movement. The other three are Little Flat Rock, Ben Davis Creek, and Fayetteville, all in Rush County.<sup>1</sup>

The ministers of the Columbus church who preceded Z. T. Sweeney were William Edmonston, William A. Washburn, Henry R. Pritchard, John B. Cobb, John Brazelton, and J. B. Crane.<sup>2</sup>

There may have been ulterior motives in Zack Sweeney's acceptance of the call to come to Columbus. He would come only on the condition that he could have a room in the home of Joseph Irwin.<sup>3</sup> We are not sure whether Mr. Irwin suspected Z. T.'s motives or not but he was not particularly anxious to take in boarders. However, Sweeney was a young preacher of much promise and all the signs augured for a good ministry so the Irwins reluctantly consented. Nor did they ever regret that decision. He began his ministry there January 1, 1872.

#### Protracted Meetings

The most remarkable feature of Z. T. Sweeney's ministry to the Columbus church was the overwhelming success

<sup>1</sup>B. B. Tyler, "Henry R. Pritchard," Christian Standard, November 11, 1896, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie I. Sweeney.

of his protracted meetings.<sup>1</sup> In the course of twenty-five years in the pulpit at Columbus he himself preached twenty-two protracted meetings during which two thousand souls were added to the church.<sup>2</sup> With the possible exception of P. H. Welshimer this is possibly an all time record of home-force meetings for any minister of the Christian Church. In addition, there were one thousand six hundred other persons added to the church during the regular services at Columbus.<sup>3</sup>

These meetings were generally held in January and February although no time was exempt from preaching the "Jerusalem Gospel." Sweeney, following Paul's injunction, was "urgent, in season and out of season." That Sweeney was going to be an evangelistic preacher at Columbus was assured from the beginning, for in the first month of his ministry there he began a protracted meeting.

In 1880 Z. T. held what was considered up to that time the most remarkable meeting in the history of Columbus. It was his seventh protracted meeting in his nine years in that city. It lasted more than a month and resulted in eighty-one additions, bringing to four hundred fifty-nine the number received into membership of the church during pro-

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix I for a list of known meetings conducted at Columbus during Z. T. Sweeney's ministry.

<sup>2</sup>John T. Brown, *op. cit.*, reports that these meetings averaged six weeks in length. Although some of the meetings were at least that long, many were much shorter making it highly improbable that they averaged six weeks in duration.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 464, 466.

tracted meetings since the beginning of Z. T.'s ministry. The meeting was marked by a crowded house each evening and by regular coverage in the local dailies. The Columbus Daily Democrat was greatly impressed with the sustained interest in Sweeney's efforts: "It is sometimes said that a new broom sweeps clean, but the Elder can beat all the new brooms in the country for calling out a congregation and keeping it interested."<sup>1</sup>

These meetings were not always planned far in advance. In 1883 an unplanned meeting resulting in thirty-seven additions was held. Again, ten days before Z. T. left for Europe another was begun and it progressed so well that elders searched frantically for a successor to continue the gospel preaching even though pastor Sweeney would be absent.<sup>2</sup> On other occasions a protracted meeting begun by a visiting preacher would be continued by Sweeney by popular demand after the evangelist had returned to his own field of labor.

On the last Sunday of the Cowden meeting in 1888 the eleven responses to the invitation were so gratifying and promising of future good that Sweeney announced a preaching service the following night and so one of his great meetings was launched and was continued by announcements given one day in advance.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in the Christian-Evangelist, March 18, 1880, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Sweeney was secured to continue the meeting. He preached seven sermons with seven additions, bringing the total accessions to sixty-two.

The temper of the time also determined the closing of a meeting, the meetings being continued as long as they were producing results. Even if the preacher could not continue, another would be secured and the revival prolonged.

Although Zack held most of his own meetings in his quarter century ministry with the Tabernacle congregation, he had no psychological need to preach all of the meetings in Columbus. In fact, after one meeting Sweeney reported that it had been found wise to exchange meetings with other located ministers.<sup>1</sup> One of the most successful meetings, already mentioned, from every standpoint was begun by William E. Cowden who preached for three weeks resulting in ninety-three additions.<sup>2</sup> Z. T. continued preaching nightly for another three weeks which brought the total number of additions to three hundred eleven. One hundred forty-one were reported heads of families, two hundred fourteen were by confession and baptism, fifty-one by letter, four by restoration, and forty-two of this number came from "denominations."<sup>3</sup> Most of the other churches in the city were also conducting revivals concurrently but the one at the Tabernacle outlasted them all.<sup>4</sup> An editor asked if this was not the greatest meeting since Cane Ridge.<sup>5</sup> This meeting brought the

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<sup>1</sup>"From the Field," Christian Standard, March 10, 1888.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, March 1, 1888, p. 136 and March 8, 1888, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 3, 1888, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1888, p. 232.

membership to about one thousand two hundred.<sup>1</sup> Cowden reported of the church and meeting on his return home,

The church at Columbus is one of the largest and most prosperous I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. It has enrolled not less than one thousand members, including a large portion of the intelligence and culture of the community. I found many of the most prominent men of the city including her leading lawyers, physicians, teachers and business men, most actively engaged in the various departments of the church work. Men who had not merely given their names to the church, but who had presented their bodies a living sacrifice to God. They have a large, elegant house of worship admirably adapted in all its appointments to church work. The arrangements for baptizing are the most unique and perfect I have ever seen. This church not only wields a controlling influence for Christ and his gospel in the city, but is exercising a powerful influence on the regions round about through faithful missionaries largely supported by her treasury, and directed by her pastor. The secret of this strong thoroughly equipped aggressive church is to be found in the fact that Bro. Z. T. Sweeney has been its gifted preacher, faithful pastor and fearless leader for a period of nearly seventeen years.

Interestingly, he adds this warning,

And here we desire to say very seriously to sister churches that while it is proper to covet the best gifts, yet, what God has so perfectly joined together let not man put asunder.<sup>2</sup>

Z. T. also exchanged meetings with Brother John at Paris, Kentucky, for very successful results at both places. During the two weeks of John's preaching at Columbus one hundred twenty-eight were added. This is probably the greatest per diem harvest in the reaping work at Tabernacle.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 3, 1888, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 8, 1888, p. 156.

To say that it was the most masterly, logical and moving series of sermons ever preached in the city is to put the case very mildly in the unanimous estimation of the church here. No preaching ever stirred the community as did this series of sermons.<sup>1</sup>

Z. T. continued preaching the following week bringing the additions to one hundred forty-two.

Others who preached in protracted meetings were A. N. Gilbert (1877), D. P. Henderson (1878), and five sermons by J. S. Sweeney (1874) previous to the above mentioned revival.

The enforced absence in Constantinople did not abate Sweeney's zeal or ability to reach the souls of men. The first spring after his return he preached another meeting resulting in two hundred twenty-five additions.<sup>2</sup>

James Small explained Zack's success,

"His sermons in this meeting are all first principle sermons." In other words, he does not convert men by having them sign a card, but calls upon them to do just what Peter called upon them to do on the day of Pentecost. This in our judgement, explains, in part at least, the basis of Bro. Sweeney's force. Whenever the Gospel is emasculated and trimmed to suit nineteenth century tastes, it loses its power.<sup>3</sup>

The length of meetings varied widely. In 1884 Sweeney reported that a number of shorter meetings during the year seemed to be better than one big meeting.<sup>4</sup> However, he continued to have long protracted meetings on occasion. In

<sup>1</sup>"From the Field," op. cit., March 23, 1886.

<sup>2</sup>This was the number at the time the only report. However, the meeting was still in progress and doubtless there were more accessions. Christian-Evangelist, April 7, 1892, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 15, 1884, p. 316.

1893 forty additions were reported in approximately the first two months of the year, and that without any protracted meeting. On one February Sunday evening that year, Z. T. preached to one thousand six hundred at the Tabernacle with more than one thousand turned away.<sup>1</sup>

### Larger Evangelism

Z. T.'s revival preaching built the Tabernacle Christian Church, changed Columbus, and converted men. One of his earliest meetings (1874) reported the conversion of a saloon keeper.

With the intense evangelistic program of the church in Columbus Sweeney found it impossible to answer all of the invitations to conduct protracted meetings in other fields.<sup>2</sup> Columbus was his first love and allegiance and he gave it priority in these decisions in which he had to consider his time and health. He considered preaching the gospel the greatest task on earth and he would not permit himself to be committed to preaching tasks to which he could not give adequate time. And although he could be considered healthy and moderately strong all of his life his vigor was probably partially due to his concern not to abuse the temple of the spirit. He conserved his strength and guarded his health carefully in order that he might always be at his best in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1893, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix II for a list of known evangelistic meetings conducted by Z. T. Sweeney away from Columbus.

the Master's service.

To those calls he accepted he gave his best, often with dramatic results. Nor were the smaller churches ignored. Many of the Bartholomew County churches owe their existence to the revival they experienced in a Sweeney visit at a critical time.

Z. T. was greatly interested in the evangelization of Bartholomew County. When George D. Roland conceived of a county missionary organization, Zack was among its enthusiastic supporters and became one of the first officers of its board.<sup>1</sup> On his return from Palestine he met James Small in Liverpool, England, and persuaded him to come to Columbus to be the Bartholomew County evangelist,<sup>2</sup> an event that had far reaching effects in the history of the Christian Church in that area as Small was a powerful evangelist.

Sweeney was also largely responsible for establishing at least four congregations. The first was at Conlogue, Illinois, in 1871 while Z. T. was still minister at Paris.

In 1889 the Tabernacle church had reached a membership of about one thousand four hundred and established a mission church in the suburb, East Columbus.<sup>3</sup> This became an

<sup>1</sup>James Small, The Old Days, the Old Ways and Old Friends. For the Bartholomew County Christian Missionary Association, 1928, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>"Indiana," Christian Standard, October 12, 1889, p. 680. "From the Field," op. cit., February 9, 1889, p. 85.

organized congregation in 1893.<sup>1</sup>

During a Methodist revival at Elizabethtown, Indiana, nine miles south of Columbus, a young lady responded to the evangelist's invitation which was given with the explanation that the converts could unite with any church. He refused, however, to baptize her on the grounds that Methodist baptism would be invalid in the Christian church which was the communion of her choice. The next morning the girl's mother came to see Z. T. about the matter. Although he was not as stout and rugged as usual he went to Elizabethtown that night to preach on the subject of baptism. The Methodist church, the only church building in town, was closed to him, but two hundred to three hundred people were waiting in E. Springer's hall. Seven people confessed their faith in Christ. The meeting continued for ten days with thirty-three baptisms, and about fifty members formed the organization of the Christian Church there on Wednesday, November 27, 1878. Z. T. made an appeal for \$1,000 for a building which was subscribed during the service and by the next morning \$1,300 had been raised.<sup>2</sup>

About the same time the New Light church building at Clifford was for sale and a Christian brother residing nearby and Joseph Irwin purchased it for the use of the Disciples. Zack met C. H. Caton on an Indianapolis street at

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<sup>1</sup>Small, The Old Days, pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>"From the Field," op. cit., December 7, 1878, p. 393.

the time a preacher was being sought for the proposed new congregation and persuaded him to take the work. Three weeks of preaching resulted in a new church of twenty-nine members including a former Baptist preacher.<sup>1</sup>

Z. T.'s persuasive oratorical powers, and keen logic, and Scriptural authority had their effect on "denominational clergy" as well as on the masses. At least four Methodist preachers and ministerial students united with the Columbus church during his ministry. At one time three divinity students of the M. E. church gave up their "denominational" status to become simply "New Testament Christians." They had been studying for more than a year, but as Sweeney said, "fortunately they studied too far."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps more dramatic was the change of A. B. Smith in October 1886. Smith had been preaching for the M. E. church since 1865, and was a presiding elder, but he had become dissatisfied with what he regarded as inconsistencies of creed and polity so withdrew from the ministry and pursued business interests in New York City. B. M. Hutchins, a Columbus elder, invited him to the Tabernacle when he was in town on business. The result was three years of study and correspondence resulting in his confession and baptism at Columbus. That same night he preached his first sermon as a member of the Christian Church. He renounced his business

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., January 4, 1879.

<sup>2</sup>"In a Nutshell," Christian Standard, September 22, 1877, p. 301.

career and resumed his original intention of becoming a gospel preacher.<sup>1</sup>

#### This and That

"Welcome Home!" read the banner stretched across the large organ in the Tabernacle. While Z. T. Sweeney is best known as a great pulpiteer he was also a great pastor who shepherded his sheep well. Perhaps the reception held in his honor upon his return from the Old World best demonstrated the people's estimation of Zack as a pastor. Not less than two thousand five hundred citizens met the train and escorted Z. T. in a landau drawn by four white horses to the Tabernacle where a program was presented. Sweeney's "shepherd heart" was exposed during the occasion as he sat on the platform with tears of joy streaming down his cheeks.<sup>2</sup>

As an administrator Z. T. had the remarkable faculty of keeping the whole membership at work. "If he finds a member a little cold, he finds some important work for him to do immediately."<sup>3</sup>

The Bible school was considered an important agency of the church by Sweeney although throughout the history of his ministry the church services were consistently much higher

<sup>1</sup>"From the Field," op. cit., November 13, 1886, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>W. T. Hacker, "Bro. Z. T. Sweeney's Welcome Home," Christian-Evangelist, July 7, 1887, p. 424.

<sup>3</sup>B. M. Hutchins, "From the Field," op. cit., July 24, 1886, p. 238.

in attendance than the Bible school.<sup>1</sup> From less than one hundred fifty average attendance to upwards of eight hundred the school grew during his twenty-seven years of service. One of the devices he used in building attendance and Bible memorization was the giving of tickets to his lectures. Each Sunday each child at Sunday School would be given a ticket which had a verse of Scripture printed on the reverse side. When four such verses were learned verbatim a fifth and larger card with a Scripture was given to the child and the memorization of that verse entitled the child to attend one of Z. T.'s illustrated lectures. In addition to the "magic lantern" pictures he showed there was usually a comic picture also.<sup>4</sup>

On Christmas Sunday, A. D. 2001, the Bible school of Tabernacle (now First) Christian Church will open and read the letters from various class members that Z. T. had them prepare at the close of 1901.<sup>5</sup>

Z. T. was always interested in the improvement of the Bible school, and the first Sunday school institute in the district was held in the first year of his ministry at

<sup>1</sup>An attendance report for 1893 give the average morning worship attendance at about one thousand and the average Bible School attendance in March at four-hundred eighty.

<sup>2</sup>The earliest figure available.

<sup>3</sup>The figure at the close of his ministry was probably somewhat larger.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Mrs. Lillie Leppert, August 27, 1958.

<sup>5</sup>"Our Budget," Christian-Evangelist, January 9, 1902, p. 29.

Columbus, with eighty-eight present.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Sweeney's primary concern for his own congregation in Columbus, he was also active in the larger concerns of the church. Twice the state convention met in Columbus, 1876 and 1894. He was active in Bethany Park, a campground of the Christian Church of Indiana. He also served as editor and later as editor-in-chief of the Central Christian, a religious paper devoted to the interest of the Christian churches in Indiana.

Z. T. was responsible for introducing The Columbus Evangelist, one of the earliest papers devoted to the interests of a single congregation. The first issue was probably issued in April of 1888 and the annual subscription was fifty cents.<sup>2</sup> After a temporary suspension the paper was revived as The Evangelist with Z. T. Sweeney as editor and A. J. Seaman as business manager.<sup>3</sup> No extant copies of either paper are known to exist.

Five times Z. T. Sweeney's ministry at Columbus was briefly interrupted -- an interim ministry at Louisville, Kentucky, two short ministries at Augusta, Georgia, two years service with the United States Government as Consul-general to Constantinople, and a six month tour of Europe and

<sup>1</sup>A. A. Knight, "Christian S. S. Institute at Columbus, Ind.," Christian Standard, July 6, 1872, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup>"Editorial Items," Christian Standard, April 14, 1888, p. 233. Although two weeks later the Standard mentions that W. A. Tritt writes the paper for the district.

<sup>3</sup>Christian-Evangelist, December 15, 1892, p. 789.

the Near East with Isaac Errett. Then in 1897 Zack decided to use his time in writing, lecturing, dedicating churches and so closed what is one of the most successful ministries in the history of the Christian Churches. The church had grown from about three hundred members to the largest congregation of "Christians only" in the nation, with one thousand five hundred members. The Columbus church honored him by naming him minister emeritus, which title he held the remainder of his life.

After a quarter of a century of his life given to the leadership of the Columbus church it was not always easy for Z. T. to be a follower. Apparently as a result of a difference of opinion with one of his successors he wrote the following resolution which was found in his papers after his death.

Whereas

There is great need of more brotherly love and affection among the members of the Tabernacle Christian Church, and

Whereas we realize that nothing but the preaching of Christ will accomplish it

Resolved

That we advise the next pastor we may call that it is our desire that he limit his preaching to such subjects as are clearly taught in the scripture and are necessary to the upbuilding of christian character and the salvation of men from sin. That he let alone all outside questions such as the mistakes of missionary organization and other questions as will provoke strife and dissensions among the members of our congregation.

After Z. T. Sweeney's death Alkin Polasek, a Chicago sculptor, was commissioned by Mrs. Sweeney to prepare a bronze relief of Z. T. The plaque was mounted in the

Tabernacle church. When the new building was erected in 1940 the bronze sculpture was one of the few items moved.

### CHAPTER III

#### PREACHER AND TRACKING

##### Part 1 of 2

Until he began teaching school Jack Sweeney had not planned on being a preacher. But other events were happening to change his course. Although his own plans called for preparation to plead before the bar of justice, the influence of two preceding preaching generations and of three older preaching brothers united with the divine imperative, "Obey," to compel J. T. to pick the game of righteousness before man.

He had graduated from the Jolietville (Illinois) Seminary and as was custom for poor boys in that day was working his way through college by hawking stock. During this time many acquaintances who had known his father and brothers sought his to preach for them. They met his hesitancy and excuse with, "My brother expressed a good sermon." And so J. T. Sweeney's ministry began, along with that of S. B. Hayden, in May 1868 at Joliet, Illinois.

In 1870 he began his first pastorate with the small and struggling congregation in the town of Paris, Illinois.

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"Who is Calvary," *The Evening Republic*, November 17, 1923.

### CHAPTER III

#### PREACHER AND PREACHING

##### Paris et al

Until he began teaching school Zack Sweeney had not planned on being a preacher. But other events were happening to change his course. Although his own plans called for preparation to plead before the bar of justice, the influence of two preceding preaching generations and of three older preaching brothers united with the divine imperative, "Go ye," to compel Z. T. to plead the cause of righteousness before men.

He had graduated from the Scottville (Illinois) Seminary and as was common for poor boys in that day was working his way through college by teaching school. During this time many acquaintances who had known his father and brothers sought him to preach for them. They met his hesitency and excuses with, "any Sweeney can preach a good sermon."<sup>1</sup> And so Z. T. Sweeney's ministry began, along with that of N. S. Haynes, in May 1868 at Kansas, Illinois.

In 1870 he began his first pastorate with the small and struggling congregation in the town of Paris, Illinois.

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<sup>1</sup>"Who's Who in Columbus," The Evening Republican, November 17, 1923.

During his eighteen months there two hundred twenty-five persons were added to that church and the neighboring congregations.<sup>1</sup> A reporter wrote,

Under the energetic and efficient management of Elder Z. T. Sweeney, aided by the ardent support of the leading members of his congregation, the Christian Church of this place has advanced from its former languishing and apathetic condition to a state of active usefulness and prosperity. Previous to his administration, so far as we know, there had been but little accomplished toward placing that church on a permanent footing and in a position of importance which the number and standing of its members, not only in this city but throughout the country, entitled it to occupy. . . . Under the ministrations of Elders Sweeney, of this place, and Haynes, of Kansas, large additions have been made to the church in various parts of the county during the past winter.<sup>2</sup>

During 1871 a new church building was completed and dedicated. The new house of worship was of two story brick construction and would seat five hundred people.

Sweeney attended one year at Eureka College in Illinois and studied three years at Indiana Asbury College (now Depauw University). However, there is no record of his having received a degree. Whereas his health was good it could not have been considered robust and he found it necessary to guard it carefully. During this last year of study and preaching he found it necessary to go to Kentucky to seek

<sup>1</sup>Some accounts give two hundred twenty-five as the number received during the first year. Since two hundred twenty-five is the largest number reported for his Paris ministry it is more probable that this is the number received during the whole period of his work there.

<sup>2</sup>"Church Dedication," Christian Standard, March 25, 1871, p. 95.

rest for his over-worked body. This resulted in his contact with Columbus which was to result in a lifetime relationship.

The first interruption of Z. T.'s long and successful Columbus pastorate came in 1873 when he accepted a call to the Jefferson Street Church in Louisville. He had been there only a few months when the church began to consider enlarging the auditorium to hold the crowds.<sup>1</sup> While on a visit to Paris, Illinois, Z. T. suffered a sunstroke that endangered his life for several days. This resulted in his resignation in Louisville before a full year had been spent in that place.<sup>2</sup> After vacationing in Canada, he returned to the Columbus pulpit.

James S. Lamar, minister of the First Christian Church in Augusta, Georgia, tendered his resignation after nearly twenty years there. One of the most renowned scholars in the Christian Church, he concluded that "he had exhausted his influence for good in the propagation of the Master's Kingdom in this place."<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Emily Tubman, wealthy philanthropist and member and benefactress of First Christian Church, was spending the summer in the West, but sent the names of five men whom she

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<sup>1</sup>"From Correspondents," Ibid., May 24, 1873, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>"Personal," Ibid., June 14, 1873, p. 189 and August 9, 1873, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes of the Church Board, First Christian Church, Augusta, Georgia, June 21, 1874.

considered desirable as potential ministers for Augusta. Sweeney's name was among the five. He promptly received a unanimous call (the only kind he would accept), and began his ministry March 14, 1875. He chose for his text that day a verse that characterized his preaching, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

The honeymoon year in Augusta, Georgia, was a busy and fruitful one for the Sweeneys. Z. T.'s preaching in the South was as popular and successful as it had been in the Hoosier state. His oratorical delivery of the Gospel was welcome and powerful anywhere. The church grew rapidly and many influential citizens of the community were drawn into church membership.

During this one-year ministry a new church building was completed at Augusta.<sup>1</sup> The building and parsonage, costing \$100,000, was given by Mrs. Tubman.

One of Sister Tubman's private projects was the return of slaves she had freed to Liberia. She chartered a ship to take the freed Negroes who so chose back to Liberia where their ancestors had originated. In fact, the name Tubman is retained still by the present president of that country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"In a Nutshell," Christian Standard, October 23, 1875.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie Sweeney, March 10, 1958. Liberia was founded in 1822 when a settlement was made at Monrovia by Negro freedmen from the United States with assistance of American colonization societies. William V. Tubman was elected the eighteenth President May 4, 1943, for an eight year term and was re-elected for four year terms May, 1951, and again on May 3, 1955.

Sweeney was given a unanimous call to remain in Augusta without time limit at the end of his first year in Georgia, but upon advice of his father-in-law, he elected to return to his beloved Columbus.<sup>1</sup>

J. S. Lamar was recalled and served another five years with the Augusta church. When he resigned, Z. T. was also recalled for his second ministry, which lasted from May 9, 1880 to August 24, 1882. During this period Zack wrote to Isaac Errett that one of the most prominent and wealthy citizens of Augusta had been baptized. Sweeney reported that the community was thunderstruck because for years this man had held a pew in the Baptist and Episcopal churches.<sup>2</sup> Errett printed the letter in the Standard. This called forth Zack's immediate reply that this was a private letter and not meant for publication, and that this communication was not sent for the purpose of "blowing his own horn."<sup>3</sup>

Several months of 1898 and 1899 were spent in an interim ministry at Richmond, Virginia. "It is reported that he has 'immense crowds to hear him' and that the people are delighted with his eloquent sermons."<sup>3</sup>

Beginning the first Sunday of 1912 Z. T. undertook the difficult task of ministering to the Lenox Avenue church

<sup>1</sup>"Changes, Removals, Etc.," Christian Standard, March 18, 1876, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>"From the Field," Ibid., November 27, 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Christian Evangelist, May 12, 1898, p. 293.

in New York City. In time this section of the city changed color and became Harlem, causing the Lenox Avenue church to merge with another white congregation. Even in Sweeney's day union evening services were held with Central church looking forward to the uniting of those two congregations.<sup>1</sup>

#### As Evangelist

Beside the twenty-two protracted meetings Z. T. preached in Columbus his services in this capacity were widely sought in America and plans were even laid for an evangelistic tour of England. While Sweeney was in the pastorate at Columbus he considered his first obligation to the congregation there and refused to accept many meetings believing they would weaken his work at home. Sweeney gives the account of his first revival meeting:

The first protracted meeting I ever held was in a little village in central Illinois, where there was no church of any kind. I was filling an appointment for my father, when I was only nineteen years of age, at a country church about seven miles from the village. After the morning service, a lady came forward, shook hands with me, and said: 'I have walked seven miles this morning to hear you preach. I live over in the village of Blank, and we have no church there. Could you not find time to preach a sermon for us?' I told her that if she was going home, and could make the announcement, I would preach Monday night. The next day I went to the village, and found that her husband, who was a blacksmith, had been all over the village, notifying people there would be preaching in the school house that night. I found an audience of some 100 or 120 people, and I preached with all the fervor and power of my boyhood life. There was an evident interest, and I decided to preach the following night -- and it developed into a meeting

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<sup>1</sup>"Told in Brief," Christian Standard, March 14, 1914, p. 463.

of nearly three weeks, with thirty-four additions. At the close of the meeting, I made an effort to raise money to build a meeting house, which was successful, and a congregation was organized. During that meeting, a boy of about twelve years of age came forward and made the confession. Everyone said that it was time to close the meeting when that boy came for he was the rudest hardest boy in the neighborhood, and no one had any faith in his sincerity.

After the meeting was over, I continued making monthly visits to the village, but on one occasion disappointed them, and there was no one to take charge of the services. After a very embarrassing pause, this young boy rose and went forward and read a chapter, and offered prayer, after which the meeting broke up. This boy proved a most faithful and worthy member of the church until he was called by his brother to a city in the far West when about fifteen years of age.

I have not seen that boy since, but some years ago I saw a letter in one of our church papers signed by him, saying that in the city where he lived there was no Christian Church, but that he had called a number of children together and organized a Sunday school, and he asked any preacher who might be traveling in the West to stop and preach a discourse for them. There is a good church in that city today, and, while I cannot speak advisedly, I am under the impression that that boy was the principal means in founding and establishing that church. How far reaching are the results of an ordinary incident in human life.<sup>1</sup>

Sweeney made a favorable impression on the British brethren when he preached there on his trip to Palestine with Errett. They felt that he was just the man to bring new life and vigor to the British churches in an evangelistic crusade. At their request the F.C.M.S. planned to send Z. T. to Europe for three months of preaching. He was to sail March 30, 1889.<sup>2</sup> Butler University, however, granted him the

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "My First Meeting," Ibid., December 1, 1906, p. 1816.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, February 28, 1889, p. 137.

Doctor of Laws degree and elected him Chancellor of the University with extensive authority in the general management of the school. They were not anxious to have Sweeney go to England but it was not thought that the English brethren would so easily release him.<sup>1</sup> However, another circumstance soon resolved the dilemma. Sweeney developed a cough and bronchitis which thwarted his journey<sup>2</sup> and necessitated a rest cure for some time.

Proclaiming the "Restoration Plea" to the whole world was a passion with Sweeney. During the 1893 Exposition in Chicago a World Congress of Religion was held. Z. T. was one of the leading advocates of the idea that the Disciples be adequately represented in preaching "New Testament Christianity" to the Fair visitors from all over the world. Sweeney was at this time perhaps the best known orator among the Christian Churches yet he did not preach from the platform. Perhaps modesty forbade, inasmuch as he was on the planning committee.

When the exposition was held in Paris seven years later Sweeney had a plan for Gospel meetings there. He proposed that a large hall be rented for preaching services and that literature be distributed. He believed that thousands would be attracted to religious services, many who were not so persuaded at home. Sweeney was willing to cancel engagements for the summer and serve without salary if only the expenses

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1889, p. 217.

were paid. The Evangelist gave him editorial support:

Bro. Sweeney is a popular and attractive preacher of the Gospel, and a series of discourses by him on the elements of the gospel and setting forth our plea for a return to the Christianity of Christ, and for the unity of Christ's followers, would, no doubt, fall upon many listening ears and open minds and be productive of much good.

We are glad to give our heart endorsement to this enterprise and to commend it to the brotherhood as worthy of their support.<sup>1</sup>

This dream never materialized.

### Special Occasions

Sweeney's rare gifts as a preacher made him the choice selection for rallies, conventions and gathering everywhere.<sup>2</sup> He was a giant that would grace any occasion and assure large crowds to the promoters. Audiences did not go away disappointed in what they saw and heard from Z. T. Sweeney. Few men could begin to approach the power of Zack's preaching so he became a natural choice for every important occasion.

O. M. Johnson said of him after the annual Wisconsin convention in 1888, "I have no language with which to convey the spirit and power of this man of God."<sup>3</sup> Still, others tried to assess Sweeney's remarkable abilities. One noted his physical assets at the annual meeting of the disciples of Western New York in 1898, "He has an excellent and clear

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 17, 1900, p. 613.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix III for a list of known special occasions at which Sweeney spoke.

<sup>3</sup>O. M. Johnson, Ibid., November 22, 1888, p. 732.

voice, which seemed to reach the most distant parts of the auditorium and parlors."<sup>1</sup>

Plainness and clarity were marks of his oratory. Z. T. had said at the foregoing New York convention, that it was "usually the custom (at conventions) to preach one sermon, presenting the primitive principles of the gospel." The reporter added, "which he did in the clearest and most logical manner."<sup>2</sup>

These personal gifts were linked with unusual experiences that Z. T. used to advantage. Writing about the Congress of Church Efficacy at Davenport, Iowa, in 1913 it was said,

Among the defenders of the faith now in their prime Bro. Sweeney is one of the foremost. This not only because of long and active pulpit ministry and close acquaintance with the Restoration movement, but because of personal gifts rarely found among men. As a speaker no living man allied with the movement is entitled to rank as his peer.

Added to talent, natural and acquired, such an experience as falls to the lot of few men has been enjoyed by Mr. Sweeney.<sup>3</sup>

He also had the unique quality of empathy with his audience. Of an address given in a grove near Edwardsport, Indiana, one wrote,

Bro. Sweeney was at his best, and in his happy, loving way caused all our hearts to overflow with thankfulness and love, and our faith and love to grow stronger which he led us to contemplate "The Gospel as God's Power."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nettie E. Fuller, "June Meeting," Christian Standard, July 7, 1888.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Who's Who at Davenport," Ibid., September 27, 1913, p. 1579.

<sup>4</sup>Christian-Evangelist, October 15, 1891, p. 669.

From such press releases one would expect that the anticipation of such a great orator would outrun his ability and many would be grievously disappointed. But A. Martin tells of his feeling at a County Meeting in Delaware County, Indiana.

Much was expected of Bro. Sweeney, but he far surpassed the expectations of everybody. I am usually conservative in my estimation of men, but when I say that Bro. Sweeney is a great preacher I but state a bare fact that everybody that has heard him knows. I have heard some of the ablest preachers of this country and of Europe but I never heard an abler preacher than Z. T. Sweeney. From a heart full of love for God and humanity he preaches the gospel and tells the old, old story with a sweetness and power rarely equalled and never excelled. And he is so manly and plain.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps that was the real secret of his popularity, which is no secret at all. To preach the gospel simply and in love was to let the gospel be the power of God. Yet it was truth through personality for Sweeney spoke with an invigorating freshness in his approach to the old, old story.

Accolades came from outsiders too. At the Jubilee convention of Disciples in Cincinnati in 1899 Z. T. preached at the leading Methodist church, St. Paul's, on Sunday morning. P. H. Welshimer, then a young preacher, estimated that the sermon was interrupted by applause possibly thirty times. At the close of the discourse the minister in charge invited Sweeney to join the Methodists declaring that with such

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<sup>1</sup>"From the Field," Christian Standard, September 12, 1891, p. 780.

ability he would be a bishop in four years.<sup>1</sup> Sweeney replied, "I thank you, Sir, but I am content to dwell with my own people."<sup>2</sup>

Zack had at least one experience in a more academic field. In the fall of 1897 he was invited to give a series of lectures at Missouri Bible College. The Independent, organ of Missouri University, noted that he was up to the distinguished standard set by former lecturers, that "His lectures were heavy and deep, but the speaker has the happy faculty of making every subject he touches popular."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Bible in Preaching

Z. T. was liberally educated and widely read. His library contained large sections of volumes on geography, literature, history, and the like. His preaching reflects his broad background in language and a wide choice of illustrations, but his primary concern was the preaching of the Gospel. He held no love for "book review" preaching or scrappy textualism that emasculated the gospel. He criticized the preaching up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century as textual and scrappy, not having the text related to the context or to other passages on the same subject, with corresponding confusion on the part of the preacher. Sweeney

<sup>1</sup>"Picked up at the Convention," Ibid., October 28, 1899, p. 1384.

<sup>2</sup>P. H. Welshimer, Unpublished Funeral Sermon of Z. T. Sweeney, Z. T. Sweeney Files, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>3</sup>Christian-Evangelist, October 14, 1897, p. 644.

was an advocate of Bacon's inductive method of study as applied to the Bible. He cited D. L. Moody as the first to use collective Bible reading from the platform and I. Errett as another master of the Baconian method. Zack viewed Errett as having a wider grasp of the scheme of redemption and as being much more systematic and logical than Moody.<sup>1</sup>

"The best argument for the Bible is a faithful presentation of its contents. It carries its credentials in its own bosom. The best way to interpret it is to let it interpret itself."<sup>2</sup>

#### Americanism

Sweeney was a dedicated patriot. Second only to his love for Christ and His church was his devotion to America and her ideals. One of his few published sermons was a labor day message extolling the opportunities of the American working man. And for the presidential address of the A.C.M.S. convention in 1904 Sweeney spoke on "Our Country and Our Cause." In this unusually long address, Sweeney kept the auditors' attention for one and one-half hours as he combined patriotism and religious fervor to challenge the audience of the A.C.M.S. Perhaps the fact that the World's Fair was currently in progress in St. Louis suggested this theme to him. The address, incidentally, is highly reminiscent of Alexander Campbell's addresses, both in content

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<sup>1</sup>Isaac Errett, Bible Readings, ed.: Z. T. Sweeney, (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1913), I, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

and style. He said savagry, barbarism, civilization, and Christianization represent the four stages of development of the human race. And as the United States is the highest type of Anglo-Saxon civilization, so "Our Cause" is the highest type of Christianity. As the fundamental principle of Anglo-Saxon civilization is the "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" so the basic principle of the "Restoration Movement" is the "regnancy and governance of law" (authority) in spiritual matters. Americanism and the "Restoration Plea" alike have moved along the lines of invasion, revolution, and expansion. He pointed out that we must continue to expand. Sweeney compared America and the Restoration Plea as the highest representatives of Anglo-Saxon civilization and Christianity respectively, and that the world problems would be settled on the Pacific Ocean because of the opening of the Panama Canal and that the dominion of the Pacific would be by the Anglo-Saxons of whom America must be the leader. And if America is to so control world influence its citizens must be permeated by the spirit and influence of the A.C.M.S. and similar organizations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Our Country and Our Cause," Christian-Evangelist, October 27, 1904, p. 1381. Ibid., Christian Standard, October 22, 1904, p. 1474.

## Topics

Very few of Sweeney's sermons are available today<sup>1</sup> making a thorough study of Sweeney's preaching impossible at this late date. However he did make a few comments on the art of preaching.

The editor of the Standard sent a request to one hundred preachers asking for the "great subjects" preached upon the preceding year, 1904, and suggestions of a general nature on themes and classes of themes preachers should deal with to best meet the needs of people. Z. T. sent this reply:

Subjects are great or small according as they meet the needs of a local community. In all my preaching, I endeavor to adapt my subjects to the needs of the people to whom I am preaching. A subject very trivial under some circumstances becomes a "great subject" under others, and conversely also.

I think the preacher in the pulpit should always deal with doctrinal questions. By that I do not necessarily mean "faith, repentance, and baptism," but the great ideas of God, man, and duty. Preaching is teaching, and you can teach nothing but doctrine or teaching. Doctrine should be taught; practice, practiced, and experience, experienced. A great deal of so-called "practical" preaching of the present day is only "nagging" and nagging is unpleasant in either husband, wife or preacher. And to analyse the varied experiences of the human soul is about as ridiculous as to hear a ten-year-old girl attempt to lecture married people on how to bring up children.

Again, let me repeat: preach "preaching," practice, "practicing," and we will experience "experience."<sup>2</sup>

The year before Z. T. wrote about a story his father told of a young, raw sailor who sailed past the north star.

<sup>1</sup>No extant manuscripts are known to exist and only eleven of his sermons were ever printed in books and periodicals. And of these only five are in publications currently in print.

<sup>2</sup>Sweeney, "Out of the Wells of Salvation," Christian Standard, June 17, 1905, p. 961.

Sweeney pointed out that many young preachers pass the north star and take their spiritual and moral bearings from jack-o-lanterns. Of a young preacher who told Sweeney he was commissioned to preach "all the truth" Z. T. said that his experience as a diplomat showed one had power only within one's commission, and Jesus' commission was "whatsoever I have commanded you."

There is necessity for constantly recurring to the commission under which we are working. Every apostasy, both in teaching and in practice, began by the teacher overstepping the limits of his commission.

.....

I conclude from the above that the preaching of Christ's commissioned gospel is the highest and holiest work that can engage mortal heart or tongue. But to trifle with it, to alter it by narrowing or broadening its terms, is rebellion against high heaven of as deep, dark and damnable character as it is possible for a man to commit.<sup>1</sup>

#### Characteristics of his Preaching

Z. T. Sweeney was primarily a "doctrinal preacher." The Standard among others, attributed much of his success to this factor in his preaching. The editor said, "Our most successful evangelists are they who discuss most constantly and most thoroughly the cardinal principles of the reformation."<sup>2</sup> Z. T. was cited along with John Sweeney, J. V. Updike, Morgan Morgans, and J. H. O. Smith as proof of this fact.

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Pole-Star or Jack-o-lantern," Ibid., April 9, 1904, p. 521.

<sup>2</sup>Christian Standard, April 20, 1895, p. 378.

Z. T. told a story connected with his preaching to illustrate his belief in doctrinal preaching. Sweeney was holding a revival in Central Church in Indianapolis. Nearby resided two medical students. One was a Christian. The other had been reared in a United Brethren parsonage but being disappointed in the mourner's bench became a disciple of Ingersoll. Out of curiosity the skeptic finally attended the Sweeney meeting after repeated invitations from his roommate. The subject that night was "Rightly Dividing the Word." The next night it was the unbeliever who invited his Christian roommate to attend. For the next two weeks the agnostic attended regularly and took extensive notes. In time he was converted and became a preacher. He began by using the notes he had taken from Zack's preaching. He said, "They preached very easy." This new convert, Edwin A. Nye, became editor of the Daily News of Des Moines, Iowa. When he died Sweeney told his story in the Standard and asked the man who had invited Nye to his meeting to make himself known.<sup>1</sup>

Almost all of his extant sermons, "Our Divine Authority," "Fundamentals of Christian Belief," "Should Churches of Christ Receive Unimmersed Into Formal Fellowship," "Source of Authority in Christianity," "Have We Outgrown Our Plea?" "The New Creature," "Saul of Tarsus -- Paul the Apostle," and "Rightly Dividing the Word," are basically doctrinal. And the other three, "They Royalty of Service," "Our Country

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "What an Individual Disciple May Do," Ibid., October 17, 1914, p. 77.

and Our Cause," and "The Glory of the House of God," have doctrinal value although they serve primarily another purpose.

"He is bold and aggressive in manner, the result of strong convictions and a zealous disposition."<sup>1</sup>

Although Sweeney's doctrine was like that of the pioneer Restoration preachers, he had a creative imagination that presented the old doctrines in new ways and supported them by fresh arguments. For instance, in his famous sermon on the question of open membership in Cincinnati in 1919, he maintained that the four thousand years of planning by the Father and thirty-three years of execution of the Father's will by the Son had their fulfillment in the one commandment. "This one commandment is the fundamental, organic and constitutional law of the kingdom of Christ."<sup>2</sup> He then analysed the order of the items in the commission comparing it to the arrangement given by different theologies and then pointed out three corollaries. First the true church of Christ presents the commission in the order given by the Holy Spirit. Second, the degree that a church departs from the commission to that degree it becomes apostate. Third, there are some among us who would alter the constitutional law.

Zack's creativeness was united with vivid descriptions

<sup>1</sup>History of Bartholomew County, Indiana, (Chicago: Brandt and Fuller, 1888), p. 755.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, Should Churches of Christ Receive Unimmersed Into Formal Fellowship?, p. 5.

using sensory language. He reaches the pinnacle of sublimity when describing Jesus. It was the Christ who thrilled his spirit and called forth his masterful oratory.

He startles the vaults of death with the cry: "Lazarus come forth," and death yields his icy hold, and the sleeper comes forth to life and friends.<sup>1</sup>

.....

Wrestling with His baptism of suffering, He cries in agony of soul, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." With foreseeing eye He beheld the stormcloud approaching, that was soon to burst in all its fury upon Him. The thunders are charging in heavy squadrons along the mountain clouds that soon are to toll in relentless fury over His head. The air is luminous with quivering bolts of God's justice, that soon shall sink into His bursting heart. Before all this the affrighted humanity in His nature shrinks in dismay. But over this the God-man rules, and soon He bows His head, and the beautiful prayer of submission to the Divine will is heard ascending to God: "Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>2</sup>

.....

As the morning sun rises proudly up the heavens, rolling back the dark curtains of night, suddenly the air is filled with quivering pinions, and the sky is brilliant with their sheen of glory. They hover joyfully over His sleeping place, and while the guards fall back as dead men, before the heavenly vision, two of the brightest and strongest step forth, breaking the seal of Roman power, He calmly rises as from refreshing sleep, and showing no haste, He deliberately folds the white garments in which he has been enshrouded and steps out a risen Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Sweeney was an outstanding example of the type of oratory popular in the chautauqua days. In the "The New Creature" his ability is revealed,

When the Roman conquerors ended a successful campaign, they were entitled to a triumphal entry into

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Rightly Dividing the Word," New Testament Christianity, (Columbus, Indiana: New Testament Christianity Book Fund, Inc., 1930), p. 465.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 467.

the city. The gates were thrown wide open; and while beautiful maidens strewed sweet flowers, and sang songs of welcome, the conquerors entered the city, greeted by the shouts of the multitude, and the blasts of music from the royal bands. But shortlived was their welcome. The voices that fell upon their ear were soon hushed in death, and the hands that strewed were soon dust with the flowers they scattered. The conqueror that overcometh through Jesus Christ, shall have a welcome that shall endure forever. The gates of glory shall open before his advancing step, and the greetings of angels will fall upon his ear, while the harpers shall play "The Conquering Hero." Under the emerald branches of the tree of life that overarch the waters of the river of life, he shall march to heaven's melodies, up to the throne of God, and have placed upon his brow the victor's fadeless crown.<sup>1</sup>

The picturesque language and dramatic oratory, however, were attached to a simple structure and idea and were expressed in plain language. To Zack "A subject is half argued when it is clearly stated."<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of a controversial topic he added, "I wish on the threshold of my address to state my subject in the clearest possible term."<sup>3</sup>

More frequently, however, he did not call attention to the simplicity of his argument but simply stated it in unequivocal terms. In the sermon, "Have We Outgrown Our Plea?" he began, "The title raises two questions: First, What is our plea? Second, Have we outgrown it?"<sup>4</sup>

By the way, Bro. Zack has the gift of presenting the gospel with rare plainness and force. We would not like to see him overworked, but it would delight us to see him put in this winter, going from one city to

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "The New Creature," Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Source of Authority in Christianity," Ibid., p. 504.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Have We Outgrown Our Plea?", Ibid., p. 82.

another, and supported everywhere, not by a single congregation, but by all churches in each place. Give him but half the advantages that are always secured for Mr. Moody, and it would be seen whether the Old Gospel in its plainness is less acceptable than when emasculated to suit modern notions.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the best illustration of Zack's use of common, working-man's language is in his "The Fundamentals of Christian Belief." In this address before the Inter-denominational Bible Conference of Richmond, Z. T. appeals to the reason, rather than to the Bible, of his auditors to support the claims of Christian faith. He begins with epistemology. He uses the classic ontological, cosmological, and teleological, and moral arguments. He contrasts Kantian and Lockean philosophy with Christian revelation. But although he uses these concepts nowhere does he use the technical nomenclature of philosophy but presents his arguments in simple terms and supports them with everyday illustrations.

Simplicity and plainness, although they make for clarity, do not exclude closely reasoned discourses. Z. T.'s messages were eminently logical and cogent. Judging by the number of times the theme authority appears as the leading idea or as a major supporting argument, the concept of authority must have been primary in Z. T.'s thinking. This would be natural to a preacher who spoke so often of getting down to bedrock and of a Restoration preacher in an era when the "denominations" made their appeal to creeds and confessions.

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<sup>1</sup>"Editorial Items," Christian Standard, December 15, 1888.

His sermons on this subject stand out as prime evidence of his logical mind. After calling attention to necessity for authority and to the two kinds of authority -- primary and delegated, he proceeded to argue that the first delegation of authority was from Father to Son, the second from Son to apostles, and the third from the apostles to the "perfect law of liberty." The unfolding of divine authority may be marked by the expression, "God in Christ, Christ in the apostles and the apostles in the world."<sup>1</sup>

His arguments were described as "clear as sunlight" and

His sermons, though always fresh and vigorous have in recent years mellowed into a sweetness that has all the fragrance of an autumn ripeness. And yet the yellow leaves, which hang as decorations, detract nothing from the beauty, but rather, add to the comeliness. In any case the fruit has a more invigorating effect upon weary souls than the bright flowers, laden with rich aroma, which made brilliant his sermons of early manhood, and which were the promise of what is now the full corn in the ear.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was Z. T. without humor. Although there is not a lot of funny stories and allusions, an occasional appropriate humorous story appears. In talking about church creeds he said,

An Irishman was once giving testimony in court. When he finished, the judge said; "Pat, have you told the truth and the whole truth?" He replied: "Yes, your Honor; and a good deal more." That "more" causes the trouble.

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Divine Authority," Ibid., March 22, 1902, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup>W. T. Moore, ed., The New Living Pulpit of the Christian Church, (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1918), p. 48.

And illustrative of this, a story is told of a man in southern Indiana, who lived in the neighborhood of a strong congregation of Christians, who had added to the above creed a plank that required every man who came into the church to relate a "Christian experience," and have it voted on before he was admitted. This man had no "Christian experience" and was therefore ineligible. He wanted to go into the church with his family and friends, and he finally concluded he would make up an experience, copying after some he had heard. He finally "cooked up" an "experience of grace," and it was voted upon as sound and acceptable, and he was admitted. He was an honest man and it lay heavily upon his conscience. One Sunday morning he rose and told the church that he had made up a good deal of his experience out of his imagination, and he was sorry for it and asked the church to forgive him. They took it in high dudgeon and a motion was made and carried to expel him from the church. They took him in for telling a falsehood and turned him out for telling the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Not the least significant in Z. T.'s preaching ability was his use of illustrations. He does not use so many as to make his sermons read like The Master Book of Illustrations, yet nearly every point is supported and illuminated with a story, verse, or citation. Most remarkable is his vast repertoire of illustrative incidents. Personal experience, history, geography, nature, theology, poetry, hymns, literature, science, and the Bible are at his command in kaleidoscopic variety.

He has a strong hold on the tender sympathies of life. In all that relates to home and country he is particularly strong. He has a happy faculty for illustrations, and can paint in words anything in nature from a sun rise to a thunder storm with wonderful facility and beauty. And yet his ornamentation does not detract from the strength of his argument nor from the soundness of his logic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Have We Outgrown Our Plea?", op. cit., pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup>Bartholomew County, op. cit., p. 755.

An editor summed up his preaching succinctly:

"Few ministers have wielded a great influence. As a preacher he ranked among the best, eloquent logical, inspiring. He knew the Bible and preached the Gospel fearlessly."<sup>1</sup>

#### Conclusion

Z. T.'s preaching had a measurable effect on the contemporary preachers, and borrowing of his material and style was commonplace. On a western tour Z. T. was not receiving the usual warm welcome that his preaching usually elicited. Upon inquiry he found that James Small on an earlier tour had been using Zack's material.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the greatest tribute, however, was paid by a younger contemporary, P. H. Welshimer. Welshimer pronounced Sweeney's sermon at the Cincinnati Convention "the greatest sermon to which I had ever listened."<sup>3</sup> The occasion was the 1899 International Convention. Z. T. was preaching at a Methodist church at an early hour but more than five hundred were outside. The audience sat for more than an hour entranced and thrilled by his eloquence. The text was Romans 1:16. Welshimer said,

The thing at which I marvelled was the simplicity of that sermon and the eloquence of the man who delivered it and his grace and dignity on the platform. I recall

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<sup>1</sup>Greensburg News quoted in Zachary Taylor Sweeney Appreciation Regret, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with F. E. Davison, November 2, 1958.

<sup>3</sup>P. H. Welshimer, Funeral Sermon of Z. T. Sweeney Typescript.

his illustrations -- some of them were taken from the old Fifth and Sixth Reader by McGuffey which I had read as a boy. He talked of the familiar childhood associations and told the simple stories much as did the great Teacher who used the parables in other days.<sup>1</sup>

Russell Conwell, perhaps America's greatest oratorical preacher, said to Z. T., "When the hour comes for me to go home, I know of no other person I would rather have succeed me as the preacher of Temple Church than yourself."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### UNDER TEN FLAGS

#### Palestine

Isaac Errett, guiding genius of the Christian Standard, was suffering from ill health and an extended tour of Europe and the Near East was proposed that he might regain his health. A number of friends and associates made up a purse to enable him to go. Errett, however, needed a congenial companion who could afford the time and expense of the trip as well as assume the responsibilities of the journey and the care of Mr. Errett. At length Z. T. Sweeney was suggested. The two had already formed a close friendship during their ministry. They had shared many of the same views. Sweeney had been an occasional contributor to the Standard and frequent visitor to the editorial offices. Many times they had shared the same platform at rallies, conventions, and dedications. It was an ideal arrangement. Errett said, "Bro. Zachary T. Sweeney is a capital traveling companion, and we shall have a good time together."<sup>1</sup> Sweeney said later at the death of Errett,

In all the six months there was never an unkind word, or even thought, between us, and when we came to

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<sup>1</sup>Isaac Errett, "Letters of Travel," Christian Standard, February 19, 1887, p. 60.

separate it was like severing the relation of father and son, so closely had we been bound together in out mutual isolation from country and family ties.<sup>1</sup>

They sailed from New York at 3:00 p.m. January 23, 1887, returning six months later. Zack said, "I was never tired of looking after this lordly man and devoted servant of God."<sup>2</sup> Sweeney reported that not once did Errett complain but took it for granted that everything was being done rightly.

Unfortunately, the trip did not have permanent salutary effect on Mr. Errett. A year and a half after their return home he died on December 19, 1888, at Terrace Park, twelve miles north of Cincinnati.

Although there was friendly business rivalry between the Standard and Evangelist, at this time Errett and J. H. Garrison were close friends and the editorial policy had not developed into the bitterness and factionalism of a later period. Sweeney wrote a regular account of his journeys with Errett in the Evangelist. Errett, on the other hand, perhaps because of ill health, wrote only infrequent articles in the Standard.

Errett suggested to Sweeney that he write their experiences in book form. So the birth of Under Ten Flags. Travelogues of this type were popular in that day, and the

<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Isaac Errett," Ibid., January 19, 1889, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Isaac Errett--The Preacher," Christian Standard, September 11, 1909, p. 1596.

book became a detailed and massive volume of over five hundred pages. This book becomes important to the study of Sweeney, for although he served as editor to twelve volumes he authored only two, The Spirit and the Word and Under Ten Flags.

It was described as "Rich, rare, racy. If you can't take a trip to Europe, this reading-book is the next thing to it."<sup>1</sup>

The reader is impressed by the enormous quantity of historical detail and background. Sweeney gives the history of Paris beginning with Caesar's commentaries, and mentions the part Dyonisius, Julian the Apostate, Clovis, Pepin, Hugh Capet, Philip VI, Napoleon, and many others played in its development. He knows that Pope Boniface was imprisoned at Anagni and that Hannibal, with his army surrounded, made his escape by tying fagots to the horns of cattle and driving them into the hills to divert the enemy's attention while slipping from their grasp. One marvels at such a command of history and geography and then remembers that Sweeney's library contained a large number of works in literature and geography and history.<sup>2</sup>

He has given much attention to the details of his journey. Perhaps so much so as to become too tedious to the modern reader. But no doubt it was of interest to his

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<sup>1</sup>Advertisement, Christian-Evangelist, November 7, 1889, p. 713.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with William E. Sweeney, October, 1958.

contemporaries who lacked the facilities of radio and television. For instance, he has three pages devoted to informing the reader that the ship carries 12,550 pounds of beef, 760 pounds of corned beef, 220 quarts of ice cream, 15 tons of potatoes and that lemons are used at the rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per head per day, etcetera.

But far from being abtruse and pedantic, the book is lightened with humor. An English landslide reminds him of a rancher in the Rocky Mountains

who lived on the hillside with a neighbor's ranch lying just above; one morning there came a land-slide and seeing his neighbor's house, barn and farm come sliding down the hill he "lit out." His neighbor's farm stopped just over his, and then came a suit for the possession; the judge rendered a verdict in favor of the defendent, because the plaintiff did not stay and hold possession of his ranch.

A man who would stay under either of the foregoing circumstances would have pretty good "staying qualities."<sup>1</sup>

Zack's comment on climbing Mt. Vesuvius was,

My private opinion is that all the raptures into which people go about the grandeur and sublimity of the visit are only a mild way of letting people know they have been (sic) there. I regard the ascent of Vesuvius as a foolhardy piece of business from beginning to end. I should not ascend it again were I to go there a hundred times.<sup>2</sup>

But perhaps the most significant feature of his travelogue is the frequent sermonizing and moralizing on the events of the journey. From page one where he comments about the fog surrounding the Statue of Liberty that liberty "is

<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, Under Ten Flags, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1889), pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

often enveloped in fogs and mist, while attempting to hold her blazing torch athwart the pathway of her enslaved and enslaving children" to his final statement, "and when the pilgrimage of life is ended we shall hope to enter the rest that remaineth to the people of God,"<sup>1</sup> Sweeney is ever the preacher and does not let the reader forget it. Yet his applications do not seem forced but spring naturally from the spirit and mind of one whose primary concern is "to preach Christ."

On the journey Errett and Sweeney took note of the missionary activities of the Christian Church. In Liverpool Zack preached in a church started by the F.C.M.S. and said it "kindled a new enthusiasm in my heart for our missionary enterprises."<sup>2</sup> That morning he had preached for W. T. Moore in London. Moore had been sent from America to help strengthen the British churches.

Of the mission in Paris he said, "Paris has hundreds of churches, but the little flock under Jules de Launay was the only one I found erected simply to God and wearing only the name of His Christ."<sup>3</sup>

He took note of other preachers and religions also. After hearing the famous Spurgeon he commented:

I think that the secret of his success lies in keeping down to the level of his audience. . . .The sermon

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 508.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

itself was a very plain discussion of "The Pharisee and the Publican." We have preachers by the hundred that could surpass the effort as an effort.<sup>1</sup>

Palestine itself, however, was the real joy to these two veteran preachers. Their pleasure at visiting the sites of the saints of the Bible was matched only by their despair at the commercialism and sectarianism of many of the places of Jesus's ministry. Errett writes of Zack's enthusiasm,

. . .and our Zach., ever foremost in adventure and exploration, headed a party of six to go to the witch's home (at Endor). As we did not go, he has kindly written a report of their discoveries. . . .When they came back, they talked and acted as if they had inhaled some intoxicating gas escaping from the witch's caldron; but as these fumes have lost their power we take. . .their account to be sober and accurate.<sup>2</sup>

Sweeney, the inveterate fisherman, much to the amazement of the natives, borrowed a hand line from a boy in order to fish in the Sea of Galilee. He had a difficult time explaining to the natives it was fun not fish that he wanted.

They were also fishing for men. Sweeney received a letter in 1895 from Rabbi Bel Oliel whom they had met in Jerusalem. Oliel had been educated as a rabbi and for forty years had been serving as a missionary to the Jewish people, having been converted by studying the New Testament. Now he informs Sweeney that he and his wife have recently been baptized.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Errett, op. cit., July 30, 1887, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup>"Among the Brethren," op. cit., August 3, 1895, p. 741.

Higher criticism was just coming to the attention of American theologians about this time and Sweeney found occasion from the evidence he saw on this trip to make some preliminary counter-attacks on the critics and evolutionists.

His visit to some Greek monasteries became the basis for an article in Cosmopolitan. After being hoisted on a rope to their lofty refuge among the mountainous crags he wrote,

I have believed with John Ruskin that holiness and helpfulness come from the same original Saxon root-word, and therefore, that the holy man should be a helpful man. But I confess that I have often been at a loss to comprehend how any person could find in the religion of Christ that which would lead him to forsake home, friends, and usefulness to his fellows, to wander away into caves and dens on cliffs in the rock and live a life of almost absolute idleness.<sup>1</sup>

#### Turkey

During the early months of 1889 it became apparent that if Sweeney was to keep his health he must have more rest. About this time the Consul-General to Constantinople resigned, creating a vacancy. This seemed to be the ideal solution to his problem. Further, it would give him the opportunity to study the site of early Christian missions. Russell Errett, editor of the Standard and son of Zack's traveling companion two years earlier, wrote to President Harrison petitioning him for Z. T. Sweeney's appointment to Constantinople. Errett gave five reasons for Sweeney's

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Greek Monachism," Cosmopolitan, July, 1887, p. 297.

choice: (1) Z. T. was a staunch Republican and a relative of Joseph Irwin, a personal friend of Harrison. (2) He was one of the ablest ministers in America's fourth largest communion. He was chancellor of Butler University and author of Under Ten Flags which sold its first edition in thirty days. (3) Sweeney had been named by leading writers and thinkers of the church to survey and verify the journeys of Paul, a thing which had not been done in this age. (4) This appointment would enable him to make contacts to that end. (5) But Mr. Sweeney would not work on this project during his term of office. Errett's letter was accompanied by fourteen letters of recommendation.<sup>1</sup>

President Harrison gave Z. T. Sweeney a temporary commission which was approved by the Senate as a permanent commission probably in January of 1890. Sweeney arrived in Constantinople in September 22, 1889 and took charge the first of October.<sup>2</sup>

Sweeney's appointment was heralded by the secular as well as religious press. Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper said,

President Harrison has made one appointment which gives universal satisfaction in his own State, to Jackson Democrats as well as Lincoln Republicans -- that of Rev. Dr. Z. T. Sweeney, LL.D., Chancellor of

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<sup>1</sup>Russell Errett, in a letter to President Harrison, March 12, 1889, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, in a letter to William F. Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, October 1, 1889, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Butler University and editor-in-chief of the Central Christian, to be Consul-General to the Turkish Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The Columbus Herald, a "straight-up-in-the-stirrups" Democratic paper said,

One of the most creditable appointments made by this administration was that which appeared on Saturday last--the selection of Elder Z. T. Sweeney, of this place, to be Consul-General to Turkey. If the President had made all his appointments with the same regard for fitness and capability that has characterized this one, there would be none to criticise, and few, even among Democrats, that would not commend his selection.<sup>2</sup>

All were not so happy, however, to have a minister of the Gospel as minister of state. The Levant Herald, purportedly influenced by English missionaries, asserted that Sweeney would use his government position to establish his own communion in Turkey. The Central Christian Advocate and Christian-Evangelist repudiate the statement as bigotry.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, in advising President Grover Cleveland concerning the qualifications of a successor, Z. T. noted that the most important work of the Consul-General in Turkey was the support and protection of educational and missionary work which required the services of one acquainted and sympathetic with such work. He advised the President that the commercial interests of this post were insignificant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in "Professor Z. T. Sweeney, LL.D.," Christian Standard, August 3, 1889, p. 504.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Christian-Evangelist, October 19, 1889, p. 648.

<sup>4</sup>Z. T. Sweeney in a letter to President Grover Cleveland, March 29, 1893, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Some leaders of the Restoration hailed Sweeney's proposed study of Paul's journey in Asia Minor as our "paying back" Biblical scholarship and noted that as a Bible people we should make every effort to contribute to Biblical knowledge.

Lew Wallace had at one time held the post of Consul-General to Turkey.

Much of the work of the Consulate was routine but there were occasions of excitement.

Brigandage and kidnapping were common practices in the Ottoman empire. The Greeks would frequently harass prosperous Ottomen by kidnapping them to a mountain retreat and holding them for ransoms ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000. If the captive's friends were unduly slow an ear or nose or peculiar mark would be cut off and sent in proof of possession. When arbitration failed the bandits would decapitate the victim and morning would find his head on a pole in the market place. They never failed to restore a captive if the ransom was paid nor fail to kill him if it were not. "In fact, looked at from a business point of view, this is the only course to pursue." With this background Zack told that in the summer of 1891 Sir Edward Vincent, Comptroller General of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, booked passage, along with Z. T., on a sleeping car from Constantinople to London. Brigands learned of it. Sixty miles out the train was derailed in an attempt to kidnap Vincent. However, both of them had cancelled their passage. Other bankers were aboard however and several

died after their release as a result of the exposure they suffered.

On another occasion Sweeney had secured a guide in the heart of Asia Minor. Anastasius, the guide, treated him well and guarded him safely. It was only after his return to Constantinople that he learned that Anastasius was the famous brigand whose prosecution he was pursuing most vigorously before Turkish authorities.<sup>1</sup>

The diplomatic service, however, was not Sweeney's life. After nearly two years he submitted his resignation giving as his reasons that his family affairs were such that he could not move them to Constantinople again (he was in Columbus on leave of absence), and that his health had been restored.<sup>2</sup>

Sweeney had been popular in his position. From his first formal remarks which captivated the audience of the local Christian mission conducted by G. N. Shishmanian,<sup>3</sup> throughout his career he was well received by the Turks.

His Imperial Majesty, Abdul Hamid II, conferred the medal and order of Osmanieh upon Z. T. Zack was the first U. S. Consul-General to receive this honor. The Evening

<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Brigandage in Turkey," Christian Standard, November 30, 1901, pp. 1517-1519.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney in a letter to William F. Wharton, September 15, 1891. National Archives, Washington, D. C.

<sup>3</sup>G. N. Shishmanian, "Letter from Turkey," Christian-Evangelist, October 24, 1889, p. 681.

Republican reported that "it is the crowning evidence of his impartial and dignified administration of affairs of the court of the Osmanlis."<sup>1</sup> However, it was not generally understood just what this honor was given for.

We would like to know what this "Order of the Osmanish (sic)" is--what its rights and privileges! Bro. "Zack" is to deliver a lecture for the Central Church of this city next week, and that would be a good time for explanations.<sup>2</sup>

The Standard had earlier reported that Sweeney, during his vacation in 1890, had given very graphic pictures of Turkey and the Turkish people to the reporters. These press notices were forwarded to Turkey by the Ottoman minister in Washington and presumably it was for this service he was honored.<sup>3</sup>

Upon the death of Joe Sweeney, who had accompanied his father to Turkey, a Greek newspaper said,

. . . distinguished for extraordinary qualities, and being most generous in his disposition and very high spirited (literally, most noble in soul) he enjoyed general love and estimation.<sup>4</sup>

Other diplomatic appointments were suggested for Sweeney but none was ever completed.

Sweeney ever kept up his interest in the people of the Near East. While there he found an Armenian boy, Jacob

<sup>1</sup>The Evening Republican, June 22, 1892. Quoted in The Christian-Evangelist, July 21, 1892, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, December 8, 1892, p. 773.

<sup>3</sup>"A Merited Honor," Christian Standard, July 23, 1892, p. 625.

<sup>4</sup>Demarchus C. Brown in a letter to Z. T. Sweeney, October 23, 1900, Sweeney Family Files, Columbus, Indiana.

Filian, who was adopted by B. M. Hutchins and was being educated for the ministry when he was tragically killed.<sup>1</sup> Years later, Sweeney acted as a clearing house for funds being sent for the relief of persecuted Christians in Antioch.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of his work in Turkey he was appointed as the Representative of the Ottoman Government at the Chicago Exposition in 1893.

#### Russia

During Z. T.'s ministry at Lenox Avenue an appeal came to the American churches from a faithful but persecuted group of Gospel Christians in Russia for financial help. The plea came to the brotherhood through the New York City churches because that was where the initial contact was made. John Johnson, a recent immigrant from Russia became a Christian here in 1904 and established a Russian congregation in New York City having only the Bible as its guide. Four years later H. Norton visited J. L. Darsie who was supplying the church on 56th Street. Darsie in turn informed the City Mission Society of this New Testament church. After investigation the Mission invited the group into its fraternal and practical relation. In turn this congregation was brought to the attention of the A.C.M.S. and in February, 1911, Johnson was secured as a Russian missionary in New York City.

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<sup>1</sup>Christian-Evangelist, July 19, 1894, p. 452.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Z. T. Sweeney, Ibid., December 31, 1896, p. 841.

John Johnson's father was in exile in Siberia for preaching the gospel. In 1909 Alexander Persianoff while on an evangelistic tour in Siberia met the elder Johnson who told of the American Restoration Movement with whom his son had become associated. Through this contact Persianoff began a correspondence with John Johnson concerning the faith of the Christian churches in America.

Another personal connection came in January, 1912, when a cable from the Missionary Union was read in a congregation where Timothy Dadianoff was in attendance. Dadianoff had been an elder in the New York City congregation but had returned to Russia at his own expense to establish a church.<sup>1</sup>

Two Russian brethren, Persianoff and Schmidt, came to America in 1912 and at the Louisville Convention spoke and asked for funds to save some valuable property in jeopardy.<sup>2</sup> The societies were not in a position to help but a Russian Emergency Committee composed of Z. T. Sweeney, chairman, Joseph Keevil, George W. Kramer, C. B. Drake, and A. V. Chaney was appointed.<sup>3</sup>

The committee reported that the task of raising the \$7,000 needed to save the college in St. Petersburg by the end of January, 1913, was too great for such a limited contact

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Keevil, "The Story of Our Russian Mission," Christian Standard, January 14, 1913, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>"A Remarkable Movement," Christian-Evangelist, July 3, 1913, p. 886.

<sup>3</sup>"The Emergency in Russia," Christian Standard, January 18, 1913, p. 886.

with the Russian churches. Unfortunately, to close the college probably meant that the government would never permit it to open again.<sup>1</sup> The situation was made more critical by the fact that the government would not permit the All Russia Evangelical Christian Union to hold their annual conference. Thus it was expected that the deficit would reach \$3,000 by the end of the year.<sup>2</sup>

It was felt by the brethren that a first hand investigation of the Russian situation should be made by a competent person who had the confidence of the whole brotherhood. Z. T.'s popularity plus his diplomatic experience made him the logical choice to conduct the examination and to deliver the first contribution to the Russian brethren. Louis R. Patmont was to accompany him as interpreter.

The Restoration Movement in Russia had its beginning with General Pashkoff, a high official in the Emperor's regime. Pashkoff, an intellectual giant, read his way to the New Testament position.<sup>3</sup> It was at considerable personal sacrifice that he accepted a belief outside the state church, and he spent a considerable portion of his fortune distributing free Bibles. He was finally exiled to Rome where he died.

The government forbade a census of their strength, but Sweeney estimated the number of Gospel Christians at 100,000

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 25, 1913, pp. 131-132.

<sup>3</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "A Restoration Movement in the Russian Empire," Ibid., July 3, 1913, p. 890.

members, though they had but thirty-six evangelists. For \$50,000 in addition to their own resources the Christians could purchase the former city high school building and convert it into a college for training church leaders.

Of the worthiness of the Gospel Christians Sweeney reported:

First: The Gospel Christians are as emphatic and insistent upon New Testament Christianity as the Christians of the United States.

Second: They have a very large measure of sympathy among the most influential and powerful people in the empire. This is due primarily to the great influence and popularity of General Pashkoff, who laid the foundations of the work.

.....

Third: The Gospel Christians have a fine organization--better than anything we have in this country and thus work in perfect harmony. There was not a hint of clash between rival leaders or factions.

Fourth: All they need is a little of the "sinews of war" that could be so easily supplied out of our abundance. One hundred thousand dollars put into Russia in the next ten years would develop a half million Gospel Christians in less than a quarter of a century.

If this is not God's opportunity to us, I don't know anything about such opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

Patmont commented on Z. T.'s sermon to fifty young men at a preacher's meeting,

Bro. Sweeney did not hesitate to declare clearly and comprehensively the position of the disciples of Christ in America. In his incisive way he cut to the bone of all doctrinal questions, and seemed determined that his hearers should understand him, regardless of whether they agreed with him or not. All of his statements were afterward canvassed by all who heard him, and heartily endorsed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 891.

<sup>2</sup>Louis R. Patmont, "The Restoration Movement in Russia," Christian Standard, June 28, 1913, pp. 1036-1037.

Although the total needed in Russia for their college, preacher support, Bibles and other items would amount to many thousands, the total received by the Russian Emergency Committee by the end of 1913 was only \$5,474.97.<sup>1</sup> And of this amount at least \$300 was given by Zack<sup>2</sup> and \$1,000 by his wife.<sup>3</sup>

During the Russian famine of 1922 another appeal was made to the American brethren for assistance. Sweeney again is one of the leading voices issuing this call in the States. The U.C.M.S. sent Carl Borders, a Russian missionary in Chicago, to distribute the aid. The brotherhood responded more generously to this appeal. The Phillips family alone gave \$15,000 for Russian aid.<sup>4</sup>

On the return trip from Russia Sweeney and Patmont passed through Poland where they had an unexpected opportunity to serve "New Testament Christianity." Waclaw Zebrowski, a former priest of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Mariavit Church of Poland had become dissatisfied with a number of beliefs and practices of the churches he knew. In particular, a study of the New Testament led him to the conclusion that baptism is immersion. He refused to be baptized by the

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Standard, December 6, 1913, p. 2023.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., July 12, 1913, p. 1122.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., December 6, 1913, p. 2023.

<sup>4</sup>Telegram from Russell Errett to William G. Irwin, W. G. Irwin Files, Columbus, Indiana.

immersionist churches in Europe for those denominations required that he join them in order to be baptized. Neither would he permit the Gospel Christians of Russia to baptize him for fear of losing his influence with the Polish people who were not yet fully reconciled to their conquerors, the Russians.

Zebrowski told Sweeney and Patmont, "Your coming is a direct answer to our prayers."<sup>1</sup> Patmont baptized Zebrowski in the Visla River and Z. T. preached his ordination sermon in Warsaw on May 19.

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<sup>1</sup>M. M. Davis, The Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century, (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1913), p. 251.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

#### Commissioner of Fish and Game

Piscator: I doubt not but if you and I did converse together but a few hours, to leave you possessed with the same high and happy thoughts that now possess me of it; not only of the antiquity of angling, but that it deserves commendations; and that it is an art, and an art worthy the knowledge and practice of wise men.<sup>1</sup>

So said Izaak Walton. And few more devoted disciples did he have than Zachary Taylor Sweeney. Zack had fishing worms shipped into Muskoko, the Canadian summer home, where such bait was not available. He kept the family in bass, trout, and walleye throughout their annual sojourn. He fished wherever he was. The Evangelist said of his appointment as Commissioner of Fish and Game in Indiana, "Bro. Sweeney has been a professed fisherman for many years, but of men chiefly. He is not, however, without experience in piscatorial science -- if all reports are true."<sup>2</sup>

Z. T.'s appointment was made by Governor James Atwell Mount in 1897 at the request of the Rod and Reel Company, several camp meeting associations, and the officials of the

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<sup>1</sup>Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton, The Complete Angler, Translated by G. Christopher Davies, (London: Frederick Warne and Co.), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, February 11, 1897, p. 85.

railroad lines in Indiana.<sup>1</sup>

There had been since 1881 a Commissioner of Fish in Indiana but Z. T. expanded the department to include Game in 1899. At the time that Sweeney took office the need for and work of such a department of government was so new and misunderstood that many obstacles stood in the way of progress. Many of the laws and practices of wildlife conservation we take for granted were inaugurated during Z. T.'s administration. Many of the state residents had to be educated as to the value of these progressive developments. The thirteen years Zack served were epoch-making in wildlife protection in Indiana. New game varieties were introduced. More protective laws were written and existing laws were enforced. The number of fish hatcheries and game preserves was enlarged. Fishing and hunting licenses were issued and an extensive educational program concerning conservation was launched.

As education was a part of his program, the biennial reports of the Commissioner were embellished with pictures of fish and with numerous articles concerning wildlife. So valuable were these reports to nature study that extra copies were made available to the schools. In fact, Sweeney strongly urged nature study in schools.

As commissioner he was able to establish two hundred game preserves in Indiana. The budget of the Commission was increased from \$800 per annum until at the end he was receiving

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

\$75,000 in fees alone.<sup>1</sup> Sweeney was also the first commissioner to gain a real enforcement of the fish and game laws. He was able to change the pay of deputies from fee system to salary plan. And it was largely through his efforts that public sentiment was changed to be conservation-minded during this period.

In the third biennial report for 1901-1902 he said,

It is with great pleasure that I state that a remarkable change has taken place in the public mind with respect to the protection, preservation, and propagation of fish, game and birds.

Six years ago there was a general apathy in the public mind regarding the whole subject. Many thinking people seemed to feel that it was a question that had no bearing upon practical life; that it merely concerned fishermen and hunters.<sup>2</sup>

In the first biennial report Z. T. called attention to the ruinous policy regarding fish then prevailing and made several suggestions for the improvement of fish conservation. His appeal was based on the value of fish -- commercial, sanitary, moral. Fish had commercial value in Indiana because stocked ponds could yield more money per acre than many field crops. Further, license fees would directly increase state revenue. The sanitary value came from the scavenger fish. Fish had moral value, according to Sweeney, because it was better for children to spend their time fishing than playing pool. Among his suggestions were these now

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<sup>1</sup>Indianapolis Star, February 5, 1926.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game for Indiana (1901-2), (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1905), p. 9.

commonly accepted practices, stopping pollution, stopping dynamiting, giving police powers to conservation officers, having uniform laws in the various states, enlarging the commission to include game, and increasing the budget to not less than \$10,000. He also reported that the amount collected in fines was more than twice the cost of enforcement and that he had induced several mill owners to put in fish ladders. However, in the early years of office Z. T. found that the office cost him more than he received as commissioner.<sup>1</sup>

By 1902 Zack was able to report,

Indiana has in the last few years made rapid improvement, and this office is in receipt of letters from nearly every State in the Union requesting copies of our late fish and game laws. Many States are modeling their legislation after ours.<sup>2</sup>

The same report made several suggestions concerning seasons and bag limits on certain types of fowl and suggests a \$1.00 license for hunters.<sup>3</sup> The license for hunters was suggested again in 1908.

Z. T. took note of the growing interest in the trend to the outdoors. One report gives considerable attention to this trend so that the citizenry might have useful information readily available.

I have devoted considerable space in this report to camping and outing. More and more as the years go

<sup>1</sup>Indianapolis Journal, August 17, 1898.

<sup>2</sup>Biennial Report, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

by is the habit of spending a few days or weeks along the lake or riverside growing among the people.<sup>1</sup>

Sweeney's achievements in the Fish and Game Commission permitted him to hold the office in several administrations. During his period of service Indiana reached a level of efficiency reached in few if any other states. "This, no doubt, grows out of Mr. Sweeney's love of nature, of birds and fishes, and the personal interest he has taken in his work."<sup>2</sup> The biennial reports were lifted from dry reading to a delightful volume filled with poetic description of nature that only a genuine nature lover could see and appreciate. His attitude toward nature was

First: Pry into nature's secrets and expound them. As a result we have science. Second: Lay hold of nature's forces and empty them. As a result, we have art. Third: Take possession of nature's riches and enjoy them. As a result we have culture. Science, art and culture make up the unit of civilization and the difference between man in his most degraded and most highly civilized conditions lies precisely in the relation that he carries out the first command ever addressed to him by his Maker.<sup>3</sup>

#### Politics

Z. T. was nearly as strong in his political beliefs as he was in his religious convictions. He was an ardent Republican and took an active part in his party. However,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>"Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game of Indiana. By Z. T. Sweeney," Christian-Evangelist, March 4, 1909, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>"The Search for the Pearl of Great Price," Ibid., June 16, 1904, p. 769.

he persistently refused an elective office because he felt that it might impair his work as a minister. He did, however, accept two appointive offices as we have noted. His popularity would have virtually assured his election if he would have accepted the repeated invitations of his party leaders to run for high office. Of the actual offers of political advancement we cannot know, but a few have been preserved for posterity.

In 1892 The Christian Worker reports,

Dr. Z. T. Sweeney is one of the leading orators of America today, and is being eagerly importuned by the leading men of Indiana to run for Governor this year. In his loyalty to Bro. Chase, the present Governor, he has so far persistently declined. He would grace the gubernatorial chair as no man since Oliver P. Morton.<sup>1</sup>

Ira J. Chase had been elected to the office of Lieutenant-Governor while ministering to the Christian Church in Danville and on the death of the Governor ascended to that position. Chase and Sweeney were good friends and perhaps it was Chase's political success that gave rise to hopes for Zack. But Sweeney declined, not only because of friendship with Chase but as a matter of personal principle.

Again in 1884 an Indianapolis paper was reporting an "Order of Many Republicans"<sup>2</sup> urging Z. T. to run for Congress. The Christian Standard was not quite as enthusiastic,

<sup>1</sup>The Christian Worker quoted in March 3, 1892, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>Indianapolis Journal, June 11, 1884. Quoted in "Editorial Items," Christian Standard, June 21, 1884, p. 196.

Those making the call speak in high terms of Bro. Sweeney very properly, and express themselves as being certain of his election if he will accept the nomination. . . .His success in the ministry of the gospel in the past makes it clear that he has already found his proper place.<sup>1</sup>

The "fighting parson" was the title Zack won in the political campaign of 1906. Sweeney was seeking the nomination of his son-in-law, Hugh T. Miller, as Lieutenant-Governor. The party leaders in the state told Z. T. that the slate was already made up. He retorted, "All right we'll break your slate." He did. Hugh Thomas Miller became the next Lieutenant-Governor.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps even less remembered was Sweeney's influence in obtaining the Columbus, Indiana, post office building.

The Columbus Evening Republican tells the story,

When the Rev. Sweeney heard that Lincoln Dixon, democrat of North Vernon, then congressman from the Fourth district, had been successful in getting Columbus' name placed in the public buildings bill he took action which played an important part in obtaining the building for the city. Knowing how easy it would be for some republican congressman from the northern part of the state to move to strike out the name Columbus and substitute the name of his city (congress was republican at the time), the Rev. Sweeney went to Hon. James E. Watson, who was then the "whip" for Uncle Joe Cannon and secured his promise of support to the bill, provided Mr. Dixon could get the name included in the original bill. The name was included; Mr. Watson kept his promise and Columbus got the post office.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Editorial Items," Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Indianapolis Star, February 5, 1926.

<sup>3</sup>"Who's Who in Columbus," The Evening Republican, November 17, 1923.

## Business

The Sweeney brothers had a keen business acumen and saw nothing inconsistent in having financial interests outside their ministries. Reared in near poverty, three of them, at least, were able to become rather prosperous as a result of their business activities and fortunate marriages. Z. T.'s worth was estimated at \$150,000 at the time of his death.<sup>1</sup> Zack had accumulated property in Ft. Smith, Arkansas; Gulfport, Mississippi; Sharon Springs, Kansas; Kansas City, Kansas, as well as a sizable amount of stocks and bonds. He was a director in the Indianapolis, Columbus and Southern Railway, a family owned traction line.

Perhaps the most interesting of Zack's proposed ventures was his plan to build a concrete road between Huntsville and Moberly, Missouri and to operate two Packard passenger cars as public passenger vehicles. His father-in-law had promised to take half interest in the line. Sweeney had spent some time in laying the groundwork and had made some promises and expended a small amount of money on the scheme when Joseph Irwin died. Will Irwin was reluctant to assume his father's interest in the matter as he felt it would be a losing proposition. Z. T. felt that W. G. should carry out the matter regardless of his personal feeling because of the previous contract with his father. In time, however, the matter was dropped and the road never was built. One cannot

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<sup>1</sup>Letter of W. G. Irwin, July 10, 1926, W. G. Irwin Files, Columbus, Indiana.

help but wonder what effect such a project, if successful, might have had on American transportation.

While Sweeney was preaching in New York he took care of several business and personal matters for the family. In January, 1914, Zack attended an auction in New York City to buy a Lincoln artifact for Will Irwin's library as a conversation piece. After many unsuccessful bids he finally bought Abraham Lincoln's letter to General John M. Palmer for \$295. Z. T. told of a Mr. Smith, bidding for Huntingdon, who was hogging the auction by bidding on all items of value and who had no limit of resources. Apparently someone distracted him at \$290 and the auctioneer knocked it off to Zack in a few seconds. The auctioneer was apparently sympathetic as Z. T. had been "plucky" but unsuccessful in his bidding. Sweeney later learned that Smith would have gone to \$500 or \$600.<sup>1</sup>

Sweeney had had help from the Irwins in financial matters. The Irwins were wealthy. They were also generous but never wasted money. W. G. wrote his sister (Mrs. Sweeney) in New York advising her purchase of rugs for the Columbus home. He suggested they get prices on the rugs separately, then find the total at each business place and get a reduction on the total. She was told that the merchants

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney in a letter to W. G. Irwin, January 16, 1914, Z. T. Sweeney Files, Columbus, Indiana.

wanted the cash and would sell accordingly. She was also advised by him that she could make money buying clothes by staying longer and bargaining.<sup>1</sup>

#### Church Dedications

A teenage boy at Carol, Illinois, heard E. T. Sweeney give three addresses when he dedicated the church there. That boy was so moved by the power of these sermons that he sold his Stevens Favorite Rifle, of which he was very proud, and gave the money to the church. Twenty years later that boy, then a prominent minister, said,

The words have passed from memory, yes, but the message intended has not, or else affect. . . . I said at some ministrations who had more people in actual. My God, rise up were E. T. Sweeney!

It is no wonder that in all the church dedications he conducted, he failed only once to raise the required amount.<sup>2</sup>

After E. T. retired from the active pastorate at Columbus much of his time was occupied in dedicating churches, a task for which he was especially well-known. By 1914 it was reported that Sweeney had conducted one hundred sixty-six

W. G. Irwin, *A Short History of the Kingdom of Christ*, St. Louis: The William Irwin, 1910, p. 217.

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<sup>1</sup>W. G. Irwin, in a letter to Mrs. Linnie Sweeney, September 14, 1914, W. G. Irwin Files, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>2</sup>The one occasion when the necessity of this congregation whose records were related even to the persuasive oratory of E. T. Sweeney.

## CHAPTER VI

### A BOY'S RIFLE

#### Church Dedications

A teenage boy at Carmi, Illinois, heard Z. T. Sweeney give three addresses when he dedicated the church there. That boy was so moved by the power of those sermons that he sold his Stevens Favorite Rifle, of which he was very proud, and gave the money to the church. Twenty years later that boy, then a prominent minister, said,

The words have passed from memory, yes, but the message intended has not, or the effect. . . . God send us more ministers who can move people to action! May God raise up more Z. T. Sweeneys!<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder that in all the church dedications he conducted<sup>2</sup> he failed only once to raise the required amount.<sup>3</sup>

After Z. T. retired from the active pastorate at Columbus much of his time was occupied in dedicating churches, a task for which he was especially suited. By 1904 it was reported that Sweeney had conducted one hundred sixty-six

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<sup>1</sup>W. W. Jennings, A Short History of the Disciples of Christ, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1929), p. 210.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix IV for a partial list of churches Z. T. Sweeney dedicated.

<sup>3</sup>Time has judiciously hidden the identity of this congregation whose pockets were sealed even to the persuasive oratory of Z. T. Sweeney.

dedications.<sup>1</sup> He was in great demand as a dedication speaker for many years after that. It was the custom in the decades near the turn of the century to have a dedication service for a church building when it was ready for occupancy. On this day generally an outside speaker was secured to give a fiery and challenging dedicatory address and then make an appeal for cash and pledges to finish paying for the building. A few preachers became masters of this art of raising funds. As nearly as can be ascertained Z. T. Sweeney was second only to L. L. Carpenter, also of Indiana, in popularity as a church dedicicator.

The first known dedication conducted by Sweeney was at Conlogue, Illinois, a church he had organized while ministering at Paris. This is probably the congregation he told of organizing in "the village of Blank."<sup>2</sup> That same year he dedicated the church at Summit, Illinois. Although Z. T. was only twenty-two at the time the reporter said, "Bro. Sweeney at a dedication is the right man in the right place. If anyone can get money from an audience and at the same time make them feel good over it, he can do it."<sup>3</sup>

At Falls City, Nebraska, during snow and rain that reduced attendance "Brother Sweeney preached with power,

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<sup>1</sup>Harmon, "The Sweeney Family," Churches of Christ, p. 466. Many articles about Sweeney apparently relying on Harmon's article have given the total number of dedications by Z. T. as one hundred sixty-six.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>John Kern, "From Correspondents," Christian Standard, December 23, 1871, p. 407.

seeking to overcome the gloom of the day that had settled on the hearts of the workers and people."<sup>1</sup> Apparently he was successful, raising \$4,700 when he asked for \$4,000, and receiving \$400 more at the evening service.

At West Side Church in Chicago John W. Allen reported, To say that Bro. Z. T. Sweeney did the preaching is to say that part of the service was all that could be desired. His theme was, the Gospel the Power of God unto Salvation, and his sermon was perfectly adapted to the occasion. Pledges were taken at the close of the sermon, and it would have done you good to have seen them roll in. The way the people gave was a surprise to me and to everybody else. We did not expect to be able to raise more than \$2,500, but they got started and, like the man with the cork leg, couldn't stop.<sup>2</sup>

Central Church in St. Louis like many others, followed dedication day with a series of gospel meetings.

Bro. Z. T. Sweeney preached with his wonted power and eloquence. Bro. Sweeney's great gifts as a preacher--simplicity, fervor, force, tenderness and tact, joined to a complete mastery of his subject--make his preaching acceptable and delightful to all.<sup>3</sup>

In Topeka, Kansas, Z. T. reversed the usual procedure by advising it be publicly announced that they would not ask for money on their \$4,000 debt. "This came in the nature of a surprise to many people."<sup>4</sup>

These fund raising dedications were frequently quite

<sup>1</sup>"New Church House at Falls City, Nebraska," Christian-Evangelist, February 23, 1911, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from John W. Allen to B. W. Johnson. Quoted in "The Opening of West Side," Ibid., October 29, 1885, p. 694.

<sup>3</sup>Christian-Evangelist, December 22, 1887, p. 808.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 20, 1897, p. 308.

lengthy and demanded a dynamic and eloquent speaker to hold the attention of the audience for so long and be able to persuade them to give even after two or three hours of sitting. The Carbondale, Illinois, dedication was reported as follows:

After an eloquent presentation of the purpose and promises of God in the scheme of redemption, he called on the people for \$8,000, and \$9,000 was raised in cash and substantial pledges. It is certainly true that a person who can deliver a profound discourse, then hold his audience for two hours longer, without dissenting voice, is a master of dedication ceremonies. In the evening Bro. Sweeney delivered an address that delighted everyone, and especially those of the household of faith.<sup>1</sup>

Seldom was mention made in the news reports of these dedications of the actual message of the speaker. Reporters were more interested in the physical facilities of the building and the success in raising the necessary funds. Consequently, few of the topics and sermons Sweeney used have been preserved for posterity. But of the few of which we have some knowledge it seems Z. T. was concerned always with speaking upon the glory and responsibility of the church.

On the reopening of the house of worship at Lenox Avenue, New York City, Sweeney used Haggai 2:9 as his text and spoke on "The True Glory of the Sanctuary." He said the second temple lacked the physical splendor of the first but it had great glory in that Christ was present there many times. Thus also the thing that decides the glory of this building is whether Christ is present or not. God has promised that "my

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<sup>1</sup>"Church Building News," Christian Standard, August 23, 1902, p. 1186.

tabernacle shall be with them." How then can Christ become the glory of this Sanctuary today? (1) By the presence of His teaching and His law. (2) By manifesting the spirit that is of Christ. (3) By doing the work of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

At Franklin, Indiana, where more than \$10,000 was pledged, Z. T. in a short sermon

demonstrated that this church had, like the apostle Paul, passed through the stages of "promise" in which the church existed only in the minds of the few who were backing the movement for a new church; the stage of "preparation" in which the ground was broken and the excavation begun; third, the stage of "prophecy" in which the architect decided that the building should be of stone rather than brick and that it should be beautifully frescoed and decorated in tasty manner; and; fourth, the state of "proclamation" in which he proclaimed that the church was completed and that it was a marvel to the human eye.<sup>2</sup>

That afternoon, incidentally, individual communion cups were used for the first time in the city.

At New Hope, Indiana, Zack preached from Romans 1:16 "the general drift of which was to impress upon his hearers the importance of sustaining the gospel of our salvation."<sup>3</sup>

The audience thought it a good joke when at the conclusion of his discourse he announced that \$1,200 must be raised before going to dinner. To their astonishment \$1,361.65 was raised.

<sup>1</sup>"The True Glory of the Sanctuary," Christian-Evangelist, February 6, 1913, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur R. Owens, "Dedication at Franklin, Indiana," Christian-Evangelist, July 16, 1903, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>J. C. Hayes, "Columbus, Indiana," Christian Standard October 26, 1872, p. 338.

At New Paris, Ohio, Sweeney's sermon contrasted the kingdoms of this world founded on force to the kingdom of Christ founded on love. He caused the audience to love this kingdom of love to the extent that raised a surplus of \$400 to \$600.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat related in theme to the last two mentioned sermons, was the one reported by the Chicago Tribune as a "Scholarly discourse on 'Power.'" He demonstrated power as exhibited in nature and natural force and then moved on to illustrate the power of the gospel to civilize, harmonize, humanize, and save man. The home, to Sweeney was the unit of all other powers.<sup>2</sup>

When Sweeney went to Connersville for the dedication there the following day he found a large crowd waiting at the railroad station for a "great orator from Columbus." Zack gives the account in his own words,

Several brass bands were playing as the train rolled in, and a great sea of faces on both sides of the cars proclaimed the fact that thousands were waiting to catch the first glimpse of the orator. As I stepped upon the platform I was taken in hand by the reception committee, with the following result: "Are you from Columbus?" "Yes, sir." "Is your name Hacker?" "No, sir." I was dropped like a hot potato and the Hon. Marshall Hacker was taken in charge by the committee.<sup>3</sup>

Hacker, a faithful teacher in the Tabernacle church and

<sup>1</sup>A. H. Moore, "New Paris, Ohio," Ibid., January 1, 1873, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>"Dedication at Chicago," Ibid., November 21, 1885, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Connersville, Indiana," The Central Christian, October 15, 1888, p. 4.

faithful attender of the prayer meeting, was a prominent lawyer and was to address the citizens on the political issues of the day.

Perhaps the highest tribute to Z. T.'s success as a dedicator came from the St. Thomas, Ontario, newspaper. It said, "Elder Sweeney's Irish eloquence would charm a humming bird away from the honeysuckle."<sup>1</sup>

### "We Called It Culture"

The Lyceum was born in 1826 to provide an association for the mutual intellectual improvement of the Americans who were hungry for culture but who were still living a pioneer life. A basic need was met in these associations and by 1850, three thousand Lyceums were in existence. Springing from the Lyceum movement was the chautauqua phenomenon. The original Chautauqua had permanent buildings on a lakeshore in New York. Chautauqua meant music, dramatic interpretation, lectures, oratory. The idea of tent chautauquas hit culture susceptible Americans like an epidemic. From its inauspicious beginning in 1874 it reached its peak in 1924 when an estimated three million persons in twelve thousand communities entered the brown tents with sawdust floors. Chautauqua died the very next season. The very elements that made chautauqua successful were responsible for its death.

Z. T. Sweeney was one of the leading orators of this

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in "Among the Brethren," Christian Standard, May 18, 1907, p. 345.

social and cultural phenomenon. He was at his prime in its heyday. Z. T. was ranked as one of the six or seven "universal favorites" of the lecture circuit. He was considered on a par with Russell Conwell, Thomas, Dixon, Prof. J. B. DeMotte, and three or four others.<sup>1</sup> Conwell, who was perhaps the best known, gave his famous lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," six thousand times.

Sweeney engaged himself exclusively to the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, the oldest such organization in the business and also one of the largest. It is said that the aggregate audiences obtained in the Midwest under Redpath auspices were never surpassed. Z. T. delivered approximately fifty addresses a year during the time he was engaged in chautauqua work.

Chautauqua managers generally classed lectures into six general categories, the "Mother, Home, and Heaven" type of inspiration, social issues, travelogues, scientific talks, humor, and political speeches. General Z. T. Sweeney, as he was billed, had lectures fitting nearly all of these categories. He could fit into any occasion.

The Redpath brochure announcing Sweeney said,

General Z. T. Sweeney, of Columbus, Ind., is one of the great lecturers of the American Platform. We say this advisedly, as we have acted for most of the prominent American lecturers, and rank him with the best. He ought to be heard in every lecture course, and once heard will be wanted again and again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Churches of Christ, p. 466.

<sup>2</sup>Announcement of General Z. T. Sweeney, Season of 1900-1901, Redpath Lyceum Bureau, p. 2.

"Going up to Jerusalem," "Walks 'mid Holy Hills," "The Peoples and Religions of the Ottoman Empire," "The Golden Age," "The New Man," "Testimony of the Pharaohs to the Truths of the Bible," "Foundations of Faith," "A Whack at the Universe," "Royalty of Service," "From Gotham to Jerusalem," "The Unspeakable Turk," "Kaiserism or Civilization, which Shall Go?" and "The Bedrock of Our Civilization," are the titles to known lectures Zack gave.

These lectures were not ten minute sermonettes.

Joseph C. Todd reported that the lecture on Kaiserism, given during World War I at Bloomington, Indiana, lasted one and three-quarters hours and was the most wonderful demonstration of platform ability ever in that city. The audience applauded his address until he returned to the platform to speak his appreciation. "His coming has done more to tone the morale of the community than anything we have so far had."<sup>1</sup>

After hearing his travelogue, "Going up to Jerusalem," L. L. Carpenter, himself an orator of ability, said, "we all felt that we were almost pressing the very soil once trod by the Holy One of Israel."<sup>2</sup> Another said of that same lecture,

He held the attention and admiration of his audience for two hours. The effect of his effort was to make our faith firmer in the Word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem. The lecture was logical and

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph C. Todd, "Sweeney's Eloquence Against Kaiserism," Christian-Evangelist, January 10, 1918, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, August 25, 1887, p. 537.

argumentative, and contained many interesting facts and sparkling surprises. It was delivered with the speaker's characteristic cheerfulness, crispness, and clearness.<sup>1</sup>

After appearing in the Star course in Carnegie Hall, Allegheny, he delivered his new address, "The Bedrock of Our Civilization." "His eloquence, pathos and logic held the vast audience for two hours. Pittsburg papers commenting on it pronounced it the best ever delivered in the city."<sup>2</sup>

A few of the comments about Sweeney's lecturing follows:

Bishop J. H. Vincent, "It is a pity such a man as Dr. Sweeney has to die."<sup>3</sup>

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, "I regard Dr. Sweeney as one of the strongest preachers of America."<sup>4</sup>

Professor John Stuart Blackie of Edinburgh, Scotland,

I regard the Earl of Roseberry as the greatest orator in the world since the retirement of Gladstone, unless it be the Rev. Z. T. Sweeney, an American torrent of eloquence.

Winfield (Kansas) Assembly Herald,

No lecturer has ever gone from our Assembly leaving better impressions than General Sweeney. His manner is entirely unique and original. He has something to say, and has his own way of saying it. He abounds in humor, and yet he is the very embodiment of dignity and pathos. When he came to our platform in 1893, the query was, "Who is he?"

<sup>1</sup>"In a Nutshell," Christian Standard, March 9, 1889, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>"Evangelistic," Christian-Evangelist, December 18, 1902, p. 897.

<sup>3</sup>Announcement, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Since then it has been, "Where is he?" He is withal so thoroughly American that to hear him is to be drawn nearer our country and its flag.<sup>1</sup>

Richmond (Virginia) Daily Dispatch,

Humor, wit, pathos, and magical description all flowed from the speaker's lips, and, with his genial countenance, graceful gestures and fine appearance, his audience was swayed as by a master hand and mind. The straining, eager countenances of the audience were an inspiration, and the speaker, no doubt, felt it.<sup>2</sup>

Editorial in the Phrenological Journal, New York,

His head measures 23 3/4 inches, which is very large; and considering the wonderful susceptibility and vigor of his brain and organic structure generally, he has the conditions to win and hold a place which few can hope to attain. It is as natural for him to think as it is for a duck to swim.<sup>3</sup>

Editorial Note in Louisville (Kentucky) Courier-Journal,

It is not often that a lecturer who is not at the same time a professional humorist fires off so many good things as Mr. Sweeney did last night at the First Christian Church. Many a comedy has been put on the stage with less to laugh at in it than was contained in the "Journey to Jerusalem." Mr. Sweeney's summary of the English character in the matter of fondness for class distinctions was as brilliantly epigrammatic as anything of Max O'Rell's; less compact, perhaps, than the French writer's work, but much nearer the truth than he commonly comes.<sup>4</sup>

At Sweeney's death the Evangelist evaluated his ability and success,

It is doubtful whether any man among the Disciples, during all their history was better known than "Zack Sweeney." . . . He was a favorite whether in the pulpit or on a lecture platform. In the pulpit he was the gifted and beloved minister, on the lecture

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

platform he was the admired and brilliant teacher.

It is no exaggeration to say that he was one of America's foremost pulpit orators for more than the length of a generation. People hung on his speeches and it is the simple truth to say that no one ever heard him utter a word that left a sting in any heart or put a tang of bitterness into any life.<sup>1</sup>

The staff of the College of Religion, Butler University paid him homage,

No other word seems to express the situation in anything like adequate form. Everything about Z. T. Sweeney was titanic, and reminded those who knew him of the days of giants. He had a forehead like the front of Jove, and when he spoke he swayed the multitudes after the fashion of Demosthenes or Webster. If he had chosen a political career he would, doubtless, have found his proper setting in the halls of the Senate, and he might have gone higher. We have listened to practically all the outstanding orators of the upper house of Congress during the last twenty years, and we do not know one of them who could match Sweeney at his best.<sup>2</sup>

#### Of the Earth Earthy

"He's a Roman senator," declared the artist who had come from Chicago to Columbus to prepare the death mask of Z. T. Sweeney.<sup>3</sup> Roman features, six feet tall, and of athletic build is the physical description of Zack Sweeney.

In spite of his physical and material advantages he remained in touch with common people. S. S. Lappin, one of Z. T.'s closest associates who was also raised in near poverty conditions, regarded this as Sweeney's chief characteristic.

<sup>1</sup>B. A. Abbott, "Z. T. Sweeney," Christian-Evangelist, February 11, 1926, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>College of Religion, "Sweeney, The Titan," Ibid., February 25, 1926, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie Sweeney, March 19, 1958.

Lappin's title of a memorial article about Z. T. is "Zachary Taylor Sweeney; Christian Commoner."<sup>1</sup> Lappin said of him, "Of the earth earthy was he, though fond of a good meal, a good joke and a good business deal."<sup>2</sup> And while Sweeney was always ready with repartee or a good story his respect for the sanctities of life did not permit him to indulge in those things that were vulgar or embarrassing.

Z. T. kept regular hours for study and sermon preparation. From 8:00 to 12:00 each morning he could be found in his study. Frequently, as he was fishing or walking about Columbus upon pastoral errands he would practice the oratory and gesticulation of his sermons. Columbus citizens, amused by this habit, would sometimes inquire of him why he did it. His reply was, "I like to talk and listen to a smart man."<sup>3</sup>

Late in life he took up the practice of occasionally smoking a cigar. However, perhaps out of deference to Joe Irwin who never smoked or even drank coffee, or from personal preferment, Z. T. did not smoke in the house. As he worked in the study or walked in the garden he would, as he said, "fulminate."

On one occasion when Z. T. had delivered the morning sermon in a country church and was to deliver another in the

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Lappin, "Zachary Taylor Sweeney: Christian Commoner," Unpublished Typescript.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie Sweeney, March 10, 1958.

afternoon, he found a quiet spot and a comfortable log in the woods and was quietly puffing a perfecto when he was approached by a local man. "Ah brother Zack, I've caught you burning incense to the Devil." "Yes?" replied Z. T., "but I did not expect him along so soon."<sup>1</sup>

Z. T. Swainey was rocketed into national prominence and leadership among the Unitarian churches. His family background, his unusual ability as a preacher, and perhaps most significant of all, the rise of the Universalist Christian Church under his ministry to the position of the largest church in the brotherhood at that time, contributed to his meteoric rise to recognized leadership. Z. T. was loved and respected everywhere. He preached the faith of the Restoration fathers. He was a man of conviction. The masses responded to his faith and oratory. All these abilities made him a natural leader. Then, too, Swainey lived in an era of change and controversy. It was a period that demanded leadership and a situation that made leaders. The need was apparent and Z. T. Swainey was there.

Zack's leadership, however, was proved in many ways before the crucial tests of his later ministry.

Sunday School conventions and rallies on a state and district basis were popular for instructing and inspiring Sunday School workers. The first state association was formed

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Elmore, "What Do You Read?" Restoration Herald, March, 1958, p. 15.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SWEENEY RESOLUTION

Z. T. Sweeney was rocketed into national prominence and leadership among the Christian churches. His family background, his unusual ability as a preacher, and perhaps most significant of all, the rise of the Tabernacle Christian Church under his ministry to the position of the largest church in the brotherhood at that time, contributed to his meteoric rise to recognized leadership. Z. T. was loved and respected everywhere. He preached the faith of the Restoration fathers. He was a man of conviction. The masses responded to his faith and oratory. All these abilities made him a natural leader. Then, too, Sweeney lived in an era of change and controversy. It was a period that demanded leadership and a situation that made leaders. The need was apparent and Z. T. Sweeney was there.

Zack's leadership, however, was proven in many ways before the crucial tests of his later ministry.

Sunday School conventions and rallies on a state and district basis were popular for instructing and inspiring Sunday School workers. The first state association was formed just eleven years before Z. T. moved to Columbus. He became active in the support of the new Sunday School movement which played such a large part in the growth of the churches during

the period of Z. T.'s ministry. At one time he was president of the Indiana Sunday School Association.

Periodicals exercised a large measure of influence on churches and individuals throughout the history of the Christian Church. It has been said that Disciple editors in Sweeney's day exercised more real authority than Methodist bishops. Sweeney, like nearly every other prominent minister, tried his pen in this field. From the beginning of the Central Christian, he was a contributing editor to this paper published in Indianapolis for the interests of Indiana Christians. Early in 1888 he was elevated to the chair of editor-in-chief. Unfortunately, only five known copies are extant, and only one of these was edited by Sweeney. In March, 1889, the editor announced that the paper was faced with the dilemma of choosing to become a weekly paper or uniting with a weekly paper with a circulation in Indiana. The latter course was chosen and the subscribers began receiving the Christian Standard on March 15, 1889, which paper began an "Indiana" column.<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelist had proffered Sweeney their best wishes as he embarked on this shortlived editorial voyage,

If Bro. "Zack" adorns the tripod as he has the pulpit, there can be no doubt that the Central has made a hit in securing his service. So far as the readers of this journal are concerned, they do not need to be informed that Br. S. has already demonstrated his ability to drive the quill, or push the pencil to the entertainment and edification of his readers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Standard, March 23, 1889, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup>Christian-Evangelist, May 3, 1888, p. 264.

Z. T. was also assistant editor of the Iron Preacher, a church paper published in New Orleans. Nothing further is known about this work however.

Pulpit Diagrams is one of the four sermon books Sweeney edited. To obtain charts for this publication Z. T. offered prizes of \$25, \$15, and \$10 for diagrams submitted. The resulting book of forty-eight diagrams was popularly received and went through three printings. At least six of these diagrams were printed on large sheets of paper for auditorium use.

Other works of Sweeney's included editing two volumes of Isaac Errett's essays. One entitled The Querist's Drawer was a compilation of Errett's answers to questions addressed to him when conducting a query column in the Standard. Bible Readings was a book of similar nature but based on Errett's comments on Biblical passages.

Sweeney was quite active in attending and working for the gatherings of the brethren in both local and national level.

Nothing could be a better example to younger men than his devotion to leadership and his constant participation in our conventions and church gatherings. . . .He took the time and labor necessary to do his bit in our national conventions and in many local gatherings.<sup>1</sup>

During 1904 Z. T. was President of the A. C. M. S. and he campaigned vigorously for the support of the work. That year there were eighty-four missionaries under the employ

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<sup>1</sup>B. A. Abbot, "Z. T. Sweeney," Ibid., February 11, 1926, p. 167.

of the society besides thirty-four missionaries not under employment at that particular time, and two hundred forty-one were jointly supported with the state boards.<sup>1</sup> He appealed to the churches "to believe in God and keep the fires burning." The world had turned away from the Sun of Righteousness but the winter solstice was reached at Calvary and now is gradually turning back to the Sun. America is the blackboard on which God is solving the problem of true government for all ages to come. May 1 is our spring and October in St. Louis the harvest. The society managers have set \$200,000 as the goal. It can be reached if we "believe in God and keep the fires burning."<sup>2</sup> This theme of paralleling the destiny of the A.C.M.S. and the U.S. was followed through in his convention address that fall. Z. T. also toured extensively that year conducting rallies for home missions.

Later, but prior to World War I, the board of trustees of the A.C.M.S. created the Commission of Foreign Relations. The duty of this committee was to follow the current of migration between Europe and America as it was related to Disciples and stimulate helpful movements. Sweeney was named chairman and charged with the responsibility of selecting the other members in conference with George Miller, president of

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<sup>1</sup>Souvenir Program (International Missionary Convention of the Christian Church, St. Louis, October 13-20, 1904), pp. 29-32.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Believe in God and Keep the Fires Burning," Christian-Evangelist, February 14, 1904, p. 45. Ibid., Christian Standard, January 16, 1904, p. 81.

the A.C.M.S.

Sweeney was also responsible for the present form of International Convention. The first general convention was held in 1849. Throughout the history of the convention until 1916 there existed two conflicting opinions as to the structure of the assembly. Some preferred a delegate convention, others preferred only the cooperation of individuals.

The Toronto General Convention of 1913 was to be a delegate convention. The meager number of delegates made it a miserable failure. At a mass meeting called to register protest to a delegate assembly, Z. T. said, "The delegate Convention is dead; I say, it's as dead as last year's bird nest. Its fangs are drawn, and it will never show its head again."<sup>1</sup>

At the Des Moines convention in 1916 Z. T. Sweeney introduced a resolution proposing the establishment of a committee to study the problem of convention organization. An editorial by Frederick D. Kershner, editor of the Christian-Evangelist, urged a bicameral type of convention.

The Sweeney committee made their report at the Kansas City Convention in 1917. Essentially the constitution provided for two houses, the Committee on Recommendations and the mass meeting of the registered individuals. The Committee on Recommendations was composed of delegates selected by the state conventions. This committee passes on each resolution,

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Standard, October 11, 1913, pp. 1656-1657.

and reports either favorably or unfavorably. They may make amendments. The convention in turn must either reject or approve the resolution without amendment or recommit to the Committee.

The passage of this new constitution was secured by the oratory of Zack himself. The Standard reports,

The real issue before the Convention spread its wings and took its initial flight when the report of the Sweeney Committee was submitted in the afternoon, October 26. It sailed forth and returned safely to the stage, while a great audience looked and waited-- and a hundred men or so held their breath. Then it was that Z. T. Sweeney, himself, took his place in the tonneau and laid his hand on the rudder. The flights (of skillful oratory) under his guidance were successful, and at the same time, highly entertaining-- the audience applauded and laughed and did some genuine thinking. And when the meeting adjourned, it was admitted on all sides that the airplane had been carefully constructed and tested, and that our missionary and benevolent agencies should feel no hesitancy in attaching themselves to it.<sup>1</sup>

An historian said, "In spite of some questionable features, his tactful and eloquent address secured its unanimous adoption."<sup>2</sup>

In a gracious brotherly spirit Z. T. had submitted a copy of the proposed constitution to the Gospel Advocate, a periodical of the non-instrument churches, for their consideration. M. C. Kurfees, although rejecting the plan, replied in a most cordial and friendly manner.

<sup>1</sup>"The Kansas City Convention," Ibid., November 10, 1917, pp. 173-174.

<sup>2</sup>W. W. Jennings, A Short History of the Disciples of Christ, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1929), p. 211.

## Liberalism

Beginning in the 1880's a new attitude began to influence the Disciples. Some of the younger men during this period began attending universities that had been affected by the theological view known as liberalism and popularly styled modernism. This new theology had been influenced by new scientific attitude, evolution, higher criticism, and the development of the psychology of religion. The Restoration Movement up to this time had been a strange mixture of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The preachers were completely conservative regarding the inspiration of the Bible and the historicity of the events recorded in the Scriptures. On the other hand the Christian church repudiated Calvinism and creedalism, a reaction to which gave rise, in part, to liberalism.

Since liberalism invaded the Christian Churches through a few young preachers who studied in "modernistic" "denominational" schools the controversy that resulted centered in these men and the institutions they came to represent. In the Protestant world the popular champion of these new views was Harry Emerson Fosdick. In Disciplesdom it centered in Clinton Lockhart, Herbert L. Willett, E. S. Ames, W. H. Garrison, and C. C. Morrison.

Z. T. Sweeney was of the traditional school. He was a man of conviction and soon spoke out against this innovation. The particular personal conflict was with H. L. Willett. Willett had written an article, "Miracle and Faith," in the

Christian Century, September 3, 1898. Immediately Sweeney responded in a letter to the Century charging Willett with heresy. The resulting eleven communications were published in a booklet entitled The Supernatural Element in the Miracles of the Bible. Sweeney, of course, upheld the supernatural source of the miracles whereas Willett defended a natural interpretation of the miracles.

Soon the institutions that employed these liberals became points of controversy. In 1917 an uproar was caused at College of the Bible and Transylvania University. J. W. McGarvey, one of the most influential and most popular teachers of the Bible and defender of the conservative point of view, died and his place and other vacancies at Lexington were filled by those influenced by liberalism. George P. Rutledge, editor of the Christian Standard was the first to call public attention to the "scandal" at Lexington. Z. T. wrote Rutledge,

I think the matter of charges against Transylvania University should be impartially investigated. It is a matter of justice to the college that it should be done. Moreover, it is justice to the great brotherhood that has made the school an actuality.<sup>1</sup>

Z. T. was thankful to Rutledge for "stirring up mud" for to do so he recognized there must be both paddle and mud. Zack's attitude toward the men involved, however, was charitable.

I make no warfare upon the teachers personally. They are all men with years of usefulness, integrity of

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Sweeney Writes a Letter," Christian Standard, October 13, 1917, pp. 30-31.

character and probity of life behind them. I am too much of a logician to try to hold them personally responsible for the consequences of their teaching. I have, however, the right to hold their teaching responsible for its consequences.<sup>1</sup>

The Standard charged these teachers with seventeen accusations. Sweeney selected one, "Man fell up, and not down, as Genesis represents," to comment upon.

1. It follows that man was better after his fall than before, if he "fell uphill." But God made him "upright," "in his own image and after his own likeness," "just a little lower than God." He therefore improved upon the divine model after which he was created.

2. It also follows that God was wrong and the devil was right. . . .Satan was his true friend, and got him in better condition by having him "fall uphill."

3. If man, by transgression, "fell up-hill," all transgressions fall u-hill, and the more they transgress, the higher up-hill they get. . . .

.....

The logical results of the "up-hill movement" are to neutralize faith, emasculate inspiration, hinder work for the salvation of a sinful humanity and paralyse all efforts to preach salvation to a lost and dying world.<sup>2</sup>

The Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago was under similar attack. The battle did not wage as hot there for it was avowedly liberal in its very beginning. It was, however, the center from which liberalism managed to permeate other brotherhood institutions. Three years before the Lexington furore, when W. G. Irwin was one of the leading supporters of the Men and Millions Movement, Irwin had written his brother-in-law concerning the touchy problem of whether or not the Divinity house was to be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

included in the Men and Millions contributions. Irwin was opposed to it but wanted help from Zack in formulating an answer. Sweeney suggested he say,

I did not consider Chicago University a proper atmosphere in which an educational institution devoted to primitive Christianity would thrive-- That it would be wiser for our young men to attend a school where they would be turned out perfectly loyal to the inspiration of the Bible the supernatural character of the Christian religion as taught in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

It was during this same period that Z. T. announced in the papers that he knew of a graduate evangelical school in the East where young preachers could get an education in a scholarly atmosphere where their faith would not be destroyed. The school had twenty-four instructors and was superior to Harvard and Yale in Zack's opinion. Those interested were to correspond with him to learn more of the school.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his lifetime, Z. T. Sweeney had been an ardent advocate of missions. Early in the history of the F.C.M.S. he took a life membership in the society at \$100. Later, the Columbus church assisted him in paying three more life memberships. In 1904 he was president of the A.C.M.S. The Central Christian reported,

he has never ceased to lift up his voice in the advocacy of missions, so much so as to be criticized

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney in a letter to W. G. Irwin, January 16, 1914. Z. T. Sweeney Files, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>2</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Safe Place for 'Post-Grad' Work," Christian Standard, January 15, 1921, p. 1761.

sometimes by leading members of his church for an over-zeal in these matters.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of liberalism as it reared its head in the U.C.M.S. was consequently to be of great concern to Sweeney.

#### Open Membership

In 1919 six agencies united in forming the United Christian Missionary Society. The A.C.M.S. and F.C.M.S. in which Z. T. had been so active were two of the agencies whose functions were subsumed in this new organization. In 1921 Z. T. became a member of the board of managers of the new body.

One of the fruits of liberalism was the practice of open membership. Closely related and contributing to the actual practice of open membership were comity agreements. Where such practices were engaged in in the United States there could be no widespread brotherhood division. Only the individual churches following such practices were involved. However, such practices on the mission fields brought every contributing church into the controversy and widespread split was involved. The F.C.M.S. had sent Guy Sarvis to China. Sarvis was an acknowledged liberal and exponent of open membership. The C.W.B.M. also had introduced comity in Mexico.

Thus the U.C.M.S. did not have just the seeds but some rather well-started sprouts of controversy growing within

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<sup>1</sup>Central Christian, January 1, 1887, p. 1.

it from its inception. It is not surprising therefore that many conservatives opposed the organization. At least two of its parent groups had "departed from the faith." It was highly probable that a more centralized and more powerful organization would continue the trend toward liberalism with an every increasing rate of speed.

Z. T. did not share these apprehensions concerning the proposed society. He was however, thoroughly opposed to the practice of open membership and at the Cincinnati convention in 1919 spoke on "Should the Churches of Christ receive the Unimmersed into Formal Fellowship." This sermon was printed and distributed in tract form and later reprinted as "Open Membership." He began his discourse by recognizing the conflict between friendship and conviction, "In discussing this subject one sustains a conflict between two impelling motives--one is a desire to please, the other to be loyal to one's convictions."<sup>1</sup>

Zack was unalterably opposed to this innovation. To him it was a violation of the constitutional law -- treason. He cited the instance in 1832 when the State of South Carolina tried, by legislation, to alter the U. S. Constitution. President Jackson said this was treasonable and if they did it he would "hang you as high as Haman."<sup>2</sup> Z. T. exhorted the young preachers to plead for the restoration of

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, Should Churches of Christ Receive Unimmersed Into Formal Fellowship?, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

the unity of God's people upon the basis of God's foundation and not be misled by any appeals to have unity at the cost of conviction about baptism.

In spite of the overwhelming prejudice against open membership among the churches, a small minority of missionaries were practicing it and the controversy waged on.

Open membership was not a new thing as some suppose, declared Sweeney. He cited the fact that a half-century before the discussion revolved around the "Pious Unimmersed" but the issue was soon dropped as a dead apple from a tree when a young preacher at Wellsville, Ohio, reasoned that if it was right to receive the unimmersed into fellowship it was right to sprinkle a dying man. About the same time L. L. Pinkerton advocated open membership but Isaac Errett settled the issue for a time with his reply.<sup>1</sup>

Open membership appeared again occasionally but did not receive wide-spread attention until its practice was inaugurated on the China mission field. When news of this practice reached the local membership in the States a storm of protest was raised. At the 1920 Convention the so-called Medbury resolution was passed. This resolution forbade the practice by the representatives of the Society. However, it was nullified in effect, by the action of the liberals at the Winona Lake Convention the following year. The majority of the membership of the local churches were conservative in

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "The Open Membership Crisis," Christian Standard, May 12, 1923, pp. 958-959.

theology and they were not satisfied as to the action taken by the society to change the situation in China. More effective action was needed if the masses were to continue their support. In any case, Z. T. Sweeney proposed the so-called Sweeney Resolution at a meeting of the Board of Managers in St. Louis on January 18, 1922. The Sweeney Resolution, like the Medbury Resolution, called for a cessation of the practice of open membership on the mission field. All points of the resolution were unanimously accepted except the one dealing with open membership. Four of the managers objected on the grounds that it was a threat over the head of the missionaries.<sup>1</sup> Sweeney wrote, "The policy agreed upon. . . is as firmly established as the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States."<sup>2</sup> The convention that year was to meet in Winona again. Sweeney went anticipating a struggle.<sup>3</sup> John T. Brown had made his trip to the mission fields and was to give a report. Frank Garrett, missionary to China was to be present and speak. There would be some objection to the "Sweeney Creed." By a large majority the Sweeney Resolution passed the convention, but not without a rider. This "Higdon Interpretation" was attached to the resolution. The passing of the resolution

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "A Clarion Call from Z. T. Sweeney for the Support of the United Christian Missionary Society," Christian-Evangelist, February 16, 1922, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup>R. E. Elmore, "Corey Manuscript," Restoration Herald, July-August, 1955, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>W. G. Irwin in a letter to Mrs. Z. T. Sweeney, August 28, 1922, Sweeney Family Files, Columbus, Indiana.

had the positive effect of winning back some who had withheld support from the Society. The aging J. B. Briney, before rapping the gavel to close the convention, made a clear and moving call to rally to the society's support. P. H. Welshimer and the great Canton church resumed some of their support on a designated basis but it was withdrawn again soon.

Most conservatives, however, felt the Sweeney resolution had gone the way of the Medbury Resolution. And that although it is still carried in the missionary handbook of the U.C.M.S. its real effect is destroyed by the Higdon interpretation.

In 1923, in a series of articles about the crises that had been faced with the Christian Churches, Z. T. gave his analysis of the missionary crisis.

There were three conflicting opinions concerning missionary activity which resulted in the current crisis. First, there were those who held all human societies to be unscriptural and unnecessary. Second, some would say, "Let us do this work for you." And the third group, composing about ninety-five percent of the brotherhood say, "We need the society and want the society." Sweeney added, "We not only want the society to be wise, but we want it to be loyal as well."<sup>1</sup>

Of the missionaries who introduced open membership

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "The Missionary Crisis," Christian Standard, June 16, 1923, pp. 1109-1110.

in China he said,

These young people were not strong enough to withstand it (antagonistic atmosphere) and they compromised. Having done so, they withheld the facts and dealt doubly, with the board. It was a case of wrongdoing with a good intention.<sup>1</sup>

This was characteristic of his attitude to the officials and employees of the society. In his writing and speaking in this controversial period never once did he impugn them with improper motives. Never once did he question their sincerity. And apparently, he himself was so far removed from duplicity that it never crossed his mind that there might be others less open-faced than himself.

Sweeney continued his defense of the Society in 1923 by pointing out the steps it was taking to correct the situation. (1) A year ago the board of manager unanimously adopted an eight or ten point policy. Only the exclusion of open membership was not unanimously received. This new policy forbade federation and interference by officials with churches. (2) This policy was unanimously reaffirmed by a full board at Winona. (3) Protests were read and referred to committee. It was unanimous there be no change in policy. (4) The policy passed by the International convention by more than one hundred to one. (5) The policy was sent to the missionaries in China. Each pledged to carry out the policy in full. (6) No one has been accused of violating this policy.<sup>2</sup>

In the next article on the issue Sweeney pointed out

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the three courses open to the brotherhood:

(1) We can withdraw our support as individuals and churches. Whether this is a wise course or not, it is clearly our Christian right. . . . If we wish to contribute through another agency, it is our privilege and our duty to do so.

(2) We can draw out and still fight the society. This is inconsistent.

(3) We can forget past mistakes and errors and love and watch the U.C.M.S."<sup>1</sup>

His wholesome attitude to both the critics of the society and the accused within her ranks he reveals again as he says,

There has been a great deal too much suspicion sown in the last few years. Good men--not intending it--have caused a large part of the brotherhood to lose faith in the integrity and intentions of the Board of Managers and officials of the U.C.M.S. As a matter of fact, the 120 men and women who compose the General Board are as loyal as any such number we could select. The secretaries are tried and true, and not one of them can by any stretch of the imagination be called disloyal to the New Testament teaching. If I were to venture an opinion, I would say we have a few week-kneed (sic) ones in the Executive Committee, but they can not do anything that will betray the brotherhood, that moment their heads will come off, provided the loyal all "stay in."<sup>2</sup>

The Standard and other conservative brethren were not so quick to accept Z. T.'s attitude. They still remembered other resolutions accepted but divested of the essential meaning. The editor of the Standard pointed out that only Sweeney and one other had been even willing to admit mistakes and that there was no report of action taken concerning the unimmersed already received into membership.<sup>3</sup> The next week he defended

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., July 14, 1923, p. 1212.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Editorial, "The Missionary Crisis," op. cit., July 7, 1923, pp. 1194-1195.

the Standard's position by pointing out that the society was an impersonal corporation and was not to be treated as one would an erring individual, that we are not in the society as Z. T. suggested, and the one hundred twenty do not have close watch over the workings of the society. The editor then urged withdrawal of support as the only workable solution.<sup>1</sup>

At the 1924 convention in Cleveland a resolution was passed creating a Peace Committee to help resolve "serious misunderstanding" existing between the society and many brethren and churches. This five man committee was to meet and call in leaders of both sides to the controversy and after hearing their differences, make such recommendations to the Executive Committee who in turn would report to the 1925 Convention. Sweeney was one of those whose name appeared on the resolution.

The magnanimity of Z. T.'s great concern for the brotherhood was shown here again. Commenting on the Cleveland Convention he said,

I know better than anyone else the danger I am in. I know that I am between the upper and nether millstones, but I am willing to stay there if it will keep my Saviour from being "wounded in the house of His friends." I am not much of a prophet, but I can forecast a little. I see our noble brotherhood, that has achieved so much in the last hundred years, divided into rival factions, our plea for Christian unity a by-word in the world, and the cause of New Testament Christianity, after having a glimpse of the promised land, turn back with heavy heart and weary footsteps to the wilderness for another forty years

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., July 14, 1923, p. 1218.

of wandering. God be my helper, it shall not do that till I have exhausted every effort in my power to prevent it.<sup>1</sup>

The Peace Commission met and made their report as directed. A controversial clause was contained in the following section,

1. That no person be employed by the United Christian Missionary Society as its representative who has committed himself or herself to belief in, or practice of, the reception of unimmersed persons into membership of Churches of Christ.

2. That if any person is now in the employment of the United Christian Missionary Society as representative who has committed himself or herself to belief in, or practice of, the reception of unimmersed persons into the membership of Churches of Christ the relationship of that person to the United Christian Missionary Society be severed as employee.<sup>2</sup>

The controversy raged around "belief in" open membership. The liberal faction urged that this was a return to creedalism, a position the Disciples had long repudiated. Those who spoke in the debate on the Convention platform challenging the wording were H. O. Pritchard, A. D. Rodgers, Edgar DeWitt Jones, C. M. Chilton, Mrs. W. A. Hart, and F. W. Burnham. Those defending the wording of the resolution were G. A. Miller, Z. T. Sweeney, Claude E. Hill, J. B. Briney, P. H. Welshimer, Sam I. Smith, and Charles S. Medbury.

H. O. Pritchard insisted that such a phrase was legislating faith. There were two roads open, legislation and the New Testament. It was a strong argument but Sweeney

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Inside History of the Cleveland Convention," Ibid., December 6, 1924, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen J. Corey, Fifty Years of Attack and Controversy, (The Committee on Publication of the Corey Manuscript, 1953), p. 102.

was up to the challenge. He replied he would take the New Testament, arguing that the great commission was all the authority the apostles or the U.C.M.S. has. To allow liberty of opinion on this issue is to attack the constitutional principle of the Kingdom. In an earthly kingdom this is anarchy, in God's kingdom, disloyalty. He pointed out that the U. S. government sends its emissaries out but recalls them if they do not discharge the constitution honorably. Open membership is war on Jesus Christ and you are here to decide if the U.C.M.S. is to be loyal to the constitution.<sup>1</sup>

The debate lasted for five and one-half hours. The resolution was adopted without change over the veto of the Recommendations Committee.

The Board of Managers, however, met in St. Louis on December 2 and 3, 1925. There they "interpreted 'committed. . . .to believe in'. . . .'as not intended to invade the right of private judgment, but only to apply to such an open agitation as would prove divisive."<sup>2</sup>

Disciples of Christ Congresses were called beginning in 1899 to allow opposition to be voiced to the program and policies of the increasingly liberal tendencies of the historic Sweeney was an officer and leader of the U.C.M.S. but he was also one of the outstanding spokesmen and leader of the Congresses. Z. T. was chairman of the first session of the Second

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<sup>1</sup>"Report of the Peace Conference Committee," Christian Standard, October 24, 1925, pp. 2239-2241.

<sup>2</sup>Corey, op. cit., p. 105.

congress which was held in Indianapolis. His presence is recorded at many of the Congresses held through the years. And his famous sermon "Have We Outgrown Our Plea," was delivered at the 1922 Congress in St. Louis, right in the middle of the open membership controversy. Zack's participation in these sometimes conflicting programs do not suggest he was a fence rider. He was anything but that. If it means anything it shows that he at no time identified any agency as the exclusive agency of the brotherhood in its particular field.

The Congress held in Columbus, Indiana, in 1924 was perhaps the most vocal and colorful of all. S. S. Lappin's address was criticised by R. C. Foster but endorsed by Z. T. Sweeney. Lappin in turn said that while Z. T. might endorse his remarks he did not altogether endorse Sweeney's.

Four months after Z. T.'s death, five of his close friends, W. R. Walker, P. H. Welshimer, Mark Collis, William E. Sweeney, and S. S. Lappin, were appointed as the Committee on Future Action which called for special sessions at the controversial Memphis Convention in 1926. From this beginning the North American Christian Convention was called the following year by William E. Sweeney, Zack's nephew, P. H. Welshimer, Mark Collis, W. R. Walker, Robert F. Tuck, O. A. Trinkle, and F. S. Dowdy. One would like to know what course he would have followed after this new juncture. Of course no one could say with certainty, but Z. T. made two statements at the Columbus Congress that might point the way, "That if he held membership

in an open-membership church, he would stay with it and fight to force the open-membership people to get out."<sup>1</sup> He then asserted he was going to the Oklahoma convention to get the recall of Garrett, Teagarden, Marks, Sarvis, and any other unsound teachers. He was going to break the rule of not mentioning personalities in convention, if necessary.

Lappin closed the congress remarking,

It may be possible to do more work, as its friends claim, through the U.C.M.S. than through other agencies, but will it be the work we want to do? The U.C.M.S. will get none of my money until it cleans up.<sup>2</sup>

At this point Sweeney exclaimed, "Here too," and the two shook hands heartily.

With no significant change coming after Oklahoma City one cannot help but think that Z. T.'s energies would have been devoted to the N.A.C.C. even though he may have continued his futile call to conservatism within the ranks of the historic agencies.

By this time the Columbus Church where Z. T. was a member and minister emeritus, was supporting "independent" work exclusively, and the Irwin family were giving generously to many independent causes.

Z. T. Sweeney was a peacemaker. Whatever else can be said or must be said about him, he was in this brotherhood crisis a peacemaker. That he failed is obvious, but that he sincerely attempted is equally clear.

<sup>1</sup>Roy L. Porter, "Columbus (Indiana) Restoration Congress," Christian Standard, December 20, 1924, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## Preacher Training

Isaac Errett had said to Z. T. on their European journey that he feared that the multitude of young preachers "don't even know what we're trying to do." The problems of the ensuing years left Sweeney with the same convictions. The problem was that they had never captured the vision of their fathers. After years of reflection Zack concluded the solution was to provide them with the literature of the preceding generation. To this end he established a Christian Book Fund that has provided three volumes of sermons from nineteenth century Restoration preachers to every graduate of the schools of the Christian Church. Sweeney was the editor of New Testament Christianity. He explained, "When they become acquainted with it, they will love it; when they love it, they will preach it; when they preach it, it will produce the same results it did years ago."<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelist's book review said, extravagantly,

This is one of the greatest books issued by Disciples of Christ. . . . It is the cream of our literature.--To the open-minded and honest student of the Word it will be like taking two years in a seminary. The arguments are scriptural, logical, eloquent and convincing. Brother Sweeney has done a piece of work that will live hundreds of years after his body has melted back to dust.<sup>2</sup>

It was proposed to translate the books into Russian and Italian.

<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, What Shall We Do With Our Young Preachers?, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>W. H. Book, "New Testament Christianity," Christian-Evangelist, June 5, 1924, pp. 50-51.

Northwestern Christian University was founded in the pioneer days by the Christians of Indiana to give a college education to their young people residing on the Frontier. It was a church school and Christian education was the paramount concern. In time the name was changed to Butler University in honor of one of its early benefactors, Ovid Butler. The Irwin and Sweeney families became staunch supporters of this institution. In 1889 Z. T. Sweeney was named Chancellor. He had executive authority over the university in a general way but without infringing on the duties of the president. Z. T. was to increase the endowment and add additional chairs of instruction.<sup>1</sup>

In 1924 the second college of the University, the College of Religion was founded. The first year of its classroom instruction, 1925-1926, the College had twelve graduate students, thirty undergraduate men, and six undergraduate women.<sup>2</sup> Z. T. Sweeney was largely responsible for giving the leadership for this new venture and the Joseph Irwin family supplied the driving power.<sup>3</sup>

Kershner tells of Zack's plan for the College of Religion, which name incidentally, was selected by Sweeney,

In a letter addressed to the writer during the fall of 1923 Mr. Sweeney outlined in full the general program and ideals of the new institution. He did not want it

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<sup>1</sup>L. L. Carpenter, "From the Field," Christian Standard, February 23, 1889.

<sup>2</sup>A. T. DeGroot, The First Five Years of the College of Religion, Butler University, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>F. D. Kershner, "Butler College of Religion And the Churches of Indiana," Typescript. Also F. D. Kershner, "The New Program of Butler University College of Religion," Typescript.

to be either reactionary or radical but soundly loyal to the basic principles of Christianity and of the Restoration Plea. He wanted it to be a place where scholarship and religion would walk hand in hand and where the highest and most thorough culture would be permeated with a living faith and a heart-felt devotion to the Gospel. He believed that this end could be achieved and that it was vital to the on-going of the true Church of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

In time the University moved from the Irvington campus to the site of the Fairview Amusement Park. This was a beautifully wooded two hundred forty-six acre tract along White River. Z. T. Sweeney, Allen B. Philputt, W. H. Book, and T. W. Grafton, of the Board of Directors were responsible for securing funds from the churches for endowment and equipment. In their communications to the brethren they held out to the congregations the training of the ministers at Butler where they would be "imbued with the convictions that will fit them to maintain our plea for the restoration of primitive Christianity in its ordinances, doctrines and fruits." Again, William G. Irwin and Mrs. Z. T. Sweeney were the largest individual contributors.

By 1927 five of the twenty-one directors of the board of Butler were not affiliated with the Christian Church. This wider representation from Indianapolis was sought in order to secure the patronage of the capital city. The Bible department was completely under control of the churches however, and the plan was to keep a majority of the board members of the church. This innovation of non-members of the Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Kershner, "New Program," p. 2.

Church as directors proved the camel's nose that caused the University to sever all relations with the church in later years. And then in 1958 the School of Religion, a graduate school since 1933, became entirely separate from the University.

In 1941, at the suggestion of F. D. Kershner, the chapel of the new School of Religion building was named in honor of Z. T. Sweeney who had given so much leadership to the school. This new plant was made possible largely through the gifts of Irwin, Sweeney and Miller families.

Sweeney also had wider educational interests. He served as trustee of Keuka College, Keuka Park, New York, from 1912 to 1915. He was also Vice-President of the Central Musical Conservatory of Columbus.

#### The Spirit and the Word

The only book of theological importance that Z. T. wrote was the one entitled The Spirit and the Word. Some of the pioneer preachers had proclaimed all the Holy Spirit in the world could be purchased for fifty cents. They had reference to the New Testament, of course. In that era when so many anti-Scriptural phenomena were distributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit it is not surprising that Alexander Campbell and others of like mind asserted that the Holy Spirit worked for the conversion of men today only through the Bible, His inspired Word.

Sweeney declared that the understanding of the Spirit was plain if one studied the word of God or mysterious if one

relied on one's psychological experiences. Sweeney did not deny the personality of the Spirit or his indwelling in the lives of the Christians. But he did believe that the Spirit convicted the world not of sin in general but by convincing individuals through preaching. Similarly, the Spirit convicted the world of righteousness by convincing them through the Gospel of the righteousness of Jesus' claims. And Judgment came to the world in the pronouncement at Pentecost.

To Sweeney the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian was limited to the extent the individual allowed the Scriptures to speak to his life. Men talk of being led and guided and controlled by the direct operation of the Spirit. Such men talk blindly and madly. . . . That man today is led by the Spirit who is led by the truth, and the man who walks not according to the teaching of the Apostles, walks not according to the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

In such statements as these where Sweeney identifies the Holy Spirit as truth the auditor might believe Z. T. did not believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit if the more comprehensive view as given in his book is not understood.

Walter Scott Russell may have had some influence on Z. T.'s conclusions about the Holy Spirit. Russell, a preacher living in central Illinois, advocated the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and the influence of the "Inner Light" in the heart of the believer. G. E. Sweeney was one of the few

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "Source of Authority in Christianity," New Testament Christianity, p. 515.

preachers in the area that was not carried away by this defection. The death blow came to Russell's teaching from J. S. Sweeney who preached at the state meeting in Eureka in 1866 on John 16:13-14. John S. made two points, (1) The Spirit does not preach himself but Christ and if any man preaches much about the Spirit it is a sure sign he is not led by the Spirit. (2) The Spirit was not promised to guide all men but the apostles only. The effect of Pentecost was what was preached.<sup>1</sup>

This one sermon brought an end to the peculiar doctrines of Walter Scott Russell.

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<sup>1</sup>Z. T. Sweeney, "The Walter Scott Russell Crisis," Christian Standard, February 10, 1923, p. 539.

## CONCLUSION

Although Zachary Taylor Sweeney was a man of many talents his chief ability was as an orator. For this reason his influence is primarily limited to his lifetime. A contemporary said, "It is doubtful whether any man among the Disciples during all their history was better known than 'Zack Sweeney.'"<sup>1</sup>

Rated as one of the best, if not the best, preacher in his day among the Christian Churches he exerted considerable influence for over half a century. His preaching at Columbus built the largest congregation of Christian Churches in the country up to that time. Thousands of people responded to the invitation he extended during revivals all over the United States. Indirectly, his influence continues through the Christian testimony of those who responded to his appeals.

In many ways his influence continues although he is virtually unknown in the present generation.

Not the least to be noted is the remarkable interest of his children and grandchildren in the church. All of them are active in a local Christian Church. In addition Miss Elsie Sweeney and Irwin Miller have become active in the "lay"

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<sup>1</sup>"Z. T. Sweeney," Christian-Evangelist, February, 1926, p. 167.

activities of the National Council of Churches. Each member of the family is active in the operation of Christian Foundation, Christian Theological Seminary, and in various other brotherhood enterprizes. Thus five generations of the Sweeney family have served quite actively in the Christian Church, a record seldom equalled.

Z. T. also instituted enterprizes that have continuing influence. Three of the four churches he established are still active. And over three hundred church buildings for which he raised over a million dollars stand as a monument to his ability to raise money as a church dedicator. One of the chief ways one may continue one's influence after death is by writing. The three books of sermons he edited, New Testament Christianity, are being distributed to every preacher graduating from any of the colleges of the "Restoration Movement." Thus "he being dead yet speaketh." One of the other books, The Spirit and the Word, is still in print and is continuing to speak in the Campbellian tradition of the Holy Spirit. Christian Theological Seminary, with an increasing student body and influence, owes its beginning to Sweeney. Much of its financial support comes from the Sweeney family.

In the larger brotherhood interests Sweeney continues to be with the churches. The International Convention is still operating under the constitution Z. T. wrote and had adopted. However, although he had a mediating spirit in proposing the present constitution many of the brotherhood refuse to partici-

pate in the program of the Convention.

There are few who walk in the spirit of Z. T. Sweeney. Sweeney, the peacemaker, perhaps is responsible for forestalling the division within the ranks of the Christian Church over the mission controversy. And it is likely that his witness helped prevent an outright split during the heat of the conflict in the early Twenties. Zack was able to work and witness to both parties, a thing few are capable of or would find comfortable today.

Sweeney lived in a day of exclusiveness. Churches were virtually unaware of the activities of the rest of the religious world. Z. T. was one of the few who also moved outside the circle of the Disciples. As a chautauqua and governmental figure he attained national prominence and formed acquaintances in areas other than in religious fellowship. He thus was one of the number who lifted the Christian Church above a frontier provincialism.

Missions in the Christian Church began with Dr. James T. Barclay in 1850. However the church became world mission conscious only with the repeated efforts of men like Z. T. Sweeney.

"This one thing I do" may have been the apologetic of the first century preachers but not so with Z. T. Sweeney. "The first thing" to Sweeney was preaching the Gospel but he also regarded himself as a citizen of the world with other responsibilities. To him America was providentially prepared for the preaching of "pure simple New Testament Christianity."

Americanism became second only in importance to the preaching of "Christ crucified." To serve as Fish and Game Commissioner was to make America a better place and to give the Gospel a better hearing. When health forced a leave of absence from preaching Z. T. chose a field where he could combine his interests as a preacher with the service of the United States government.

Z. T. Sweeney died at 6:50 p.m., February 4, 1926, at Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis, Indiana. Characteristically, as he was being carried out of his Columbus home for his last journey he said, "This is the first time I ever went to Indianapolis without my pants on."<sup>1</sup>

His last public addresses were given at the convocation of Butler College of Religion in September, 1925 and at the International Convention at Oklahoma City in October, 1925. At Butler his text was I Corinthians 2:1, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." At Oklahoma City he made his last fight against the practice of open membership in China and the Philippine Islands and appealed for a return to the teachings of the primitive church.

During that same year, 1925, S. S. Lappin and Z. T. were walking along a street in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Lappin gave the account of the conversation. Sweeney was saying,

"Even when we have done our very best we have no claim in ourselves we can make on God; and in the face of it

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Miss Elsie I. Sweeney, March 10, 1958.

all we feel how much we lack of all we meant to be and do."

And I made answer, "But there is the limitless grace of God, the 'everlasting arms,' for those who have been faithful; that is our hope after all, is it not?"

"Yes," he said slowly, and with deep and tender intonation, "Yes, that is our hope. . .and it is our only hope. . .the grace of God for poor lost. . .the grace of God shed forth in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

His eyes reddened as he spoke, in a way unusual to him, and his expressive lips were close drawn to conceal a tremor I knew was lurking there. He gripped my arm tightly as he spoke and when our hands clasped in parting a moment later there was no other word. In the day of his own physical decline he was resting in the assurance he had so often and so confidently commended to others.<sup>1</sup>

Lappin and the Bedford church were hosts to Zack for his last sermon. Although suffering from an attack of ptomaine poisoning Z. T. insisted on filling his appointment. He closed the sermon with the poem,

Blessed Bible how I love it!  
How it doth my bosom cheer!  
What hath earth like this to covet?  
O what stores of wealth are here.

Yes I'll to my bosom press thee;  
Precious word, I'll hide thee here;  
Sure my very heart will bless thee,  
For thou ever sayest, "Good Cheer."

Part in death! no never, never!  
Through death's vale I'll lean on thee  
Then in worlds above, forever,  
Sweeter still thy truths shall be.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Lappin, Zachary Taylor Sweeney: Christian Commoner. Unpublished typescript, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

## APPENDIX I

The following incomplete report is a tabulation of known revivals held at Columbus during Z. T. Sweeney's ministry with the number of known additions.

1st	-	1872	-	?
		1874	-	150
		1877	-	58
		1878	-	99
7th	-	1880	-	81
		1883	-	37
		1883	-	39
		1884	-	22
		1886	-	142 (possibly more)
		1887	-	62
		1888	-	311
		1889	-	62
		1892	-	225
18th	-	1894	-	53
19th	-	1896	-	39

It has been impossible to ascertain the exact date of more than one or two of these meetings. However, the length is known to have ranged from seven days in 1896 to six weeks or more in 1888.

## APPENDIX II

The following is a partial list of protracted meetings conducted by Z. T. Sweeney.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Additions</u>
8/1870	Stateline (Indiana?)	34
1870	Effingham, Illinois	
1870	Walnut Grove Station, Edgar County, Illinois	35
1/1871	Paris, Illinois	37
1871	Little Grove, Kentucky	27
1873	Fourth and Walnut, Louisville, Kentucky	30
1873	Charlestown, Indiana (Z. T. preached 2 of the 17 sermons)	14
1874	Franklin, Indiana	14
1876	Baltimore, Maryland	48
1877	Fourth Street, Covington (Kentucky?)	8 or 10
1877	Baltimore, Maryland	
1878	Elizabethtown, Indiana	
1879	Ohio and Delaware, Indianapolis, Indiana. (Z. T. preached the first week of a four and one- half week meeting.)	
1884	Central - Indianapolis, Indiana	
1886	Paris, Kentucky	46
1887	Central - St. Louis, Missouri	
1-2/1888	Allegheny City, Pennsylvania	84
1888	Paris, Kentucky	118
1891	Campbellsburg (Kentucky?)	5
1894	Eustis, Florida (A week later this new church re- ports only 65 members.)	75
1/1895	Paris, Kentucky	
8/16-19/1895	Ashtabula, Ohio	
1/1896	Central, San Jose, California	
1897	Seventh Street, Richmond, Virginia	
1/9f/1898	Richmond Avenue, Buffalo, New York	
1899	Paris, Kentucky (This was Z. T.'s fifth meeting at this place. The dates of one of the revivals is unknown)	
1901	Vine Street, Nashville, Tennessee	50
3/10f/1909	Lenox Avenue, New York, New York	
1911 or 1912	Linwood, Kansas City, Missouri	
1915	Central, Anderson, Indiana	
Unknown	Augusta, Georgia	
Unknown	Jonesville, Indiana	98

APPENDIX III

The known occasions of special sermons by Z. T.

Sweeney are as follows,

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>
3/17-19/1875	Sunday School Institute, Lexington, Indiana
1882	Georgia State Convention
1885	Annual Meeting of Henry County, Indiana
9/19-23/1888	Annual Convention, Center, Rock County, Wisconsin
6/14-17/1888	Convention of Disciples of Western New York, Buffalo, New York
9/14/1890	Bartholmew County Meeting
8/28-30/1891	Annual Meeting, Delaware County, Indiana
9/1891	Edwardsport, Indiana
6/2-6/1892	Annual Convention of Disciples of Christ in Ontario, Bowmanville, Ontario
6/1-5/1893	Annual Convention of Disciples of Christ in Ontario, Everton, Ontario
1/19/1896	Annual Meeting of Young Men's Missionary Society, Richmond, Virginia
1896	Commencement, Eureka College
1896	State C. E. Convention, San Jose, California
1897	Lectureship, Missouri Bible College
6/11-13/1897	New York State Convention
7/1898	National Endeavor Convention, Nashville, Tennessee
8/5-20/1899	Fountain Park Assembly, Remington, Indiana
10/1899	St. Paul's Methodist Church, Disciples Jubilee Convention, Cincinnati, Ohio
6/1901	Commencement, Watseka, Illinois
6/11/1904	Opening of Christian Church Building, World's Fair, St. Louis, Missouri
10/1904	President's Address, St. Louis Convention.
1904 or 1905	Brooklyn Y. M. C. A.
6/13-15/1905	State Convention, Pullman, Washington
7/28-8/6/1908	National Evangelistic and Teacher-Training Institute, Bethany Park, Indiana
1912	Commencement, Keuka College
11/17-23/1913	Congress of Church Efficiency, Davenport, Iowa
5/1915	Memorial Day Address, Columbus, Indiana
1920	Homecoming, Morristown, Indiana
3/16/1924	Interdenominational Bible Conference, Richmond, Virginia

APPENDIX IV

PARTIAL LIST OF CHURCHES DEDICATED BY Z. T. SWEENEY

<u>Date</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Location</u>
1871		Conlogue, Illinois
1871		Summit, Illinois
11/1872		New Paris, Ohio
1872		New Hope, Indiana
1875?	First	Augusta, Georgia
5/21/1876		Kansas, Indiana
1883 or 1884	Little Rock	Scott County, Indiana
10/1885	West Side	Chicago, Illinois
9/1886		Scottsburg, Indiana
1887	Central	St. Louis, Missouri
1887 or 1888	Third	Indianapolis, Indiana
1888	Harlem Ave.	Baltimore, Maryland
1888		Connersville, Indiana
1/1889		Hawpatch, Indiana
5/12/1895		Muncie, Indiana
11/22/1896		Spencer, Indiana
2/23/1896		Greenfield, Indiana
2/21/1897		Washington, Indiana
4/11/1897		Nevada, Missouri
5/9/1897	First	Topeka, Kansas
9/26/1897	Englewood	Indianapolis, Indiana
12/26/1897		Middlefork, Indiana
4/1898		Charlottesville, Virginia
11/19/1899	Belleview	Pittsburg, Pennsylvania
7/22/1900		Sullivan, Illinois
9/16/1900	First	Evansville, Indiana
10/7/1900	West Morris Street	Indianapolis, Indiana
11/4/1900	West Side	Chicago, Illinois
11/1900		Girard, Illinois
1/13/1901		Pleasantville, Iowa
2/17/1901		Glenville, Ohio
3/10/1901		Fountain City, Indiana
5/5/1901		Bedford, Indiana
5/4/1901		Cynthiana, Kentucky
6/23/1901	Fourth	St. Louis, Missouri
10/6/1901		Lorain, Ohio
10/27/1901		York, Nebraska
5/4/1902	First	Greenwood, Indiana
6/1/1902		Kinmundy, Illinois
6/22/1902		Glasgow, Kentucky
7/6/1902		Carbondale, Illinois
12/21/1902		Paris, Kentucky

<u>Date</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Location</u>
4/26/1903		Crawfordsville, Indiana
5/10/1903		Beaver, Pennsylvania
5/17/1903		Shelby, Ohio
6/7/1903	Compton Heights	St. Louis, Missouri
6?/1903		Franklin, Indiana
11/29/1903		Uhrichsville, Ohio
1903		North Salem, Indiana
1/24/1904		St. Paul, Minnesota
6/26/1904		Oelwein, Iowa
2/26/1905		Owensboro, Kentucky
5/7/1905		Wichita, Kansas
10/8/1905		Murray, Kentucky
1907		St. Homas, Ontario
1907		Hammon, Indiana
11/24/1907		Vinita, Indian Territory
12/15/1907		Central City, Nebraska
1/19/1908	Third	Ft. Wayne, Indiana
4/12/1908	Central	New Albany, Indiana
11/1/1908		Corsicana, Texas
1908		Greensburg, Indiana
4/4/1909	Wyatt Park	St. Joseph, Missouri
1909		Kansas, Illinois
11/21/1909	First	Little Rock, Arkansas
12/19/1909	West Park	Indianapolis, Indiana
12/19/1909		Pittsburg, Kansas
1/23/1910		Girard, Kansas
4/3/1910		Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania
5/2/1910		Greeley, Colorado
1910		Winfield, Kansas
1911?		Pleasanton, Kansas
3/5/1911		Falls City, Nebraska
5/7/1911	First	Zionsville, Indiana
9/24/1911		Centralia, Missouri
11/3/1912	Lenox Avenue	Angola, Indiana
1/25/1914	Flatbush	New York, New York
4/14/1921		New York, New York
?		Warsaw, Indiana
?	Jackson Ave.	Carmi, Illinois
?		Kansas City, Kansas
		Ogilville, Indiana

Z. T. Sweeney also had other tasks related to the erection and payment of new buildings. He laid the cornerstone of the First church, Fort Smith, Arkansas, September 27, 1903. On December 30, 1900 he visited Shelbyville, Indiana to appeal for funds in order that a building might be erected. Several days were spent with the First Church in Little Rock,

Arkansas, in 1904, for the same purpose. But perhaps most dramatic was the erection of the building in Bedford. Z. T. in preaching mentioned a new and larger house. The brethren decided then and there to raise \$12,000 as a starter. Zack managed to raise \$15,000.<sup>1</sup> And on dedication day the remaining \$10,000 of the cost was raised by him.

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Standard, May 18, 1901. The Christian-Evangelist, April 5, 1900 gives these two figures as \$5,000 and \$12,000 respectively.

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