

Depression Years

It has been given to us in our life time to have lived thru several significant events of history: ie two world wars and the so-called great depression of the '30's. Of all our years there is probably no event that has left so indelible impression on our generation as "the Depression".

The ~~at~~ collapse of the stock market which was the initial event happened in the fall (October) of 1929. I had graduated from MSU in August. Not knowing what the next step in my life should be, I had come back to my parental home to live. I had taken a job at Simmons Co. a bedding and furniture manufacturer located in Kenosha at the time. Rachel was employed in the State bank in St. Paul.

The effects of the stock market crash were not altogether felt immediately. They came gradually as employment sagged, with many losing their means of lively hood. At Simmons Co. the layoffs came as orders ceased to come in. I was restless, knowing my turn would soon come. I decided to go back to school which my foreman at the factory encouraged me to do. It was in March of 1930 as I remember it that I enrolled

in Lewis Technical Institute, then located on West Madison Street in Chicago. The employment continued to increase. Herbert Hoover was President at the time. Then came the 1932 election and the country turned overwhelmingly to Franklin Roosevelt.

The story of the bank holiday which he ordered immediately upon his assuming the presidency, his leadership in initiating a new era of social concern, the efforts of government to bring relief thru public works projects and such ~~was~~ is a story well known to us all. A new era had come to our country.

^{Economic recovery}
But relief did not really come until the Second World War brought a period of unprecedented prosperity to the United States.

The effects of the Depression upon us was far reaching. My father had been working at what was then Nash Motors. He held his job until he retired in early '38 but there were many idle weeks and months when work was scarce. Automobiles did not sell too well. Mother & Dad felt the financial pinch of those days but

refused aid of any kind, a strong feeling of self reliance - perhaps mixed with a certain amount of pride - kept them ^{and my like-minded} from asking for or taking aid, tho there was aid being made available to those in need.

There were some attitudes formed in those days which were to influence ~~our~~ lives us for the rest of our lives.

One was our attitude toward money -

It is difficult to understand ~~the~~ what life is like when money is not available. The money we did have we cherished and sought to spend wisely. There was no money available for anything that was not a necessity - food - utilities - clothing. I think it became a great burden to my mother and father. Mother's life in particular was affected. She outlived my father by forty years. It was difficult for her to spend anything, particularly on herself. It was not covetousness. It seemed to be a fear of running out of resources ^{+ poor home board} of being left penniless and destitute. Her early childhood contributed to this attitude, but the depression stamped her nature in this particular for life.

For myself, those days left their imprint - I was in my twenties during those days. I never knew what it was to have a bit of extra cash on hand. I went to college during those days, working I was pastoring the Whipholt and Walker churches - and so many of the folk there were on government aid of some kind. How we all survived I do not know - But God supplied and we were never destitute. ~~Our~~ Our work in Whipholt had begun in 1930 when Alfred Bjornlin and I went to Whipholt and opened the work, using the house we rented as a meeting place. Two or three school houses were also available to us. Both here in the early '30s and later in Walker, we need for worship regularly - The time was difficult, I remember nothing of the hardships of those days - only the joy we experienced and expressed in singing and prayer and preaching. I have wondered from the topic of money. The depression years for me were lived out in northern Illinois. amongst our people who were so needy. We cherished what possessions we had and difficult to trust God and live by faith.

Wanted nothing. To this day I find it difficult to spend money on non-essentials.

It has been an evil influence in many ways, for I know the family suffered. It has been said that our economic life is the present robes of happy memories in the future. Many times I could have been more generous with my own loved ones. There is no justification for our tight-fisted way of living, except that we were conditioned to it in the Depression years. And added to that — our salaries in the ministry were ~~always~~ ^{quite} adequate, but never abundant.

Another influence of the Depression upon us was in the matter of attitude towards debt. It was something to be avoided. We were conditioned to live on our income and never go into debt. There were pre-credit card days so we were relieved of those temptations. It has been our practice thru life to live debt free. God has been able to help us do that.

For the upbuilding of our spiritual lives the depression years were a most beneficial boon to us. It was not difficult to trust God and live by faith.

It was the natural way for a Christian to live. It was in the early thirties that I took time to secure my college degree (Dec '36). There was no financial support to see me thru. I went to college believing it was God's will & should go and the needs were supplied — a room in the Y/YCA for two weeks a week, work in the Bowling Alley, my noon meal at a restaurant where I worked etc. God supplied. I have had great confidence in preaching of the benevolent Providence of God to the congregation we have served because of the provisions I received during those formative depression years.

It was in the late 50's that Rachel and I were married (Sept 14 '58). She had lived thru the depression and has her own story to tell of those days. But we can say truly that we have found the Biblical emphasis on a life lived by faith in God for every Christian, and the corollary that God will provide for His people, to be true. We have lived thru our years on these principles and we have found God faithful.

MB I
The ⁴² years between High School graduation
and marriage

What should we say of These years? They
were long - ¹³ ~~more~~ years in all. They were
depression years. They were years of trying to
find myself.

Following High School graduation I found
myself without a true aim in life, except
to be an exemplary Christian if I could
be.

They were years of world upheaval,
In Europe Adolph Hitler was rising to power -
and it seemed there was no power to
resist him. Germany prospered in the early
years of his ascendancy - from almost
economic ruin following the Treaty of Versailles
Germany was brought back to an economic
strength which permitted it to commence
W.W. II and continue it with early
successes.

It was when Hitler was at the
height of his power and popularity that
Rachel & I were married. To have an
authentic honeymoon there was only one
place to go - Niagara Falls. We remember

so well in driving thru Ohio that we stopped for a Moon lunch in Cleveland. What we ate we have no remembrance of. But the radio giving us the up-to-date report of things in Europe, filled the room with excitement. Hitler was delivering one of his speeches.

The years were rather uneventful. After a few months work at the Simmons Co. in Kenosha, I went up to northern Minnesota upon the invitation from Alfred Bjorkin to do some mission work. This was in the Spring of 1930. It was Sedi leading & I should go. I can still remember Mother asking me if I had any plans for my life. I had graduated from H.S. & U.B.F. but had no vision of what I should do with my life. Getting up into Minnesota and engaging in mission set me upon a path which eventually led to the ministry for me as my life's work.

Con. Leading meetings in homes and school houses (no church buildings open to us) Teaching Vacation Bible School classes, teaching S.A., playing my violin which we played his guitar — and visiting the people of the community — all this I

I found myself doing with both a joy
in the work and feeling an aptitude for
it. It seemed natural to stay on
through the winter. And then when A. B.
left the field to pastor a church in
Hooper, WA, I continued on.

In the fall of 1932 I began
studies at Coe College, graduating in
1936 — spending the winter months in
Cedar Rapids and the summers in Minnesota.
I don't know how I managed financially
in college, but needs were supplied.
I don't know that they were happy years.

But I do remember enjoying the studies.
I did not take any of the pre-seminary
courses I should have taken. Math, the
sciences, particularly physics, were of
claimed most of my affection. The
College was nominally a Presbyterian
school, the spiritual atmosphere of Coe
was quite otherwise than what one would
call spiritual. There were a few
committed Christian young people on
campus. We found each other and
share a warm friendship & fellowship.

A revival spirit prevailed
throughout the beginning of the war.

While we were still engaged in the
Whipsholt community, we were able to pitch
a Gospel tent in the city park in
Walker for a weeks meetings. I do not
remember the meetings as being particularly
successful. One nite the tent blew down
in a rain storm but we had it up
again for services the next nite, a few
people began to feel a oneness of spirit
in the Walker community and gradually
we were meeting regularly for Sunday
evening services and mid-week prayers.
We soon rented a hall in the old
Chase Hotel building (long ago demolished) for
meetings.

The venture prospered, we were all
common people. A car load or two of members
from the State Sanitarium (T.B.) joined the
group and contributed so graciously ~~to~~
of their enthusiasm and funds. Eventually
the church in Walker organized as The
Calvary Free Church of Walker. It still
continues as a healthy congregation, the
the church in Whipsholt has long since
ceased to exist.

A revival spirit prevailed in ~~our~~
Whipsholt in the beginning of the work, and

in better later on. The meetings were
tender and warm with the Spirit's
presence. A great longing for God
and holiness of life prevailed. A large
group of young people formed the large
portion of the church. Many of these
have followed thru on their Christian
commitments and quite a number
entered Christian service. It was God's
work. Both A A + I were most active
about church building and discipleship
training. I have longed many times for
the committed spirituality and the warm
fellowship of those revival days. We saw
God work in the lives of us all and it was
wonderful.