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C. R. D. Whitfield, Brief History of the Negro Disciples of Christ in Eastern North Carolina: Past Achievements and Future Aims

Charles R D Whitfield

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BRIEF HISTORY

Of The

Negro Disciples

Of Christ

In Eastern North Carolina

BY ELD. C. R. D. WHITFIELD

**Past Achievements
And Future Aims**

Whitfield Printery



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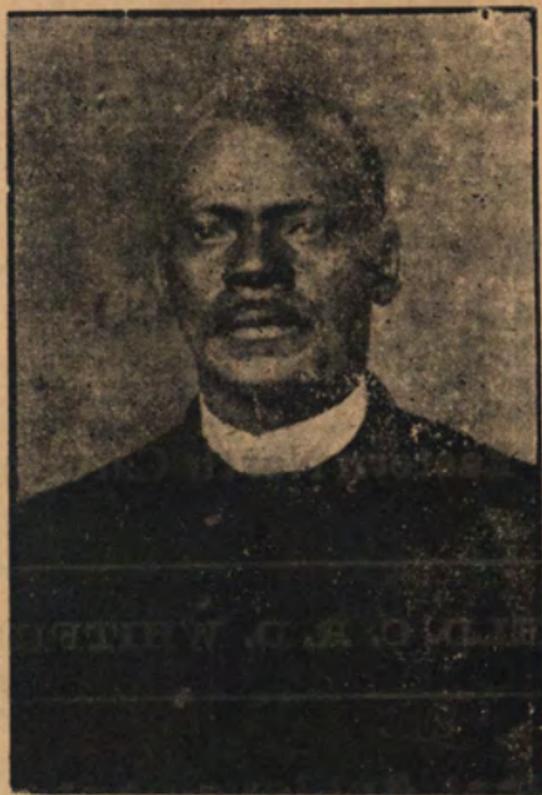
In Eastern North Carolina

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Elder Charles Randolph Whitfield.

PREFACE

For more than three years I have been greatly impressed with a desire to give to the disciples of Christ of the eastern part of North Carolina and others, but especially those of eastern North Carolina, a brief account of the origin of the connection not the origin of the Church of Christ nor the origin of Disciples of Christ, but simply the origin of this particular connection of Disciples of Christ.

In writing this book my main object is to give the information which I feel is quite necessary to all the members, namely: origin, unity and separations, causes, some past achievements, progress and future aims.

It is intended to create a desire on the part of the young men to go out into the field at large and accomplish something seeing that work, patience and endurance has netted this much to us. How much more could be accomplished with the same interest manifested.

I have written on the unity and separation with a view to let all know that we are not apart in principle, but simply as a matter of policy.

I have mentioned some of the accomplishments, financially, educationally and spiritually, and also touched along the lines of the future to awaken an interest on the part of the whole church.

I feel that I am in a position to give these facts to the people of my connection for I have not missed an assembly since two years before I became a minister, 1886.

The sermon on the Church is given for the benefit of all the Disciples of Christ to the end that no one may make a mistake as to the origin of the Church. This book

tells of the origin of this connection, where as in the sermon is set forth the origin of the Church, etc.

The manual in the back of this little book will help the ministers who have no one or one that is conveniently carried. So it is hoped that it will serve the purpose for which it is written.

CHAPTER I.

As early as 1867 Rev. Offie Pettiford, Rev. J. F. Whitley, Rev. W. A. James and Rev. R. E. Green, the old pioneers of the Washington and Norfolk District, were preaching around Pantego, N. C., Leachville, N. C., Elizabeth City, N. C., and throughout the far eastern section of North Carolina.

The first recorded church was raised by Rev. R. E. Green at Roanoke Island, the next church was established at Pantego N. C., the third one was at Jack Creek Beaufort County, the fourth one was established in Leachville N. C., (St Paul) and the fifth one was established at Juniper Bay, Hyde County, the sixth one was established in Elizabeth City, N. C., the seventh one was established at Currituck, Hyde County; the eighth one at Fairfield, Hyde County; the ninth one Inglehart, Hyde County; the tenth one at Beaver Dam, Beaufort County; the eleventh one at Bath-Bay-side, Beaufort County; the twelfth one at Perte (Pilgrim's Rest) the thirteenth one at Oriental, about thirty miles from New Bern, N. C.; the fourteenth one was established at Old Fort, Beaufort County about eight miles from Washington, N. C.

This is the record of the principal oldest churches in the connection from the time above stated. This organization work was done by Rev. R. E. Green.

It must be borne in mind, however that Revs. W. A. James, Offie Pettiford and J. F. Whitley contributed wonderfully to this work and there are several churches not mentioned in this booklet that they raised during this time and later but the writer was not in possession of the names of them at the time of the writing.

These ministers suffered many hardships to foster the cause but they continued to grow and became an important factor in the far eastern part of the state, and during this time they learned of the Disciples in the western part of the state, and, feeling that unity and co-operation would further advance the cause of Christ, Rev. R. E. Green came to the Assembly at Vine Swamp, Lenoir County, in 1886, and spoke along the lines of unity and the western brethren voted solidly to unite and meet at St. Mary Church, Hyde County, 1887 and make the agreement permanent. But when we met in 1887 we failed to reach an agreement so the eastern and western brethren all went back to their homes, feeling and believing though, that co-operation and unity would be brought about.

And right at this time a very interesting incident occurred. The Goldsboro and Raleigh Districts (Western Disciples) left St. Mary Church in Hyde county in 1887 without an appointment for the Assembly to be held the next year, 1888.

At that time Elder E. D. Hill was Chief and the late Elder I. Darden was Assistant Chief, and on their way from St. Mary, Hyde county, they decided to meet in March 1888 and designate a place to hold the assembly of that year, but they failed to meet as they had promised. So Elder Darden, assistant chief, made an appoint-

ment for the assembly to be held in Sampson county, quite contrary to the agreement with the chief. And the chief, Elder Hill, contended that the appointment was not lawful, whereupon, he made the appointment for Hickory Grove, Lenoir county, and owing to the misunderstanding among the churches resulting from the two appointments, some represented at the place designated by Elder Darden while others represented at the place designated by Elder Hill, Hickory Grove.

That explains the reason we have what is known as the Cape Fear Assembly of the Disciples today. So they have every reason to desire to be connected just as they were prior to 1888.

And it was at Hickory Grove 1888, when Elder E. R. Green, of the Eastern Disciples (Washington-Norfolk District) came and represented thirteen churches with the Goldsboro-Raleigh District. However, several of the churches of the east failed to unite at that assembly, but in 1889 the Goldsboro-Raleigh District consolidated with the Washington-Norfolk District at Plymouth, N. C., and both have been one body since, broadly speaking. And at that time it was agreed that the assembly should be transferred from one side of Tar River to the other, that is one year on the east side and one year on the west side.

The chief was always elected from the visiting assembly and the assistant chief from the assembly visited.

From 1889 to 1910 we met in one body annually but the delegation became so large that the brethren thought it better to arrange to have a quadrannual assembly. At Goldsboro, N. C., 1909 the question was

brought up, but left undecided until 1910 at Broad Creek at which place it was finally decided upon by solid vote in favor of two districts. It was then agreed that the district on the east side of Tar River be known as the Washington-Norfolk District and the one on the west side be known as the Goldsboro-Raleigh District. It was also agreed the pastors should have the fullest liberty as to their desire for pastoral work in either field. So we have pastors from the Washington-Norfolk District pastoring in the G. R. D. and pastors from the G. R. D. pastoring in the W. N. D. But the churches represent in their respective districts, and the pastors do the same.

CHAPTER II

Early History of the Goldsboro and Raleigh District.

The body of Disciples of Christ in Western North Carolina, Goldsboro-Raleigh District, had its origin in 1887.

These are the founders of the connection in this district: Allen Chestnut, of Bentonville, N. C., ordained by Rev. Dr. J. J. Harper (white), of Lenoir county; Elder E. D. Hill, Lenoir county, Elder Alfred Lovick also of Lenoir county; Elder N. P. Hargett and Elder Yancy Porter of Craver county and Elder Lewis Raynor of Johnston county, and others. The organization that they effected is now what we call the Goldsboro-Raleigh District of the Disciples of Christ in Eastern North Carolina.

It has been said that the Disciples of this section came out from the Free Will Baptist, colored but it is a mistake. They have never been any other but Disciples

as a body. They were organized and set apart by the white disciples and the first elders, as was stated in the beginning of this chapter, were ordained by Rev. J. J. Harper and others. So they all were disciples of Christ in accord with his word in John 8.31 If ye continue in my word, there are ye my disciples indeed: ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. And they accepted one faith on one Lord, one baptism and one true Holy Spirit for their guide. It was upon these principles that they stood, feeling, as is true, that they represented the right church, The Church of Christ whose members are all Disciples of Christ.

Some of the First Churches Built by Them.

Elder E. D. Hill built the church at Vine Swamp, Lenoir county, and the church at South West Lenoir county. Elder Alfred Lovick built the church at Stoney Creek which is now Grainger, Lenoir county. Elder Demus P. Hargett built the church at Moses' Creek, known as Hargett's Chapel, Lenoir county. Elder Yancy Porter began two missions Alum Spring and Sandy Plain which is now Greenleaf.

Elder Lewis Raynor and Elder Allen Chestnut and others built several churches in Sampson, Johnston, Wayne and other counties in that section of the state.

At that time our ministers were few and the membership and congregations were very small. And the way for them looked very dark and gloomy. They represented from six to twelve churches in the whole district. This was the condition of the connection when we met at Vine Swamp in 1886, when we met the brethren from the east and voted to unite with them.

But today we have in the district

about one hundred churches and about one hundred and fifty ministers and a membership of eight or ten thousand.

From 1870 to 1880 our dues to the assembly was all the way from nothing to five cents per member. Now the elders pay five dollars annually and the members pay from fifty cents to two dollars.

Then we had no school to which we could send our children for higher education, but we have an institution that promises to be second to none. You will see more about it on another page.

Then we had no teachers. Today we have hundreds, some are of the best qualified in the state. We have several graded school principals and normal school teachers.

Our First Object After Uniting in 1888

Our first object was to purchase a printing press and publish a monthly paper known as the "Signs of the Times" under the supervision of Prof. H. F. Woodhouse. In this undertaking, I regret very much, we lost several hundred dollars.

The press was worth seven hundred (\$700.00) dollars. And the press was to be paid for partly by subscriptions to the paper, but the subscriptions were very poor and it was impossible to keep the payments up. So the project was given up and the paper discontinued. But in spite of this setback the spirit of publication in the connection is still alive.

The Second Object.

The second object after uniting in 1888 having failed in the press proposition, was to purchase a school site. And at the annual assembly at Vine Swamp in 1904 we decided to purchase two acres of land from Brown Bros., in Greenville, N. C., for the

sum of seven hundred (\$700.00) dollars which was paid in full.

We were in one body at the time of this transaction. We held the land several years without any improvements on it whatever.

Elder B. J. Gregory and the writer were the purchasing committee from the west side of Tar River and elders W. A. James and I. V. Keys were the committee from the east side of Tar River.

In the annual assembly at Broad Creel Pantego, N. C., in October 1910, we decided to sell the land in Greenville to the Missionary Baptist and purchase a site in Goldsboro, N. C., which was more desirable in every way, the site upon which the Goldsboro Christian Institute now stands. It was erected the same year, 1910, under the direction of Prof. E. S. L. Whitfield, A. B., the first principal and Prof. B. F. Simmons, assistant principal.

The School Is Opened.

The first term of school began in January 1911 with quite a large attendance. At this time Mrs. Pearl B. Walker Whitfield, wife of the late Prof. E. S. L. Whitfield was matron. The school was splendidly conducted under their able and efficient leadership, and they won the affection of all the people of the city and community.

But just at the time when the outlook was so bright for the continued success of the institution, the principal died and his death was a distinct shock to the whole community and also to the connection. After his death it was decided that the school should be closed until the next term.

Prof. J. H. Battle was then elected principal but owing to some other engagements he arranged to get his sister, Mis

Fleta Battle, later Mrs. John R. Edwards to teach in his stead. After her term expired in the spring of 1912 the school became inactive until 1914, when the first quadrennial assembly was held at Greenleaf, Prof. E. F. Simmons was elected principal and Mrs. Simmons was elected matron. They had a successful term. The school was not opened the next term on the account of insufficient funds. The two more years elapsed before it was opened again.

In 1917 Prof. J. S. Thornton was elected principal. He had a successful term. But owing to the indebtedness for the remodeling of the building we were unable to open for the term of 1918.

In November 1919 the school was opened for the first time with dormitory accommodations. Prof. John F. Whitfield was elected principal and Mrs. Nancy Moses matron. The enrollment was eighty five. Prof. Whitfield was again elected in 1920. The institute was opened October 11, 1920 with a faculty of three and an enrollment of 108. The term was very success

highly satisfactory to all. About twelve were promoted to the Grammar School Department for graduation in 1924 and one to the Third Year Normal Department for graduation in 1922. She is now a graduate of the State Normal School at Fayetteville N. C., and has entered into the professional field. I refer to Miss Louise Kir

Princeton, N. C. At the close of the term the service rendered by the principal and matron, Miss Hattie Moore was so satisfactory that they were re-elected for the next term which began on October 4th, 1921. The enrollment for the term was about 120. The dormitory was crowded to

overflowing. We used from four to five teachers. Owing to the fact that Miss Moore was misinformed as to the arrangements of the committee, Mrs. Minnie L. Meadows was elected matron. The term was very good.

CHAPTER III.

The School Land and Farm.

We have sixteen acres of good land suitable for the cultivation of almost anything. Practically all this land is cleared. Two acres are thoroughly cleared. Since the school was opened in 1919 we have grown on this land sweet potatoes, cabbage, collards, onions, tomatoes, turnips, watermelons, cucumbers, peas, corn, etc.

The school yard is well drained, having a graded rock walk, beautiful oak trees for shade and a beautiful flower yard.

The Building Itself.

The building overlooks the City of Goldsboro, N. C., from the north, therefore it invites the warm sunshine of the cold winter into its front yard, porches and verandas.

There is at present one large frame building three stories high, containing 24 comodeous rooms and a chapel.

CHAPTER IV.

Our Aim for the Future of the Connection.

What we have done is a beginning of what we expect to do in this connection. This connection has not nearly reached its fullest stage of growth and development.

All the organizations of the Church are campaigning for more money for education and for the building of better church

buildings. They are really waking up.

The Sunday Schools have on a great drive for educational funds.

The ministers and pastors are taking after collections for it in their churches to raise five hundred twenty-five (\$525.00) dollars to pay off the interest which the Washington-Norfolk District has in the school property (land). There is also a big drive on in all the churches to raise money for new buildings and equipments for those buildings. Also we expect to clear the land and put in shape for farming, and thereby make the Institution support itself.

The buildings we expect to erect must be of brick large and comfortable in order that students coming from various parts of the country may be well cared for.

Who Owns the School and Land

The Goldsboro Christian Institute was owned by the Goldsboro-Raleigh District and Washington and Norfolk District until March 15th 1921. On that date the Goldsboro-Raleigh District purchased the interest of the Washington-Norfolk District for the sum of five hundred twenty five (\$525.00) dollars or one half of the cost of the land (\$1,050.00) at the time it was purchased in 1910, without any interest on it prior to the signing of the papers March 15th, 1921.

The Proposition to Sell

The proposition to sell was contemplated by the Washington-Norfolk District as early as 1918 when the Council Board of that district met and decided to sell its part in the school and build one in their own district, for convenience, at Pantego, N. C., and at the Quadrennial Assembly at Union Town in March 1919 (The reason why we met in March 1919

was because of the influenza epidemic, so the time was deferred from October 1918 to March 1919) the action of the Council Board of the Washington-Norfolk District was brought before the Quadrennial Assembly and it was agreed that the matter should be given twelve months consideration by the churches of the Washington Norfolk District.

At the annual assembly of the Washington-Norfolk District which was held at Pantego, N. C., in October 1919 the question was brought before the assembly and was voted upon and carried that the Washington-Norfolk District sell its part in the school at the Goldsboro-Raleigh District on easy terms. Elder S. M. Lofton and the writer were the fraternal delegates from the Goldsboro-Raleigh District and heard the decision.

And after agreeing to sell and purchase in their district, they elected a board of trustees and a purchasing committee of which committee Brother Seth Clark was a member. The resolution to buy was carried.

They purchased thirty-seven and one-half acres of land for three thousand or four thousand dollars, more or less of the later. And Elder W. A. James, Elder J. R. Spencer were elected fraternal delegates to the Goldsboro-Raleigh District assembly which convened at Pikeville, N. C. in October 1919. They met us with the same proposition to sell but at that time we did not give the matter any consideration.

In 1920, when the Washington-Norfolk District assembly met in Plymouth N. C., the matter was taken up again for final consideration. Elder S. M. Lofton and the writer, the fraternal delegates from the Goldsboro-Raleigh District were

present at the time. They agreed to sell their interest in the Goldsboro Christian Institute to the Goldsboro-Raleigh District without interest on the money to be paid for the same until the papers were made. This agreement was given to the fraternal delegates of the Goldsboro-Raleigh to take back to their next convening assembly at Kinston, N. C., for consideration. And in that assembly the Goldsboro-Raleigh District agreed to buy according to the terms mentioned in the premises. And then it was agreed by the Goldsboro-Raleigh District (agreed with the fraternal delegates of the Washington-Norfolk District) to meet at Greenville, N. C., in March 1921 and have the papers drawn up.

On March 15th 1921 the trustees of the Goldsboro-Raleigh District met the representatives of the Washington-Norfolk District, Elder W. A. James, Elder J. C. Cordon, and drew up the papers.

They made a deed to the Goldsboro-Raleigh District for their part for the consideration of five hundred twenty-five (\$525.00) dollars payable in five annual notes bearing interest from date papers were made. And we made them a mortgage deed which they are to hold for security until the sum of money above stated has been paid. The first payment was due March 15th 1922.

Both the deeds are on file in the office of the Register of Deeds of Wayne county. Elder W. A. James requested that the writer take the mortgage deed to Goldsboro, N. C., and have it registered and sent back to him. It was done.

First Payment Made

We were successful in making our first payment and taking up the first note of one

hundred eleven dollars and thirty cents (\$111.30) on March 17th 1922. This was done without taking any money from the assembly treasury. Many of the pastors fell in line and took after collections and helped to get most of the amount.

DOCTRINAL SERMON

By C. R. D. Whitfield

TEXT—That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. St. Matt. 16:18.

Jesus, wanting to draw out of his disciples what they thought of him as the Christ, asked them whom men said he was, and after they told him what the people had said about him he asked them directly Peter being very quick, answered, Thou art the Christ the son of the living God. And Jesus said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood have not revealed, but my Father who art in heaven.

The question may be asked, What is the Church of Christ? When was it established? may also be asked. Here are the answers my friends. The Church of Christ was made up of the Disciples of Christ for Jesus said to the believing Jews, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. St. John 8:31:36 Jesus shows here just what a disciple of Christ is and what it takes to make one also to let people understand the cost of discipleship he speaks to us through St. Luke 14.26-33. If any man comes to me and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot

be my disciple. Then, after making a very beautiful picture of the foolish builder and the thoughtless king, he climaxed the whole discourse in saying, So likewise, whosoever it be of you that forsaketh not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

We understand that Jesus had at all times a vast multitude following him just as a great crusader would have even now and what shall we saw of that? out of the multitudes he made disciples. (Making his Church) It will be seen that ^{he did this} ~~it will be seen that~~ it be of you that forsaketh not all that he in St. John 4:1-2. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, he left Judea and departed for Galilee. This shows that Jesus had ever more disciples than John. And after John was killed his disciples followed Jesus.

In the 10th chapter of St. Matthew we see that Jesus one day made a choice of twelve out of the vast number he had and they were to preach the, "Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Church of Christ was not yet built. Jesus was only introducing himself to the people.

When the Church of Christ was Built.

The Church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem A. D. 33. On that day the Apostle Peter preached the first gospel sermon and 3000 souls heard and believed and repented and were baptized and were added to the Church the same day. So the Church was composed of the disciples of Christ, those whom he made while here on earth. See St. John 4:1. He also sent the 12 disciples to preach the gospel to every creature and into all the world. Read St. Matt. 28:19. and He commanded them to make disciples

of all nations. See, also, St. Luke 24:27 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And in Acts 2nd chapter his disciples are waiting for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. This brings us to the establishing of the Church of Christ.

The Number of Members that were First at Jerusalem and later

On the day of Pentecost there were 120 disciples together in Jerusalem, and Peter preached the gospel and (3000) three thousands believed and were baptized. All these constituted the Church of Christ in its beginning. And to show further that the disciples of Christ make the Church of Christ we will notice the very close relation that exists between Christ and his disciples. The truth of it is seen in the 9th chapter of the Acts and the 1st verse, An. Saul yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord etc., and when he was overcome by that great power from heaven, he became dazed and astonished, and Jesus spoke to him in a thunderous voice like the voice from Mount Sini, saying, Why persecute thou me. Jesus holds a true disciple to be even himself. In another place of scripture we note that he said, If they persecute me they will persecute you. Acts 2:41-47 says the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved. And the Lord has never stopped adding to his great Church.

Believers and Doers of His Word

Our plea as disciples of Christ is to "speak when the bible speaks and be silent when the Bible is silent." And use Bible names for Bible things. We denounce all creeds and doctrines of men which are not in accord with the New Testament teach-

ings. We believe in one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one true gospel church, that which was begun at Jerusalem in A. D. 33, on the day of Pentecost.

All those who adhere to the New Testament scriptures and practice the same are true disciples of Christ and they are doers of the word and not hearers only.

O, my bretheren, we should think how important it is for one to believe the word of God. We should think who said these things. Was it feeble man? No. It was He who of old called Shiloh, the Root that sprang out of dry ground, the Root and offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, Alpha and Omega the First and the Last. We should extol his name in the highest whose birth changed chronology. And his death was marked by events never known before neither have such times been witnessed since. The sun refused to shine, from the sixth until the ninth hour, the earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the veil of the great temple was rend in twain, the graves were opened, and many bodies of the old saints appeared unto many in the Holy City. But on the following Sunday morning was the day of triumph, when the Blessed Lord arose from the tomb. He told his disciples then that the power rested no more in the hands of those wicked people who had so shamefully slain him, that it all now lay in his hands, and he gave them a great and solemn charge in telling them to, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. His disciples carried out that great command when they went to Jerusalem and waited for the Holy Spirit to enable them to carry out the promise they made to Him. So

must we my bretheren. If we want to be faithful and true disciples we must emulate those of old.

Since Jesus Christ has through His word, shown us what to do we should get about the Fathers business when he was only a lad and try and save the world in his Church established in Jerusalem in A. D. 33 with three thousand one hundred twenty members known to be in one place on one accord and in that the church was completed as to its origin and the incident passed into history, along with other great events, with the close of the New Testament. See the four gospels and the epistles and Acts.

The word disciple is mentioned in Matt. 75 times, in Mark 46, Luke 39, John 81, Acts 31 Isa 8:16. Total 273.

The word christian is found 3 times, Acts 11.26, Acts 26.28, 1 Peter 4 16.

OUR SCHOOLS

The Southern Christian Institute, Edwards Miss. Prof. J. B. Lehman, Ph B., President, A christian industrial school. Capacity 250 pupils, 18 Teachers and 1,281 acres of land.

The Alabama Christian Institute, Lum, Alabama..... I. C. Franklin, Principal. A christian industrial School. Capacity 125 students, 7 teachers 65 acres of land.

The Virginia Christian Institute, Martinville, Va. James H. Thomas, A. B., Prinbipal. Capacity 100. 5 teachers. 3 acres of land.

The Tennessee Christian Institute at Jonesboro Tenn. H. D. Griffin, Principal. Capacity 80, Land 2 acres. Teachers 5.

Jarvis Christian Institute, Hawkins Texas
N. Erwin, Principal. Capacity 100 students.
Teachers. 738 acres of land.

Central Christian Institute, Crofton, Ky.
W. H. Nickerson Principal, 235 acres of land.

Goldsboro Christian Institute, Goldsboro,
N. C. J. F. Whitfield, Principal. 100 students
3 teachers and 16 acres of land.

Liberian Christian Institute, Liberia, Af-
rica, 200 students, 3 teachers.

All of the above schools are supported by
the United Christian Missionary Society ex-
cept the school at Goldsboro.

We have over 800 churches of the Negro
Disciples of Christ stretching from the Atlan-
tic to the Far West, and from the Great Lak-
es to Mexico. We have strong churches in
Africa and Jamaica.

REPORT OF THE WORK DONE FOR THE NEGRO BY THE UNITED CHRIS- TIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY 1921.

Southern Christian Institute.....	\$23 358.29
Jarvis Christian Inst.....	25,960.23
Virginia Chr. Inst.....	20,007.50
Alabama Chr. Inst.....	3,747.70
Central Christian Inst.....	2,459.00

Total for Schools.....	\$75,532.72
For Supervision.....	\$ 3,524.72
Produced by schools for support	36,569.81
For the Gospel Plea.....	1,841.06
For Evangelistic Work.....	12,773.22
For other Work.....	148,906.88

Total expended for the Negro.....279,157.85

J. B. Lehman.

