

"PREACHING"

by

D. C. Faris

While the building in which the congregation gathered for worship on the Sabbath was called the "meeting house", the services held there were not called "meeting", that name being given to the week-day services held from house to house in the homes of the people. The religious exercises in the "meeting-house" were named from their principal part, "preaching". That is a meaning of the noun which I am not able to find in the dictionary; but it was so used among us in my boyhood. My mother might have said to us, "It is time to get ready to go to "preaching"; and one of the boys might have asked her, "What shirt am I to wear to "preaching" today?" or after our return one might have said, "There were a good many at preaching." Whether all the people there used the word so, or not, I cannot tell; but such was the meaning the word conveyed to my mind. My recollection is confirmed by finding the word so employed in the earlier part of my diary. "Preaching" included all the public services on an ordinary Sabbath.

"Preaching" commenced at 11:00 A. M., and continued, with the exception of an "interval" of fifteen or twenty minutes, till probably near 3:00 P.M. The older people spoke of the closing time as "night", whatever the hour might be. I used to hear "Aunt Becky" (Wilson) speak of having seen such a one "at night", meaning, after the congregation had been dismissed. I suppose that formerly among the Covenanters in Scotland, in the winter days it was literally "night" when the services ended, and on that account this expression had grown to mean the end of the services, and still continued to be used by their descendants although having come to a southern country where it was not literally night.

A little before 11:00 o'clock people might be seen coming from different directions toward the house of worship - some on foot, some on horseback (occasionally two or three on one horse), and some in two horse wagons (heavy lumber-wagons without springs of any sort). A buggy (a one-seated, one-horse, four-wheeled vehicle, with springs, but without a cover), or a carriage (a two seated, covered, four-wheeled, spring vehicle, drawn by two horses) was scarcely used there in my earliest recollection. Mr. McCrum's people, who lived "in town" came in a carriage, I think. The people left their wagons under the trees, to the branches of which they hitched their horses. There the women and children got out and walked to the door of the meeting-house. They went in at once and sat in their pews. The men, and the older boys, lingered about the sides of the house until the hour of service arrived. The horses had no shelter, summer or winter, except that afforded by the tree under which they stood. It was long after my earliest recollections when "Uncle Charles" Ervin made an innovation, by putting up a shed for his horses. His hitching-place, where afterwards this shed was built, was away back between the road and the grave-yard. When it was about time for "preaching" Father and Mother and Aunt Becky and the boys in quiet procession, walked to the meeting-house. Father went at once into the pulpit, and Mother into the front pew of the west side of the middle block. She took with her Aunt Becky and the little children. James, David, John, Thomas and Samuel sat in the pew just behind. They always came into the house upon their arrival. Soon after, the men and boys, one by one, came down the aisles, each showing more or less of the awkwardness which he felt, while facing the people already seated.

When the hour had come the preacher would rise, and when he had said, "Let us pray", all the congregation would stand up until the close of the prayer.

In all the prayers in the meeting-house it was the custom for the people to rise and remain standing till the prayer was ended. Only a person holding a sleeping child, or a person who was not well, ever thought of sitting in time of prayer.

After the opening prayer, the minister announced a psalm, and read it in meter. It was taken in course -- a whole psalm if a short one, or a few verses of a long psalm. Having read the verses he made comments on them for perhaps half an hour. This was done in order that all might understand the psalm and so sing intelligently. (Mr. D. J. Shaw, at the close of "the explanation of the psalm" used to say, "With some such thoughts let us sing to the praise of God"). Thus the congregation heard the whole Book of Psalms explained. The minister having "explained the psalm" and having called on the people to sing it, "gave out" the first two lines (fourteen syllables). He then took his seat, and the clerk (pronounced clark) rose behind his desk on the low platform. In my younger days Uncle Tommy Smith held this position. He was tall and straight and a good singer; but probably without much education in music. When he had "raised the tune" (one of the old familiar ones) all the congregation joined with him in singing praise. As soon as they had sung the two lines which the pastor had read they waited until the clerk read the next two, which they then sang. Then the clerk read out the next two. So there was alternate "lining out" and singing to the end of the portion which had been explained. (Most of the people there could sing well. They had a good ear for music, and good voices, and were not afraid to "sing loud to God", but, like their leader, they had no training except what they got in the worship at home and in public). Singing the psalms without "lining" would, at that time, have been regarded by some as very disorderly practice. Yet, when a few years later, "continuous singing" was introduced, no one in that congregation, I think, took offence. Only the common meter version, I think, was used in my early days.

After the singing of the psalm that had been explained the minister again led the people in prayer. This was sometimes known as "the long prayer". If any one were dangerously sick in any of the families of the congregation it was customary to ask for the prayers of the people; and at the close of the first psalm the clerk would say " - - - - - desires the prayers of the congregation" (Uncle Tommy always pronounced it "cungregation"). When such a request was made, there would be special supplication offered for "the person who has desired an interest in our prayers", and in the prayers presented afterwards during the day the sick person would be remembered, more or less at large, according to the seriousness of the affliction. At the close of this prayer came what was called "the lecture". The minister would select some book of the Bible, Old Testament or New, and beginning at the first of the book would read a few verses and then expound them beginning the next Sabbath where he left off on this. Thus the people became familiar with a considerable part of the Scriptures. In this way, too, almost every duty could be urged upon the people, and every form of sin rebuked without the pastor needing to select a text for the special purpose; and a person guilty, by commission of sin, or neglect of duty, would not be so ready to think that the preacher had him specially in his mind. Following the lecture was another short prayer. Then a psalm was sung. Sometimes a collection was taken up. The deacons passing along the aisles received the contributions in their hats.

After the collection, the minister raising his hands, the people rose, while the apostolic benediction, as found in 2 Cor. 13:14, was pronounced. The women sat down again, but the men and boys, taking their hats, passed out of the house, to spend the "interval", and to eat the "piece" they had brought in their pockets. The women took somethings from their "reticules" (there called "redicules") for themselves and for the little children, and they ate it in their pews. One of the family would be sent sometimes to 'the spring' to bring water for the others. The men and boys generally went there for a drink before the "interval" ended.

"Our boys", however, as soon as the congregation had been dismissed walked up home (about an eighth of a mile) and ate our lunch. How I enjoyed the biscuits and buttermilk, and sometimes a slice of "middling", fried, which had been left in the cupboard; or pie-crust cakes with juicy cling-stone peaches (when they were in season), or apples, when peaches were not to be had! When the time was almost up we returned in single file, silently; and like the brethren of Joseph at his home in Egypt, "the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth", walked into the meeting-house and into our pews. When the people saw that "Mr. Faris' boys" had come, then they began to come in and take their places. Some, however, waited till they heard the psalm being read, and a few stragglers were sometimes out until the singing called their attention to the fact that the "interval" was ended.

We had been taught that worldly conversation was not to be engaged in on the Sabbath, and as we were not able to carry on religious conversation, we were silent. What the others talked about, during the "interval", I do not know; but those young people who came in late were most likely detained by conversation that was not altogether suitable for the Sabbath.

After the opening psalm had been sung there was a prayer. Then the minister "gave out" his "text". This was usually a single verse, or a part of a verse. The sermon after an introduction was divided into "heads", which were announced by number and in order; and, I think, that I remember that my father after having named the "heads" would say, "and then conclude". Each "head" was discussed in two or three "particulars" which were announced by number. The conclusion was also divided into several "particulars", in which the preacher wished to impress upon the minds of the people the principal things that the sermon contained. The sermon being ended another prayer was offered, and then the minister "gave out a psalm". After the psalm was sung announcements were made.

It was the law of our church, at least up to the Synod of 1861, that persons who intended to be married should be "published". This was attended to just before the final dismissal of the congregation. The publication was to be made "on three several sabbath-days, in the congregation", or if there were no public worship then they were to be published in the "societies" in which they worshipped. I think it was the minister who did this in the meeting house. By the help of my diary, I am able to give the exact date of one such announcement. On Sabbath, Feb. 24, 1861, there is this record, "Thomas N. Faris and Nancy Ervin were published for the first time." According to my recollection the form in which it would be read from the pulpit would be this: "There is a purpose of marriage between Thomas N. Faris and Nancy Ervin, both of this congregation. This is the first time of publication."

In most cases this "purpose" had already been discovered by the community; and sometimes also the time of the first publication was so nearly known that some of the curious, who were not attendants at our meeting-house, would be present that day to see how the two would act when their

names would be read out. It was a trying ordeal for the young people to have the attention of the whole congregation thus turned to them; and I think that there were some who absented themselves that they might not have to encounter the gaze of the people and their smiles, and jokes some might make. Only once, that I can remember, was the community taken altogether by surprise in a case of this kind. This was when Madden Ervin and Margaret Elizabeth Faris were published. Their homes were only about a mile apart, and Madden had been able to walk across the fields and do his "courting" without the help of outsiders.

After all the announcements had been made the minister dismissed the congregation with the benediction. The people then, more or less quietly, according to their dispositions, and the nature of the previous announcements, returned to their homes, and "preaching" was over for that day.

Written on Nov. 21, 1904

Members of the Bloomington Congregation at D. C. Faris' Birth

1843

As recorded by him; Names and Ages:

Uncle Tommy Smith (39), Aunt Jane (40), William (16), David (14), Calvin (11), Sarah Margaret (9), Jane (6), Renwick (?).  
 Uncle Charles Ervin (46), Aunt Jane (34), Maddon (11), Sarah (9), David (7), Nancy (2), Margaret (2 mo.).  
 Uncle Sam Curry (33), Aunt Sally (32), \*Smith (9), Renwick (7), Thomas (5), Margaret Jane (2), James (1).  
 Uncle David Faris (29), Aunt Elizabeth (29), James Melville (3), Margaret Sarah (2).  
 Uncle John Logan (25), Aunt Rebekah (27), Sarah (9 mo.).  
 Uncle Samuel Latimer (37), Aunt Margaret (24), Sarah-Isabella (5 mo.).  
 Uncle John Smith (22), Aunt Isabella (27).  
 Grandmother Smith (63), Grandfather Smith (dead 1½ yrs. Grandmother lived with Uncle John.)  
 James Faris (66), Martha Faris (68), Mary (Molly) Faris (61).

\* Smith Curry's (see page 9) son, John Stuart Curry was a noted artist who painted the murals on the walls of the Capitol Building at Topeka, Kansas.

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D. C. Faris mentioned in his article, "Preaching", that they sang only the common meter when they sang the Psalms. In his Book of Reminiscences he wrote, "I remember that some time later, either in our family worship, or elsewhere, a long meter was used, probably Old Hundred to the 100th Psalm, and Aunt Becky didn't sing; for she told Mother that it wasn't inspired. Mother tried to make her see that the common meter as well as the other meters were versions only of the inspired Psalm, and this one version is as much inspired as another if it gives the meaning of the original."

AUNT BECKY

From my earliest recollection Aunt Becky (my Grandfather Smith's sister Rebekah) was one of our family; and it never occurred to me then to inquire how she came to be one of us, any more than to do the same with regard to Father and Mother and the brothers I found there. I don't know now when she came there, nor why she lived with us rather than with some other of Grandfather's children.

Her husband (Hugh Wilson) and she had for a time, I think, lived in New York City, and had perhaps kept a little store there of some kind. In my childhood she had one of those old-fashioned trunks covered with raw hide with the hair on, in which were a great many packages of glass beads of various colors, which I suppose were a part of the unsold goods which she had saved.

I don't know when nor where nor how her husband died, nor when she came to Indiana; but, I think, that for a time she had lived either with Grandfather, or in a little house on his place near his home. He lived, I think, on the farm which, in my boyhood, Uncle John Smith owned. I have heard that for a time her mind was deranged: I don't know the cause nor how long she was in that condition. Her mind, I think, was ever afterwards somewhat weak; and after my father died, she was perhaps again somewhat deranged. In her old age she became very forgetful. I heard Mother say that the day after Isaiah and I started to the Natchez Mission she had inquired of her thirty times where we were.

Aunt Becky sat at the south side of the fireplace in "the room". Her chair was a split-bottomed one covered with a piece of blue (or blue and white checked) cloth. Mother sat next to her, and Father sat at the other end of the half circle about the fire-place, and the boys were arranged between. This was the way we sat at worship time. But most of the day Aunt Becky was in her place there, sewing, or knitting, or "pegging" (that is crocheting coarse thread with a big wooden needle called a "peg") making woolen overshoes, or cutting carpetings and sewing them together and rolling them together up in balls each color by itself to get them ready for weaving, or reading some good book. She was never idle. Sister Mary planted some flowers. One day when Aunt Becky had nothing else to do she took a spade, and shook up the ground till it was all loose and mellow. As a consequence the flowers wilted and almost died. Some one spoke to her about it and said that they wished she would let the flower bed alone. She replied, "It is better to work idle than to sit idle," but Mary hardly thought so on that occasion.

She used to wash the dishes. She must have had a strong stomach. I have often seen her after lifting off the dish the pieces of bacon which had been left from the meal, take a big spoon and dip up and eat the grease that was on the dish (for she didn't like to see any thing go to waste). It didn't seem to disagree with her stomach.

She was a very good woman. I don't remember to have ever seen her angry. She was very conscientious. She was also very patient and kind. I don't remember that she ever spoke an unkind word.

Some time before her death she grew totally blind, and Mother had to lead her. She still went to church. In going to church when crossing the porch, often when five or six steps from the stairs that led down into the yard, she would feel that she was at the top of the stairs; and could not be convinced in any other way than by stooping down and slowly feeling her way along with her fingertips. Mother had to wait patiently till Aunt Becky satisfied herself as to her whereabouts.

It was only a few days after Isaiah and I started to Natchez, Miss. that she died. I don't know whether, or not, her disease was paralysis. While we were still in Illinois at Brother David's house, a letter came from Thomas, was received on Sept. 24, telling of her sickness, and that she had "lost the use of herself." After we got to Natchez we heard from Thomas that she died on Sept. 27, 1864 and was buried on the 28th. Her body lies in the Covenanter graveyard near Bloomington, Indiana. She was 80 years, 2 months, 5 days old.

Recorded Feb. 9, 1909  
D. C. Faris

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CLEARING LAND

Before the first settlers had come to the neighborhood of Bloomington the country was all an unbroken forest of beech and sugar maple, with a liberal sprinkling of ash, black walnut, hickory, oak, poplar (or tulip tree) and a few other varieties. Oak, walnut, hickory, ash and poplar were valuable for fence rails and for making boards for roofs for houses and stables. Beech and maple rotted too soon to make good rails. A few of the smaller beeches were needed to build the cabins in which they lived, and the stables for their beasts.

The pioneers had to get rid of the forests; and the quickest and easiest way to clear land was to cut down and burn up on the ground the trees from as big a piece of land as he could clear, so that at once he might begin to raise crops of some kind. To cut and burn up green trees was hard and slow work. Each man, therefore, made what was called "a deadening". Taking his ax he chopped into a tree, all around, about half an inch deep, at about the height at which he would have chopped to cut it down. This stopped entirely the flow of sap and the tree died. It did not take many days to "deaden" several acres in this way. By clearing away the underbrush and old fallen logs and burning the leaves and trash it was possible at once to get use of the land. I remember to have heard Uncle Tommy tell that he had seen good corn growing on such land among the standing trees.

An excerpt.

. . D. C. Faris, Oct. 7, 1908

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HOGS - Raising and selling

When that part of the country was first settled only the land that had been cleared was fenced, and hogs and cattle fed in the woods, where ever they pleased. Each man "marked" his hogs, in some way. My father's mark, if I recollect aright, was "a crop out of the left ear and two slits in the right ear." The tip was cut off the right ear and then two slits about an inch long were cut towards the head. . . . At that time it cost little to keep hogs. They fed on roots of various kinds that grew in the woods, and thence, perhaps came the proverb, "Root, hog, or die." The whey, and skim-milk and so much of the buttermilk as was not needed for family use, went into the "slop bucket" with the dish-water, and were emptied into the hog trough. So each man's hogs learned to know their owner's trough, and when his high falsetto would be heard calling, "pe-goo-oo-oo-ee" the hogs would lift their heads and start running, shaking out a contented squeal as they ran in single file along their path towards home. . . . When all the droves had been weighed and turned into the field the buyer would have hundreds of hogs, and the farmers would go home each with his money in his pocket.

An excerpt.

. . D. C. Faris, Nov. 1, 1911