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### **A Study of the Contribution of Adolphe Stagg to the Cultural and Social Life of South Central Louisiana**

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A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF ADOLPHE STAGG  
TO THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE  
OF SOUTH CENTRAL LOUISIANA

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Ouachita Baptist University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education

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by  
Myron Hayden Stagg

August 1968

A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF ADOLPHE STAGG  
TO THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE  
OF SOUTH CENTRAL LOUISIANA

APPROVED:

  
Director of Graduate Studies

90704

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Adolphe Stagg (1834-1914) lived and worked in South Central Louisiana during the latter two thirds of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. During a forty year period, 1874-1914 he served as a minister<sup>1</sup>, private school teacher (1876)<sup>2</sup>, Tax Assessor (1877)<sup>3</sup>, and member of the Louisiana House of Representatives.<sup>4</sup> He served in these posts with distinction, influence, and honor. To adequately define his contributions to the social and cultural life of the area and to the protestant religious development of his time, the background of his life and the cultural life of South Central Louisiana in the mid-nineteenth century must be examined.

One evidence of the recognition of his contribution to Louisiana was the naming of a Baptist association in the French area of Louisiana the Adolphe Stagg Baptist Association. Successive Annuals of the Louisiana Baptist Convention made many references to his religious activities from 1884-1914. The Annual of the 1914 Convention contained

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<sup>1</sup>William L. Stagg, Sr., Adolphe Stagg Life and Work (Albuquerque: Baptist Convention Press, 1954), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Office of Secretary of State, Record of Commissions, State of Louisiana, Parish of St. Landry, 1877, p. 448.

<sup>4</sup>Official Journal of the First Regular Session of the Fourth General Assembly, Louisiana House of Representatives, 1892 (Baton Rouge: The Advocate, 1892), p. 4.

a memorial entitled "Elder Adolphe Stagg--First Missionary to the French of Louisiana".<sup>5</sup>

The official records of the Louisiana legislature of 1892 and 1894 have recorded his assignments on committees, his voting record, his proposed legislation, and his association with the "Old Guard",<sup>6</sup> composed of twenty-two members of the Louisiana House and Senate.<sup>7</sup> The tax Assessor's report of 1877, as recorded in the Report on Public Education for the State of Louisiana, and The Opelousas Courier from 1877 through 1880 reflected his service in that field.<sup>8</sup> The record of his oath of office and appointment indicated that his occupation was that of accountant.<sup>9</sup> His many activities and roles of leadership in these broad areas of influence were the result of the general acceptance and respect of his peers.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to attempt to identify and evaluate those activities and influences in the life of Adolphe Stagg which contributed directly and indirectly to the social, cultural and religious

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<sup>5</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1914, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Feature article in the Shreveport Times, March 13, 1939.

<sup>7</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit.; House of Representatives, Louisiana Legislature, Official Journal of the Fourth Legislature, 2nd Session, May 1894 (Baton Rouge: The Advocate, 1894).

<sup>8</sup>Parish of St. Landry, State of Louisiana, Report on Public Education, 1877 (Baton Rouge, 1877), p. 177.

<sup>9</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., unnumbered page preceding page 1 of index to bills.

developments in South Central Louisiana between 1870 and 1914. This study also will serve to substantiate the traditional oral tributes which have been accorded to Adolphe Stagg. Such a study will provide a valuable recorded recognition of those contributions which he has made, as evidenced by such oral tribute.

#### NEED FOR THE STUDY

The name Adolphe Stagg has been almost synonymous with Baptist French missions in South Louisiana for almost a century. Much oral tradition existed concerning his life. Some people at this writing still remembered him in his latter life, and reported on those recollections to the writer. Between 1940 and 1968 many had died who had discussed his life and work with the writer. In spite of all that has been reported orally concerning the man and his work, a complete, definitive record had not been made previously. In 1954, one of his sons prepared a brief biography which emphasized his religious contributions, but barely mentioned the contributions of other aspects of his life. This study was undertaken to meet the need for a complete, objective record of the life and contribution of Adolphe Stagg. Brief references to his work have been made by writers of Louisiana Baptist history; however, no complete work has been presented that has adequately discussed the subject.

#### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Baptist work in the French Catholic area of Louisiana was often



referred to as the French Mission work of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.<sup>10</sup> For over a century Baptist churches in this area were small and developed slower than in other areas of the state. The reason for this condition was the dominating influence of the Roman Catholic Church on those in the area of French ancestry. Adolphe Stagg was born of French Catholic Creole parents.<sup>11</sup> Dudley J. LeBlanc has defined Creole as follows:

CREOLES.--The name "Creole" (kre'-ole) originated in the French colonies, presumably the West Indies. It was the name given to the descendants of the French and Acadian descendants born there, to distinguish them from the other settlers of Louisiana. It was not intended to apply, nor was it ever accepted as applying to descendants of any other race of people. Some writers contend that the word was used to denote Spanish descendants. That is obviously erroneous, since the term "Creole" was in use many years before Spain assumed control of Louisiana. Other uninformed writers state that the word "Creole" is used to denote persons of mixed blood. This is absolutely false, as the word "mulatto" is used in English, and "mulatre" in French to denote persons with a mixture of white and negro blood.

In the latter part of the Eighteenth and during the Nineteenth centuries the Creoles of Louisiana were the "elite" and the most prominent of the day.<sup>12</sup>

Adolphe Stagg was married in the Roman Catholic Church. During the early years of his marriage, his older children were baptized in the

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<sup>10</sup>Anna Thurman Pate, The Incense Road (New Orleans: Bible Institute Press, 1939), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>W. E. Paxton, A History of the Baptists of Louisiana from the Earliest Times to the Present (St. Louis: C. R. Barns Publishing Company, 1888), p. 231.

<sup>12</sup>Dudley J. LeBlanc, The True Story of the Acadians (1932), p. 79.

Roman Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup> He spoke both French and English fluently. When he was about thirty-six years of age, he broke completely with the Catholic Church.<sup>14</sup> Because of his Catholic background, a Baptist leader in the Louisiana Baptist Convention referred to Adolphe Stagg as the "opening wedge" in French mission work in the Louisiana Baptist Convention.<sup>15</sup> At the time he became a Baptist, only eleven Baptist churches were in the area now included in St. Landry, Avoyelles, Acadia and Evangeline Parishes of South Central Louisiana.<sup>16</sup> Because of his identification with the majority of the native population, being of a leading family of the area, he was "a natural" for pioneer mission work in the developing South Central Louisiana area.<sup>17</sup> The ravages of the War between the States and the revulsion at the developments of state government during the reconstruction period served to form a backdrop for his call to public service in the Parish tax assessor's office and the State Legislature.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Baptism Book IX (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana, 1829-1862), pp. 117, 170.

<sup>14</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>15</sup>John Caylor, In Evangeline's Country (Atlanta, Georgia: Home Mission Board, S. B. C., 1954), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>17</sup>Caylor, loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup>John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago: The University Press, 1961), p. 3.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Certain delimitations have been necessary in order to concentrate with proper emphasis upon the subject of this thesis. These delimitations are as follows:

1. This study has been necessarily biographical in nature. It has applied to a man whose life was affected by conflicting forces of family loyalty and inner compulsion.<sup>19</sup> This man in some respects was ahead of his time.<sup>20</sup> A period of social change which demanded tremendous adjustments in culture, business and politics has been considered. This study was concerned with those changes only as they influenced Adolphe Stagg and as he contributed to some of the changes in specific ways.

2. Adolphe Stagg has been compared with his contemporaries, and in this sense, this study has been concerned with the groups and individuals with whom he was associated.

3. Only those periods of state government in which he was involved have been considered. This necessitated a cursory consideration of some actions antecedent to his service in the legislature, such as the Louisiana Lottery.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>21</sup>First Louisiana Legislature, First Session, Acts Passed by the General Assembly, State of Louisiana, Act 25.

4. French missions in South Louisiana have been considered in detail during the period of his lifetime. Later developments and current status have reflected his contributions but have not been given exhaustive treatment here.

5. The Civil War period was considered only as it directly related to the life and actions of Adolphe Stagg and his family. His campaigns and service have had to be inferred and assumed, due to the lack of definite data upon which to detail his wartime experience.

#### SOURCE MATERIAL

William L. Stagg, Jr., a grandson of Adolphe Stagg, and Myrtle Stagg Agaisse, a granddaughter, have made available numerous letters and other materials which were used by the late William L. Stagg, Sr., in preparation of his work concerning his father.<sup>22</sup> Other grandchildren who remembered him have recorded, especially for this study, their personal recollections of their grandfather.<sup>23</sup> Past experience, personal knowledge and memory of the area has been relied upon by the writer for some of the descriptive sections of this study. Photofax copies of official records from the Louisiana State Archives, the Office of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education of Louisiana have been obtained.

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<sup>22</sup>Stagg, op. cit., pp. 1-64.

<sup>23</sup>Correspondence: from Katherine S. Love; Correspondence: from A. M. Stagg; Correspondence: from L. E. Stagg. These persons are grandchildren of Adolphe Stagg.

Official records of baptism and marriage have been obtained from the St. Landry Roman Catholic Church of Opelousas, Louisiana. News clippings, family Bible records, and property title abstracts have been studied. Volumes on the War between the States, the French of Louisiana and the biography of Adolphe Stagg by William L. Stagg, Sr., have been examined. News accounts published in The Opelousas Courier on file in the Louisiana Room of the University of Southwest Louisiana library at Lafayette, Louisiana, and conveyance records in the St. Landry Court House at Opelousas, Louisiana, have been examined.

Records of the annual proceedings of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and the Louisiana Baptist Association for the period of his forty year ministry have been checked. Each source has been evaluated for authenticity and reliability, and the facts recorded accordingly.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study was organized under five chapter headings. The treatment given each chapter has been indicated by the outline contained in each chapter.

Chapter I. This chapter presented a brief preview of the total study. This included an introductory statement, the purpose of the study, a statement concerning the need for the study, a brief background statement, and the scope of the study with specified delimitations. The source materials were briefly described and their origin stated. Such a description, by no means complete, was given to acquaint

the reader with the type of material used, and the sources of the various materials.

Chapter II. This chapter presented a description of the geographical and cultural area in which Adolphe Stagg lived and worked. The coming of the Stagg family into the area was presented against the background of the times and the prevailing conditions which existed in the first half of the nineteenth century.

A biographical sketch of the early life of Adolphe Stagg to the time of his return from the Confederate Army was included. The influences of childhood and education were presented as they made their impression upon the young man. A description of his marriage and his young family was made a part of this section of the study, depicting the inner conflicts with which he dealt. Examination of the war experiences and their influences upon Adolphe Stagg, his young family, his brothers, his home state and his religious belief was also made.

Chapter III. This chapter examined the open break with the religion of his youth, its results in his family relationships, and his entry into the Baptist ministry. The impact of a native-born Frenchman as an evangelical missionary was considered as it changed the social customs and eventually the cultural pattern of the area. The missionary work, with all its attendant trials, was briefly presented. The declining years and the death of Adolphe Stagg were sketched. The influence of his life as evidenced by memorials was included in this section of the study.

Chapter IV. This chapter dealt with the call to state service. During this same period he continued his religious ministry. This section of the study concluded with an appraisal of the Louisiana State Legislature of 1892 and 1894, and the enactment of legislation prohibiting any type of lottery in the State of Louisiana.

Chapter V. This chapter was used as a summation and conclusion. The contributions were identified and evaluated. Adolphe Stagg's philosophy of government and missions was examined. Comparison with present day French mission work in this same area was made.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AREA DESCRIBED

Description of the area. South Central Louisiana is generally described as a triangular area formed with Alexandria at the apex with a line running from Alexandria through New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico on the east and a line running from Alexandria through Lake Charles to the Gulf on the west, and with the Gulf coastline forming the base. Here the majority of the people are French descendants, and predominantly Catholic in religion.

South Central Louisiana was the location of the activities of Adolphe Stagg. The upper section was a part of the Opelousas and Attakapas District of Louisiana, referred to in the official record of livestock brands from 1739 to 1888.<sup>1</sup> In this region there was an abundance of bayous. Several of these were navigable during the lifetime of Adolphe Stagg. Two of these bayous were probably the ancient riverbeds of two of the main rivers flowing through the state today. Bayou Boeuf, which originated near Alexandria, Louisiana, and followed a very crooked course southward and merged with another stream, Bayou Cocodrie, near Washington, to form Bayou Courtableau has been reported by soil conservationist Robert D. Stark of Alexandria, Louisiana, to have been the old river bed of Red River.

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<sup>1</sup>Brand Book for Opelousas and Attakapas Districts (Louisiana 1739-1888).



Bayou Teche, made famous by Longfellow in his work "Evangeline", which originated in the present town of Port Barre, Louisiana, and followed a similar crooked course southward to near the Gulf of Mexico in St. Mary Parish, just north of Morgan City, Louisiana, was said to have been the old river bed of the Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> Study of maps of the area have shown that Bayou Teche began in a bend of Bayou Courtableau; therefore, these two bayous were connected by this Bayou Courtableau which flowed into the Atchafalaya River below Krotz Springs, Louisiana.<sup>3</sup> Bayou Courtableau was navigated by large river boats until the early twentieth century. Washington, Louisiana, the center of much of Adolphe Stagg's activities, was the main port of call on this bayou.<sup>4</sup> Bayou Teche has been navigated by barge traffic from its southern termination to within about twenty miles of its origin. This navigation has continued to the present.

Along these bayous the overflow waters have deposited thick layers of very fertile soil. The elevation of the land near the stream is greatest, from thirty to forty feet above sea level, and slopes back into the wooded areas and swamplands away from the main stream. The average fall of the elevation from the bayou to the lowest area in the wooded or swamp area is about seven and one half feet. Much of this

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<sup>2</sup>Statement by Robert D. Stark, United States Soil Conservation Service employee, personal interview, September 17, 1966.

<sup>3</sup>Corps of Engineers, United States Army, Opelousas Quadrangle Louisiana (1956).

<sup>4</sup>Statement by Hayden Stagg, a grandson.

land was subject to flooding before the development of flood control structures, yet this area contains some of the most fertile land in the state.<sup>5</sup>

As the thrifty Creole families moved northward and westward into the Louisiana territory from the New Orleans port of entry during the latter eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, they settled along these bayous, cleared the higher lands and developed the plantations on which they raised sugar cane, cotton, rice, corn, and other agricultural crops.<sup>6</sup> The wooded lowlands offered adequate pasturage and shelter for range cattle and hogs when it was not flooded. The flood period was usually in the spring of the year. An abundance of hardwood was found in the forests and cypress in the swamps, providing lumber for building and wood for fuel. The higher prairie lands just a few miles to the west of these bayous offered open grasslands for cattle and horses, and virgin pine forests were only ten or twelve miles distant from Bayou Boeuf.<sup>7</sup>

This area offered the industrious population fertile lands, abundant open range for livestock, abundant lumber for construction, and an opportunity for expansion. Washington, Louisiana, located only six miles from Opelousas, the parish seat and main trading town of the district, developed as a main port near the head of Bayou Courtableau.

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<sup>5</sup>Corps of Engineers, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>LeBlanc, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>7</sup>Corps of Engineers, loc. cit.

The settlers brought their French language, culture and religion into this area. Examination of legal transactions recorded in the St. Landry Parish Clerk of Court office during the period prior to the War between the States has revealed that such transactions were recorded in the French language, the legally acceptable language in the parish at that time.<sup>8</sup> Not only was the French language the legal language, but it was the spoken language of the majority of the residents of the area. This condition continued through most of the first half of the twentieth century.

St. Landry Parish was reported to be the second most populous parish in the state in 1878.<sup>9</sup> This would indicate that, during the early years of the nineteenth century, the area offered opportunity to enterprising farmers, merchants, and others. Most of these were of French descent and Roman Catholic religion. The St. Landry Catholic Church at Opelousas was the center for religious rites such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. At the appropriate seasons the church sponsored its fairs and other special emphases. Other religious groups were a small minority throughout this area. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church has been evidenced in names used, holidays observed, and activities practiced in the official political life of the community.

In a community where French was the most popular spoken language

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<sup>8</sup>Clerk of Court, Parish of St. Landry, Opelousas, Louisiana, Conveyance Record Book R, April 1858 to August 1859, p. 246.

<sup>9</sup>"Letter to the Editor," The Opelousas Courier, January 5, 1876.

and Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion, an enterprising young merchantman from the city of New Orleans, the son of a prominent French woman of that city, found ready acceptance. Such a young man was John Philippe Gabriel Stagg, the eldest son, and second child of Josephine Fuselier and Henry Stagg of New Orleans, who came to the Opelousas region in the early or middle years of the decade of 1820.<sup>10</sup> He was the father of Adolphe Stagg.<sup>11</sup>

Having come from a French Catholic background, Philippe Stagg immediately assumed his place in the life of the community. Being an industrious individual, he established a mercantile business in the Washington-Bayou Boeuf area of the parish.<sup>12</sup> In this business he met a local girl, Josephine Guillory, and later married her.<sup>13</sup>

The growing agricultural region utilized slaves on the plantations and the planters and prominent families in other businesses owned as many slaves as they could use to advantage.<sup>14</sup> Slavery, agriculture, business, French Catholic culture have all blended together to constitute the background and society into which Adolphe Stagg was born. French was the spoken language, Roman Catholicism the dominant religion, slavery the

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<sup>10</sup>Marriage Record Book I (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana, 1826), p. 459.

<sup>11</sup>Baptism Book V (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana, 1836), p. 330.

<sup>12</sup>Correspondence: from E. B. Dubuisson, Opelousas, Louisiana.

<sup>13</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

general practice, agriculture the basis of livelihood. These factors were an influence upon Adolphe Stagg.

#### HIS EARLY LIFE

Ancestral data. In Adolphe Stagg the influences of England, France, Holland, and America were combined. His ancestral lineage has been traced back to Thomas Stagg, born in England about 1620. Thomas Stagg emigrated to the British West Indies, Island of Barbados, and then from there to what is now the state of New Jersey. On March 27, 1674, his son, John, was baptized in a Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey.<sup>15</sup> The name "Stagg" and the date "1696" has been inscribed on a stone which has been preserved in an old church in Hackensack, New Jersey.<sup>16</sup>

John Stagg, referred to above, married Cornelia Verwey, his second wife, on November 11, 1698. To this union Johnnis was born in 1699. Johnnis married Hendrehtie Hugsman on August 11, 1722. John, born in 1732, was their son. John married Annek Stoutenburg in a Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam, now New York City. The merging of the English and the Dutch in the Stagg family has been shown by the Dutch names, and the religious affiliation indicated by the marriages.

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<sup>15</sup>Correspondence: from E. C. Randolph, Pier 3, New York, to Dr. J. J. Stagg, Eunice, Louisiana (in possession of Mrs. Myrtle Agaisse, Beaumont, Texas).

<sup>16</sup>Correspondence: from H. D. Wilson, Ruston, Louisiana, to William L. Stagg, Sr., Pineville, Louisiana (in possession of William L. Stagg, Jr., Pineville, Louisiana).

Henry Stagg, son of John and Annek Stoutenburg,<sup>17</sup> and grandfather of Adolphe Stagg moved from New York to New Orleans, Louisiana, in pursuit of business interests as a commission broker. Taking advantage of the good relations between the United States and France, shortly after the close of the Revolutionary War, Henry was active in his business.<sup>18</sup> Henry met Josephine Fuselier, the daughter of an officer in the French Army. They were married in St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans sometime prior to 1800, probably in the mid-decade of 1790.<sup>19</sup> The first indication of the merging of the French influence with the Dutch and English culture in the family has been indicated here. Also, the bringing together of the Dutch Reformed branch of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism has been seen.

John Philippe Gabriel was born September 14, 1806, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Henry then returned to New York.<sup>20</sup> Three other children were born in New York, then he returned to New Orleans. This assumption was based upon a listing of the children of Henry and Josephine Fuselier Stagg, which indicated that three of the eight children were born in New York.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Personal papers of William L. Stagg, Sr.: Ancestral lineage chart prepared by William L. Stagg, Sr. (in possession of William L. Stagg, Jr., Pineville, Louisiana), 1951.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ruth R. Fontenot, personal interview.

<sup>20</sup>Personal papers: Listing of family groups supplied by J. J. Stagg, Eunice, Louisiana (in possession of Myrtle Agaisse).

<sup>21</sup>Correspondence: from E. B. Dubuisson, Opelousas, Louisiana, to William L. Stagg, Sr., Pineville, Louisiana.

With a desire to move from the city of New Orleans, Philippe turned his attention to the Opelousas district of Louisiana. Here he found a developing area, offering opportunity for trade in the agricultural and livestock lines.<sup>22</sup>

One of the prominent families of the Opelousas area was the Guillory family.<sup>23</sup> Philippe, as John Philippe Gabriel was called, met and married Josephine Guillory on April 11, 1826, in the St. Landry Roman Catholic Church in Opelousas.<sup>24</sup> This was the second generation of the Stagg family that married into a French Catholic family.

The men of the Stagg family, who married Catholic women in the Roman Catholic Church, were not very devout practicing Catholics, even though each of the women seemed to have been very devout and faithful to the Church. Perhaps the men were influenced more by their fathers than their mothers in this respect.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, each of the men agreed to marriage in the Roman Catholic Church and permitted their children to be baptized as infants by the Church.<sup>26</sup>

His immediate family. Philippe Stagg was twenty years of age, and Josephine Guillory was fifteen years of age at the time of their

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<sup>22</sup>Supra, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>Fontenot, loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Marriage Book I, loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>26</sup>Baptism Records, Books V, VII, IX, 1836-1860 (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana).

marriage. They made their home and the center of his business operations in a rural area near the port town of Washington, Louisiana, located on Bayou Courtableau.<sup>27</sup> To this couple sixteen children were born, four died as children, and one was killed in the Battle of Gaines Mill, Georgia, on June 27, 1862.<sup>28</sup> Adolphe was the fourth child and second son of this family.<sup>29</sup> He stated in an application for Confederate pension that he was born on Bayou Boeuf in St. Landry Parish.<sup>30</sup> William L. Stagg, Sr., has stated, "He was born at Grand Prairie, Louisiana."<sup>31</sup> Each of the above statements indicated that Philippe Stagg lived some distance from town at the time of the birth of Adolphe on December 17, 1834.<sup>32</sup>

His education and religion. Living in a rural area, with transportation dependent upon horse or horsedrawn conveyance or water transportation, Adolphe grew up learning the rudiments of agriculture and the mercantile business from his father. His early education was accomplished through private tutors in keeping with the customs of that day. Much of his education resulted from work in his father's business and on the farm. Anecdotes related by his grandson have indicated that Philippe owned a number of slaves. At an early age Adolphe became responsible for directing

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<sup>27</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>28</sup>Andrew B. Booth, Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands, Vol. III (New Orleans, Louisiana, 1920), p. 676.

<sup>29</sup>Baptism Book V, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>30</sup>Soldiers Application for Pension (State of Louisiana), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Stagg, loc. cit.      <sup>32</sup>Baptism Book V, loc. cit.



the activities of some of these slaves. Impressions formed in these early years influenced his attitudes toward the slavery question and Negroes throughout his life.<sup>33</sup>

During the early years, his religious training was the responsibility of his mother. Being a devout Roman Catholic, she was careful to see that each of her children was taught the Roman Catholic catechism, and partook of his first communion by the time he was ten or twelve years of age. The religious devotion practiced by several members of the family has indicated that all were included in this religious training without exception.

At some time during his teen years, Adolphe learned of a private boarding school located at Bayou Chicot, Louisiana, some twenty miles from his home.<sup>34</sup> He persuaded his father to permit him and his younger brother, Etienne, to attend this school. Thomas Rand, a native of Springfield, Massachusetts, and a graduate of an Academy at Springfield, and of Hamilton Theological Seminary, was the Master of this school. He was an ordained Baptist minister.<sup>35</sup> In this school Adolphe and Etienne were exposed to the Baptist approach to the Bible as they were taught the basic courses in the Academy program of study. The influence of this school and of Thomas Rand has been reflected in the fact that in later life only Adolphe and Etienne, of such a large family, renounced

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<sup>33</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>35</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 495.

the Roman Catholic Church.

His early employment and family life. After attendance at this private school, Adolphe became employed in the mercantile business.<sup>36</sup> The records relating to his public service in later years listed his occupation as accountant.<sup>37</sup> It has been assumed that he was responsible for the accounting records of his business. His older brother, Louis, was in business in Washington in 1855. Adolphe was employed in his brother's business.<sup>38</sup>

While working in Washington, Adolphe met and married Ultima Carentin on October 27, 1856. This marriage was solemnized in the St. Landry Roman Catholic Church at Opelousas, Louisiana. Rev. Gilbert Raymond, pastor, officiated and witnesses were Philippe Stagg, E. Dubuisson and Octave Fontenot.<sup>39</sup> The family of Ultima Carentin had moved to St. Landry Parish in 1838, according to a statement made by Cora Pitre, a grandchild of Ultima's first cousin. The headstone on the grave of Ultima indicated that she was born April 11, 1842. If this date has been correctly stated, she was born in St. Landry Parish, near Whiteville, Louisiana, four years after her family arrived. A study of

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<sup>36</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>37</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., unnumbered page preceding index.

<sup>38</sup>Stagg, loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup>Record of Marriage, Vol. C (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana), p. 82.

several marriage records has indicated that the custom was for girls to marry at a very early age. Adolphe Stagg was twenty-one years of age, and Ultima was only fourteen at the time of their marriage. Of the fourteen children born to this union, only five lived to adulthood. Six of them, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Bessie, Emilie and Abner, died as infants. Cora, the firstborn, lived to be seven. Isaac, the third child, died at age two. Benjamin, the fifth child, lived to be ten. The remaining five, Robert, Celima, William, Alice and John, lived to be adults and reared families of their own.<sup>40</sup> William, the last survivor, died in June 1962 at the age of ninety-five.<sup>41</sup>

Adolphe Stagg engaged in farming activities and accounting during the early years of his marriage. He engaged in a farming project in partnership with Louis, his eldest brother, prior to his military service.<sup>42</sup> This venture began prior to 1858. A transaction was recorded in the conveyance records of St. Landry Parish, dated December 15, 1858, in which Adolphe conveyed to Philippe certain properties.<sup>43</sup> Adolphe's mother, Josephine, died in 1855.<sup>44</sup> He conveyed his interest in his

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<sup>40</sup>Personal papers of William L. Stagg, Sr.: Record of children of Adolphe Stagg compiled by William L. Stagg, Sr.

<sup>41</sup>William L. Stagg, Jr., personal interview.

<sup>42</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>43</sup>Clerk of Court, St. Landry Parish, Opelousas, Louisiana, loc. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Funeral Book II (St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana), p. 69.

mother's estate to his father in order that he and his brother might purchase the property for their farming venture. Adolphe moved to the farm located on Bayou Boeuf, north of Washington, Louisiana, with his young family, and was engaged in farming activities when he was called to arms in 1862. The Confederate cause in Louisiana claimed his allegiance.<sup>45</sup>

The forces of religion, paternal attitude, educational training and family responsibilities were at work in this young man during the first twenty-eight years of his life.

#### THE WAR YEARS

The military experience and its influence upon Adolphe Stagg has been considered in this section. The campaign in which he was engaged has been assumed. They were based upon records indicating the activities of his unit and officers as reflected in various sources. In reply to a request for verification of service for a pension, the Adjutant General of the United States War Department stated,

The name Adolphe Stagg has not been found on the rolls, on file in this office, of Company A, 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, Confederate States Army. But the Union Prisoner of War records show A. Stagg, private, Company A, 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, Confederate States Army, surrendered at New Orleans, Louisiana, May 26, 1865, and paroled at Washington, Louisiana, June 16, 1865.<sup>46</sup>

According to information on the application for pension, dated October 5,

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<sup>45</sup>Stagg, loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Correspondence: The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, D. C., to Louisiana Board of Pension Commissioners, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, October 30, 1912.

1912, Adolphe Stagg stated that he entered the Confederate States Army in March 1862, that he was in Company A, 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, Colonel W. G. Vincent, Commander, General Taylor's Command.<sup>47</sup> Tracing the activities of these officers gave indications as to Adolphe Stagg's activities.

Booth has stated in his work on roles of Louisiana Confederate forces, that, upon capture of Confederate troops, many times all records were burned or destroyed, therefore much of the happenings have been pieced together from scattered information.<sup>48</sup> The purpose of this writer was to take the information available and develop a composite appraisal of these war years in the life of Adolphe Stagg.

The call to arms. As the war between the states developed and Louisiana seceded from the Union, the call was made for southerners to defend their culture and rights. Mobilization of forces for battle within each of the Confederate States followed. Induction camps sprang up throughout the country. The Stagg family of St. Landry Parish, being leaders in their community, heeded the call to arms.

Adolphe and five of his brothers answered the call. They enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861 and 1862. Benjamin, the youngest, enlisted on June 4, 1861; Louis and Etienne on September 29, 1861, all at

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<sup>47</sup>Soldiers Application for Pension, op. cit., p. 3-9.

<sup>48</sup>Booth, loc. cit.

Camp Moore, Louisiana, located in Tangipahoa Parish.<sup>49</sup> Adolphe<sup>50</sup> and Paul enlisted at a camp on Bayou Teche in March 1862.<sup>51</sup> Phillip enlisted at Opelousas on September 1, 1862. This occurred after word of the death of Benjamin at Gaines Mill, Georgia, on June 27<sup>52</sup> had been received by the family.

Adolphe did not leave a record of his wartime experiences.<sup>53</sup> Company A, 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, was listed by Booth as an independent company.<sup>54</sup> Possibly many of the assignments were escort and courier duty. This was indicated by the fact that at the time of the surrender Adolphe was on the courier line between Washington and Whiteville, Louisiana.<sup>55</sup> He was sent with Taylor's Brigade on his campaigns. In Volume II of Battle Leaders of the Civil War an account has been given of General Taylor's Louisianians being involved in the battle of Port Republic on June 9, 1892.<sup>56</sup> William L. Stagg, Sr., stated that his

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<sup>49</sup>Booth, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup>Soldiers Application for Pension, op. cit., q. 4.

<sup>51</sup>Booth, loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>54</sup>Booth, loc. cit.

<sup>55</sup>Soldiers Application, op. cit., q. 6.

<sup>56</sup>John D. Imboden, "Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), Vol. II, pp. 292-296.

father told him that he was engaged in campaigns in several states.<sup>57</sup>

The impact of military service. Adolphe Stagg, a man from the French Catholic area of South Central Louisiana, served in an area which was entirely different in culture and religion. He served in the company of men, many of whom were of the protestant Christian persuasion. He heard his commanding officers referring to God and His directions and blessings.<sup>58</sup> He saw the Chaplains as they ministered to the troops, the wounded and the dying. Such impressions caused him to recall his school experience under Thomas Rand. Seeing men maimed and dying made a tremendous impression upon the soldier. His thoughts of home and family, his love for his way of life, his questionings concerning the religion of his wife and mother confronted him in tumultuous fashion.<sup>59</sup>

The battles of the war continued. He moved from the Shenandoah Valley campaigns to other areas of the eastern states. From there General Taylor's Command moved to Nashville, Tennessee, and then to Louisiana in 1865. Most of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry Regiment, a part of Taylor's Command, was reported captured on March 21 at Henderson's Hill, Louisiana.<sup>60</sup> Either Adolphe Stagg evaded capture with his unit, or his company was away

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<sup>57</sup>Stagg, loc. cit.

<sup>58</sup>Imboden, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>59</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>60</sup>Richard B. Irwin, "The Red River Campaign," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: Thomas Youseloff, 1956), Vol. IV, p. 351.

on special duty at the time. He stated in his application for pension that he was never wounded. As the war drew to a close, Adolphe was found on courier duty between the port town of Washington, Louisiana, and his home of Whiteville.<sup>61</sup> Another courier served on the line from Whiteville to Confederate forces located in the area south of Alexandria. Evidence has indicated that his unit was surrendered simultaneously with the other forces in Louisiana at the close of the war. The Prisoner of War record has reflected that the unit was surrendered, processed and paroled by June 15, 1865. This was the date that was indicated for his parole.<sup>62</sup>

After spending three years and three months in military service and being exposed to other cultures and religious emphasis, Adolphe returned home to find that the ravages of war had not spared his home and community.<sup>63</sup> A tremendous adjustment was necessary. In the process of this adjustment, Adolphe found and embraced Masonry<sup>64</sup> and later became a Baptist minister.<sup>65</sup> The effects of his earlier schooling under a Baptist minister, the revival efforts during the Civil War and the associations he had made in the army produced the man identified by a

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<sup>61</sup>Soldiers Application for Pension, loc. cit.

<sup>62</sup>Booth, Vol. III, loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup>Stagg, loc. cit.

<sup>64</sup>The Daily World (Opelousas, Louisiana), October 1, 1967.

<sup>65</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 29.



leading Baptist minister in the State of Louisiana as the "opening wedge"<sup>66</sup> for Baptists in French South Louisiana.

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<sup>66</sup>Mary Lou Jenkins, Around the World in Louisiana (New Orleans: Bible Institute Press, 1937), p. 48.

## CHAPTER III

### YEARS OF RELIGIOUS SERVICE

This chapter was devoted to the change in religious outlook and a ministry which lasted forty years. The effects of his wartime experiences played a tremendous role in the making of decisions of far reaching import in the life of Adolphe Stagg. These and other factors leading to his break with Roman Catholicism and his entry into the Baptist ministry have been considered. His service to the Louisiana Baptist Association<sup>1</sup> and the Louisiana Baptist Convention<sup>2</sup> have been traced in this section of the study.

The break with the religion of his youth. Upon his return from military service in a lost cause, Adolphe Stagg found his farm run down, his labor force depleted, his community dejected because of the surrender to Union forces.<sup>3</sup> He immediately set about to rebuild and restore his farming operation. The changes of war had terminated the partnership with his brother, so he entered partnership with a friend. According to his son, this was a disastrous undertaking.<sup>4</sup>

Confronted with failure in this farming venture, remembering

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<sup>1</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>3</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

those experiences of war and recalling his school experiences, Adolphe wrestled with problems of mind and spirit. On February 15, 1867, two years after his return from military service, he became a charter member of "The Orphan's Friend Lodge, No. 185, of the Order of Free and Accepted Masons" located at Big Cane, Louisiana, in north St. Landry Parish.<sup>5</sup> This constituted a very definite departure from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Adolphe had acquired his father's disinterest in the affairs of his church and was seeking a more satisfying relationship through the program offered by Masonic affiliation.

This venture did not resolve the inner conflicts. Adolphe Stagg was seeking a more satisfying answer to his inner questionings. One Sunday he and a friend were returning from hunting wild hogs in the swampland. They had found nothing. The friend thought that Adolphe was just moody because of the failure of the hunt. Adolphe was quoted as saying, "Hanks, this is the end of my Sunday hunting. Just to think that this woods is full of hogs, and after all this riding, we have not even found the sign of any. I am through." The friend asked, "What in the world has come over you?" Adolphe replied, "I am through." This experience pointed to the inner conflicts which were finally being resolved openly. Adolphe and his wife, Ultima, after discussing the matter, decided to seek the answer to these conflicts by searching the Bible.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Feature article in The Daily World (Opelousas, Louisiana), October 1, 1967.

<sup>6</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 25.

Devout Roman Catholics did not usually seek answers in the Bible apart from the interpretation of the Church. In this case, Adolphe, a Catholic in name only, and Ultima, his devout Catholic wife, agreed to search the Scriptures in their own behalf, independent of the official interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church. This searching resulted in the family seeking answers wherever they might be found.<sup>7</sup>

Mt. Olivet, a small Baptist Church, was located in the community of Whiteville, where Adolphe lived.<sup>8</sup> After much study, family discussion, prayer and attendance in services of this Baptist Church, Adolphe and Ultima Stagg made the break. Renouncing their Roman Catholic Church affiliation, they asked for baptism into the fellowship of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Whiteville, Louisiana. Because he was a prominent citizen of the community, many Catholic friends and relatives packed the area to see him and his wife baptized, despite strict warnings from the Catholic priest. When he was ordained as a Baptist minister in April 1872, the building and yard of Mt. Olivet Church was filled to capacity for this unique experience in the community.<sup>9</sup>

The cost in family relations. People living in the twentieth century find it difficult to imagine the conditions which existed in South Louisiana in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Roman

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<sup>7</sup>Statement of Hayden Stagg, a grandson.

<sup>8</sup>Official Minutes of Proceedings (Louisiana Baptist Association), 1870.

<sup>9</sup>Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

Catholic Church dominated every area of the affairs of life. Superstitions resulted from the dogmas proclaimed and were passed down by word of mouth. The teaching that salvation was impossible outside the Roman Catholic Church prevailed. Non-Catholic Evangelical Christian churches were considered heretical and of the devil. The people were taught that a child who left the religion of his parents was to be ostracized by his family.<sup>10</sup>

Against such a background, Adolphe and Ultima displayed the courage to leave the church of their parents. The expected results were experienced. Both families were outraged. Their children were ridiculed by children of other family members.<sup>11</sup> The stalwart perseverance displayed under such circumstances indicated the depth of conviction held by Adolphe and his wife. They had resolved the inner conflicts and had found the satisfactions which they had sought.

At the time of his complete break with the Roman Catholic Church, Adolphe was a man thirty-six years of age. His wife was twenty-eight. Both were aware of the cost of their decision, yet they felt that they had found the answer. Life was to bring many trials for them. They heroically forsook the religion of their youth and ventured forth in one which was new to each of them, yet one which continued to challenge them to the time of their death after the turn of the century.

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<sup>10</sup>This is still prevalent in some communities of South Louisiana. This writer is acquainted with several who have experienced this ostracization.

<sup>11</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 27.

The ministry of Adolphe Stagg. Many Baptist leaders through the century since Adolphe Stagg became a Baptist minister have had much praise and complimentary comment about his work with his native people. These statements have been explored and evaluated.

Adolphe began his ministry at the same time that he became a Baptist, being ordained two years later.<sup>12</sup> Paxton in his History of Louisiana Baptists stated that in September 1871, Mt. Olivet Church, the host of the Louisiana Baptist Association of that year, and the church of which Adolphe Stagg was a member, did not have a pastor. In 1872 he reported that Adolphe Stagg was added to the list of ordained ministers of Louisiana Baptist (area) Association.<sup>13</sup> He began his pastoral work where he lived. The minutes of the 1872 Louisiana Baptist Association meeting has been quoted by Paxton, ". . . ; and Adolphe Stagg, an intelligent Creole, recently ordained, who has done a noble work among the Creoles. . ." <sup>14</sup> With energetic zeal Adolphe Stagg sought to lead his fellow citizens to the same inner satisfactions and assurances which he himself had found. His ministry was characterized by earnestness of purpose and fearlessness in the face of strong opposition.<sup>15</sup> In the minutes of the Louisiana Baptist Association for 1872 Adolphe Stagg was

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<sup>12</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>15</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 33.

listed as half-time pastor of Mt. Olivet Church, Whiteville, Louisiana. This church was reported as petitioning the Association for financial assistance for the pastor in order that he might devote half his time to missionary work among the French of the area.<sup>16</sup> In this request, which was forwarded to the Southern Baptist Domestic Board of Missions, Thomas Muse, Minister at Evergreen, Louisiana, stated,

In Brother Stagg, for whom Mt. Olivet asks help, we have an opening wedge. A Creole himself, more fluent in the French than in the English language, of high repute and extensive influence among his own people, it would be hard to find one better fitted to the work. Never was the time more propitious for immediate and zealous labor. Surely the hand of God is moving in His Own cause.<sup>17</sup>

During the years that followed, Adolphe Stagg was mentioned as messenger to the Association meetings and annual State Conventions, as pastor and as missionary, as a committee member and a participant in various discussions of interest as well as Moderator of the Association for a number of years. He was very vocal in discussion of causes in which he believed. In referring to his education, his son stated,

While he did not possess a college education, he did have a familiar acquaintance with the rules of composition in both the English and the French languages, and was an industrious student of history and the teachings of great men . . . . By careful study he acquired a practical, if not scientific, knowledge of theology . . . . He was eminently practical in his views of religious truth and by his peers, considered sound in doctrine . . . .<sup>18</sup> He was eloquent only in simplicity and earnestness . . . .

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<sup>16</sup>Official Minutes of Proceedings (Louisiana Baptist Association), 1872.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 31.

This forthright, influential man traversed the territory around Opelousas, Louisiana, employed by Baptists. Often he did not receive the promised remuneration for his services because the Baptist Association and the State Convention did not have sufficient funds with which to pay his salary.<sup>19</sup>

Lena M. Walker recalled that Adolphe was known as the "fireside Apostle" in some circles. This designation resulted from the fact that he conducted services on the porch in mild or hot weather and in the room where the fireplace was located in the winter time.<sup>20</sup> This was a distinct departure from the social customs of his day. The community dinner or dance was common, but a religious service away from a church, or on days that were not special holy days of obligation, was an innovation of non-Catholics.

The challenge to search the Scriptures for themselves was proclaimed in personal interviews, in home meetings and in church gatherings.<sup>21</sup> In simplicity and earnestness Adolphe Stagg sought to lead his fellow countrymen to his persuasion regarding religious matters, yet he insisted that the decision must be based upon personal desire and commitment, not merely on ritual.

The success of his labors has been indicated in the references

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<sup>19</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1893.

<sup>20</sup>Lena M. Walker (1894-1968), interviewed by Myron Stagg (Opelousas, Louisiana), November 13, 1967.

<sup>21</sup>Caylor, op. cit., p. 21.



made in minutes of the Louisiana Baptist Convention between 1884 and 1897, and in the records of the Louisiana Baptist Association for the years, 1870 to 1914.

As a pastor Adolphe sought to minister to the needs of his congregation and enlarge its membership. As missionary he sought to win converts in new areas and to organize new congregations. As colporteur he distributed tracts, Bibles, and Scripture portions printed in the French language.<sup>22</sup> As Association Moderator he tried to lead the group of churches to greater mission consciousness.<sup>23</sup> As a member of various committees, he was energetic and very vocal in defense of the committee recommendations. These conclusions have been drawn from a study of the minutes of the annual meetings of the Louisiana Baptist Convention for the period of 1884-1897.

In the record for 1886, the report on French missions stated,

January 1, Bro Adolphe Stagg entered upon his work among the French at a salary of \$50 per month. There is no grander field for the accomplishment of good than that which now presents itself to us among the French population. Some 250,000 in number to a large extent<sup>24</sup> only Catholic in name, but now ready and ripe for the gospel.

This entry was made fourteen years after Adolphe Stagg became pastor of Mt. Olivet Church. The following year the report contained the following statement:

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<sup>22</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1887, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup>John Tyler Christian, A History of the Baptists in Louisiana (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1923), p. 237.

<sup>24</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1886, p. 14.

As was confidently predicted, this feature of the work has proved a great success. Brother Adolphe Stagg has labored continuously with good success since last July. He has completed a substantial house of worship near Marksville, Avoyelles Parish, and will be under the necessity of building another within the next few months in a different portion of this field. The prosperity of the cause demands it . . . . Both Bretheren Stagg and Shaw, while preaching, are engaged in the distribution of French Bibles, Testaments, and tracts. These were donated to the Board by the American Baptist Publishing Society through the kindness of Dr. C. C. Bitting. This is seed-sowing time to this people, from which we look for an abundant harvest. The Publishing Society pays one half the salary of these two noble and faithful servants of God.<sup>25</sup>

At that time his primary work was that of missionary to the French. He was assisted by an Elder Shaw in missionary work and in distribution of Bibles, Testaments and tracts. In 1888 a third man, Aurelie Douzat of Opelousas, was employed in the French work.<sup>26</sup> In the same convention report a suggestion was made that an English speaking missionary be employed to assist the French speaking men in the Opelousas district. The reason for the recommendation was that the French speaking men found much difficulty in having to preach in French and then in English. They believed that combined services of French and English were a necessity.<sup>27</sup> The 1889 record indicated that the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention participated in the support of Adolphe Stagg and other missionaries in Louisiana by sending funds for such work through the State Missions office for distribution to the missionaries.<sup>28</sup> The success

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<sup>25</sup> Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1887, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1888, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1889, p. 32.

of his work among the French was indicated by his statement recorded in the proceedings of the State Convention of 1891. He stated, "I can't begin to supply the calls made upon me for the Gospel."<sup>29</sup> In spite of official opposition by the Roman Catholic Church and clergy, he was successful in reaching many French speaking people with the Baptist interpretation of the Gospel.

Adolphe Stagg was instrumental in establishing a number of churches in the area of St. Landry, Acadia and Avoyelles Parishes. He served and assisted those already established as he was able. Caylor listed churches served or established by Stagg as Mt. Olivet, Eden, Coulee Croche, Belleview, Pilgrim Rest and Big Cane.<sup>30</sup> The Louisiana Association report of 1877 indicated that Adolphe Stagg supplied Belleview, Pilgrim Rest, Coulee Croche and Eden churches as pastor during the previous year.<sup>31</sup> He was diligent in the prosecution of his religious work. In 1879 the records indicated that Adolphe Stagg led in the consolidation of Bellevue and Coulee Croche Churches.<sup>32</sup> During this same time he served his political parish as tax assessor and registration officer for voters.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1891, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup>Caylor, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>31</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>33</sup>News item in the Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, May 5, 1877.

The inability of the Louisiana Baptist Association to fulfill its' financial commitment to Adolphe Stagg resulted in his declining or resigning the position as employed missionary in 1876. In this year the Executive Board of the Louisiana Association reported,

We have no missionary in the field and hence, have nothing to report . . . we have endeavored to carry out your wishes in the employment of a missionary. The work was offered to Elder Adolphe Stagg, and it was the earnest desire of the Board that he should continue the work, but his mind was otherwise directed.<sup>34</sup>

Even though he did not accept this official employment as missionary, he continued to serve the churches in a missionary capacity as the calls came and he was able to respond.<sup>35</sup>

He was employed by the Louisiana Baptist Convention from 1886-1897.<sup>36</sup> He retired from active pastoral labors in 1897 and spent his remaining years in counseling younger ministers, fulfilling speaking engagements, and keeping in touch with the works he had begun. At the time of his retirement from the active pastoral work, his son, William, was active in the ministry. Through him Adolphe continued to reach out in missionary work.

French missions for Baptists came to fruition as a result of the ministry of Adolphe Stagg. The "opening wedge" produced many converts and congregations under the auspices of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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<sup>34</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>35</sup>Statement by William L. Stagg, Sr., about his father, personal interview.

<sup>36</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1886-1897.

W. E. Paxton<sup>37</sup> and John T. Christian<sup>38</sup> in their works on the history of Louisiana Baptists referred to his work among the French as being of great significance. Christian identified him as the first missionary to the French speaking people of Louisiana employed by the consolidated boards of the State Convention.<sup>39</sup> He was elected as a member of the first consolidated Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1886, even though he was employed by this same Board as a missionary.<sup>40</sup> His influence in the mission program of Louisiana Baptists has been reflected in the memories retained by Baptists in the area where he served and in the naming of an Association in his memory.

When he became a Baptist in 1870, Louisiana Association included a much larger area than the area now included in Acadia and Louisiana Associations. This Association reported ten churches which participated at that time.<sup>41</sup> In 1914, the year of his death, twenty churches participated in Acadia and Louisiana Associations. These churches resulted from the efforts of Adolphe Stagg.<sup>42</sup> A complete listing of these churches has been unobtainable because of mergings and discontinuance of some

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<sup>37</sup>Paxton, op. cit., pp. 231-236.

<sup>38</sup>Christian, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>39</sup>Christian, loc. cit.

<sup>40</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1886, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup>Paxton, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>42</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1914.

which existed during his ministry. Christian has listed Opelousas, Eden, Mt. Nebo, Faquetaique and Mamou as being constituted with his assistance. William L. Stagg, Sr., has mentioned his connection with Big Cane, Mt. Vernon, Coulee Croche, Providence and Dry Bayou Churches.<sup>43</sup> Not one of the ten churches listed above was included in the list of eleven reported in the 1871 Association minutes.<sup>44</sup>

#### HIS LATTER YEARS

Relationships with the Mission Boards. The reasons for Adolphe Stagg not being employed by the Louisiana Baptist Convention after 1897 have not been indicated in the records of the Convention. The State Convention minutes of 1899 indicated that the French work had been discontinued.<sup>45</sup> The reason for this discontinuance was the lack of funds due to the panic of 1893 and the national recession of 1896-1897.<sup>46</sup> Adolphe Stagg had served the State Convention continuously for eleven years as missionary. Prior to his employment, he had served the Louisiana Baptist Association for twelve years.<sup>47</sup>

He spent the latter years of his life filling speaking engagements

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<sup>43</sup>Stagg, op. cit., pp. 43-46.

<sup>44</sup>Paxton, loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1899.

<sup>46</sup>"U. S. Depressions and Prosperity since 1790," The World Book Encyclopedia (Chicago: Field Enterprises, Education Corporation, 1964), V, p. 126.

<sup>47</sup>Annual, Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1886-1897.

and entertaining new converts, young preachers, and denominational workers in his home. He studied world affairs and the Bible. He was concerned about his health, which was waning. His granddaughter stated that he ventured forth to fill engagements only when his health and the weather permitted. He lived with her parents for fourteen years prior to his death.<sup>48</sup>

Later family relationships. Mention was made in Chapter II of nine of the fourteen children born to Adolphe and his wife, Ultima. He was again confronted with sorrow in the death of his wife on January 6, 1901.<sup>49</sup>

After fifteen months as a widower, Adolphe married Cordelia M. Briley, widowed wife of W. M. Peevy and E. A. B. Hanks.<sup>50</sup> At the time of his second, and her third marriage, he was sixty-eight years of age and she was sixty.<sup>51</sup> She was a very devout Christian and faithful Baptist. Adolphe lived twelve years after his second marriage.

From descriptions offered by grandchildren, the following verbal portrait has been developed. He was bald, had blue eyes and wore a long flowing gray beard. He was considered a big man by his grandchildren. One grandson, A. M. Stagg, stated that he was about five feet seven or

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<sup>48</sup>Correspondence: from Mrs. Katherine Stagg Love.

<sup>49</sup>Headstone, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church Cemetery, Eunice, Louisiana.

<sup>50</sup>Record in family Bible in possession of Hubert Stagg.

<sup>51</sup>Comparison of birthdates indicated on headstones and date of marriage.

eight inches tall and weighed about one hundred sixty-five pounds.<sup>52</sup> His granddaughter, Katherine, with whom he lived, described him as probably more than six feet tall, large and imposing.<sup>53</sup> The daughter of his pastor, Eva Westberry Soileau, remembered him as straight, strong, and rugged, a patriarch of his age.<sup>54</sup> Each described him as an immaculate man in dress. They mentioned that he always wore a light colored, stiff bosomed shirt with removable collar and cuffs, black trousers and a long black coat. He was insistent upon cleanliness and orderliness. His grandson, A. M., remembered that he was a strict disciplinarian where his grandchildren were concerned.<sup>55</sup> The eldest of his grandsons, L. E., described him as a large stately man with full flowing beard.<sup>56</sup> Pictures in possession of family members have depicted him very much as described above.

His character was evidenced in several anecdotes. One was cited by his pastor's daughter, Eva Soileau. She stated, "Once while my father was preaching he rose and disagreed with him (during the sermon)."<sup>57</sup> Another statement by her has indicated that she remembered him as dominant, persistent, ardent, persuasive and firm.<sup>58</sup> He was often described as

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<sup>52</sup>Correspondence: from A. M. Stagg, grandson of Adolphe Stagg.

<sup>53</sup>Correspondence: from Katherine S. Love, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup>Correspondence: from Eva Westberry Soileau.

<sup>55</sup>Correspondence: from A. M. Stagg, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup>Correspondence: from L. E. Stagg, grandson of Adolphe Stagg.

<sup>57</sup>Correspondence: from Eva Soileau, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.



always ready for a debate, especially with a Roman Catholic priest. Several instances of such debates have been recalled.<sup>59</sup> His ability to relate stories and recount interesting experiences was mentioned by his grandson, A. M.<sup>60</sup> Hayden Stagg, a grandson of Adolphe, has related many interesting stories told by his grandfather. One account concerned a bit of humor, though the "joke" was on Adolphe. He had been accustomed to riding a large horse. One day he mounted a much smaller one to ride out into the field. Upon completion of his task he attempted to remount. Forgetting that his animal was much smaller than the one he had been accustomed to, he leaped completely over the horse. Picking himself up and looking around to see if he had been observed, he again attempted and succeeded in mounting. Two of his sons were watching, however, when lunch was served, they dared not mention the incident and Adolphe certainly never mentioned it.<sup>61</sup> This has been one of the experiences that the family has cherished as it was passed from one generation to the next.

During the latter years Adolphe traveled in a horse drawn buggy. He always had a team of fast horses. Lena M. Walker stated that he always seemed to be in a hurry when traveling. She related that he drove his team fast and hard, and that often he spent the night in her home in Opelousas when she was a child. Her father often, jokingly, said, "I don't mind feeding Brother Adolphe and one horse, but two horses is almost

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<sup>59</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>60</sup>Correspondence: from A. M. Stagg, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup>Anecdote related by Hayden Stagg.

too much."<sup>62</sup> Her description of Adolphe Stagg has coincided with that of family members.

Katherine Stagg Love stated that she often accompanied her grandfather on his trips to fill speaking engagements. This has indicated that, even though he was not pastor, he kept busy in the affairs of the churches during the last years of his life.

In December 1903, Adolphe Stagg conveyed his interest in one hundred sixteen acres of land to his youngest son, John Gordy.<sup>63</sup> This property was located near Pilgrim Rest Church, six miles southeast of Eunice, Louisiana. This was done to assure that Adolphe and his wife would be cared for in their declining years. He was living with this son at the time of his death in 1914, and his wife continued to live in this home until her death in 1933.<sup>64</sup> After this transaction, Adolphe devoted himself entirely to matters of the ministry.

Relationships with his brothers and sisters in later life. When he became a Baptist, Adolphe's family ostracized him and his children.<sup>65</sup> In later years when his brothers or sisters became seriously ill, he visited them and assisted in whatever manner possible. Often this contact necessitated defense of his decision to leave the Catholic Church. Some

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<sup>62</sup>Walker, loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup>Wesley H. Clanton (Attorney), Title Opinion, Certificate VI. (in possession of Hubert Stagg, Eunice, Louisiana).

<sup>64</sup>Record in family Bible (in possession of Hubert Stagg).

<sup>65</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 27.

of his nieces and nephews entered the Roman Catholic ministry as nuns and priests. Always, Adolphe conducted himself in such a manner as to elicit their praise. One niece is reported to have said, "What a beautiful spirit my Uncle Adolphe has shown. Would he not have made a wonderful priest?"<sup>66</sup> In spite of their rejection of him, in love he sought to serve his brothers and sisters in their need.

The family of Philippe Stagg, except for Adolphe and Etienne, remained Roman Catholic.<sup>67</sup> Shortly after Adolphe and his wife became Baptists, his brother, Etienne, and his wife became Baptists.<sup>68</sup> Etienne was the younger brother who had attended the private school of Thomas Rand with Adolphe.<sup>69</sup>

His death. According to William L. Stagg, Sr., Adolphe suffered acute indigestion on Christmas Day, 1913. He had performed a wedding in Eunice, some six miles distant, and returned home to have Christmas dinner with the family. After the meal, he became violently ill and never completely recovered.<sup>70</sup> In the light of modern medical practice, he probably suffered from a heart attack, which was never recognized or treated. His death occurred on April 17, 1914, after four months of illness.

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>67</sup>Feature article in The Baptist Message, "Etienne Stagg, Faithful French Baptist," date unknown.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

In a memorial to this pioneer French preacher, his pastor, W. J. Westberry wrote:

Another of our Lord's soldiers has fallen in battle . . . . He was really the founder of the French work, and for a long time the only French speaking preacher Louisiana had . . . . As long as he could travel he would go and preach. After his physician forbade his preaching he would assist his pastor in every way he could. In his afflictions he did not complain but was perfectly reconciled to his heavenly Father's Will . . . . May his mantle fall upon some of his grandchildren.<sup>71</sup>

His grandchildren have spoken affectionately of him and his work as they recalled experiences which occurred more than fifty years ago.

In Adolphe Stagg, integrity, devotion, determination, fearlessness, courage, hope, concern, selflessness and vigorous vitality were combined. These characteristics made the man. He accepted the challenge to lead his own people in a venture of faith. His influence and denominational sculpture has been found throughout the area around Opelousas, Louisiana. He was an "opening wedge", a pioneer of the Baptist faith, a patriarch of his age among the French Catholic people of South Central Louisiana.

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<sup>71</sup>W. J. Westberry, "In Memoriam--Elder Adolphe Stagg," The Baptist Message [Louisiana], April, 1914.

## CHAPTER IV

### YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Service as teacher. Adolphe Stagg's service as private school teacher has been mentioned by William L. Stagg, Sr.<sup>1</sup> The St. Landry Parish School Board records on file with the State Department of Education have not indicated any teachers by name during this particular period; therefore the statement of one of the students who attended the school has afforded the only source of information. A search for records in the St. Landry Parish Clerk of Court office revealed that many records were destroyed by fire about 1890. The records on file with the State Superintendent of Education only indicated the total number of teachers, schools and pupils.<sup>2</sup> Adolphe Stagg served as a teacher; however, the size of his school has not been indicated. Information concerning the location of the school and his tenure was unobtainable.

Anecdotes related by his son have indicated that he was a strict disciplinarian.<sup>3</sup> Emphasis was on the three "R's" and the rote memory of facts. His early education was from the private tutelage of Thomas Rand,<sup>4</sup> a native of West Springfield, Massachusetts.

Service as Tax Assessor and Registrar of Voters. Members of the

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<sup>1</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Report on Public Education, op. cit., p. 171.

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

<sup>4</sup>Supra, p. 20.

Stagg family were often called upon for public service. Louis Stagg, the eldest of Adolphe's brothers, served in the Louisiana State Legislature in 1879<sup>5</sup> and was very active in the St. Landry Parish Democratic Committee.<sup>6</sup> Paul Stagg, another brother, was listed as a member of the St. Landry Police Jury during the 1892-1896 term.<sup>7</sup> Philippe Stagg, Jr., another brother, was mentioned as a member of the St. Landry Parish Democratic Central Committee by The Opelousas Courier,<sup>8</sup> journal of the parish government.

Adolphe's appointment to public office was announced in The Courier of May 5, 1877.

Mr. Adolphe Stagg, of Bayou Boeuf, has been appointed by the Governor tax assessor for this Parish. The law requires that the assessment shall be completed by the 15th of August. To do this probably eight or ten deputies will be necessary, and they will have no time to lose. Under the new law the Assessor is also Supervisor of Registration, we believe.<sup>9</sup>

This brief statement by The Courier has pointed up the tremendous task to be undertaken in such a short time. The reason for the vacancy in the office was not indicated. With the passing of the "new law" referred to in the announcement, the incumbent Assessor was no longer eligible to serve. The gubernatorial appointment was in keeping

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<sup>5</sup>Gilbert L. Dupree, Political Reminiscences, 1876-1902 (Dupree Memorial Library, University Southwest Louisiana), p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>News Item in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, May 5, 1877.

<sup>7</sup>News Item in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, January 30, 1892.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Courier, May 5, 1877, loc. cit.

with the new law. Reference was made to the dual responsibility of the Tax Assessor and Supervisor of Voting Registration.

The turmoil in the system of governments, resulting from the rapid changes in constitution and laws, was shown against the background of the Reconstruction Period.<sup>10</sup> In such a crucial time, Adolphe Stagg, respected by his community, of mature years, and a man of integrity and honesty,<sup>11</sup> accepted the call to public service in the parish which was the second most populous area of the state.<sup>12</sup>

In the issue of May 26, 1877, The Opelousas Courier quoted the editorial in the Alexandria Daily Town Talk commenting on passage of the new registration law. The requirements for the position of Tax Assessor were stated as follows:

In the parishes, the assessor of taxes is to perform the duty of registering all voters. He is to have one clerk for sixty days only at three dollars per day. The Assessor himself is to have a salary of two hundred dollars per annum and no more. He is to keep his office open for registering voters all the year. He is to make an appointment and advertise the same in each voting precinct of one additional day to the two days for assessing taxes. He must be a bona fide resident of the parish for which he is appointed, and shall be ineligible to any elective office, federal, state, parochial or municipal, during his term of office and for three months after the expiration thereof, or after his resignation, if he should resign.<sup>13</sup>

From these stated requirements and compensation provided, the Assessor

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<sup>10</sup>Franklin, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Correspondence: from Eva Westberry Soileau

<sup>12</sup>Letter to the editor, The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, January 5, 1878.

<sup>13</sup>Feature article in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, May 26, 1877.

required income from other sources in order to care for his family. The plight of the people of this time was revealed by the list of delinquent taxpayers listed in the November 24, 1877, issue of The Courier.<sup>14</sup> Two pages were filled with the lists of names. Among those names listed, the name of the Assessor, Adolphe Stagg, appeared, stating that he was in arrears on both State and Parish taxes. The amounts listed were \$10.02 in state taxes and \$24.70 in parish taxes.<sup>15</sup> His younger brother, Etienne, was listed as owing \$10.59 in state taxes and \$23.73 in parish taxes.<sup>16</sup> This has indicated that, in the first year of service, Adolphe Stagg was unable to complete the herculean task and get his personal affairs in order. Subsequent delinquent tax lists did not list the Stagg name through the year 1880.

During this period, letters to the editor of The Courier were written by citizens of the parish and meetings were held protesting the tax structure of the state. In these discussions comparisons were made to other states, and Louisiana was identified as the state having the highest taxes for state purposes, a rate of fourteen and one half mills.<sup>17</sup> Such conditions required a qualified man of integrity and general acceptance to perform the task of assessing property.

Adolphe Stagg made his property assessments according to the best information available to him. He registered the qualified electorate of his parish in keeping with the law. He made appointments for registration

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<sup>14</sup>Delinquency Tax Listing, The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, November 24, 1877.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid.    <sup>17</sup>Ibid.



at each voting precinct and advertised the date and time in the official parish journal, The Opelousas Courier.<sup>18</sup> He scheduled registration during the final days before election at the Assessor's office as the law required.

An interesting experience of this period indicated some of the many problems related to the job of Assessor. In a letter to the editor, a writer identified as Z. Z. stated the dilemma of the situation. He pointed out that St. Landry Parish was the second most populous parish in the state next to New Orleans. He indicated that the school census of the parish for 1877, based upon the Assessor's count, was less than the census reported in 1874. He did not blame the Assessor for the low count but did blame the requirements of the job and the limitations on money and help for the Assessor.<sup>19</sup> In his report to the St. Landry Parish Board of Education, Adolphe defended his count in the following statement:

The Assessor explains that he had to make the last enumeration of youth in connection with the assessment of property, which was very laborious and extensive, and that he has reason to believe that he omitted some children. Some of the citizens own little or no property, and from dread of taxation, would not give in their children. Others were not at home, and no one could account for their children, and notices left at their houses were always disregarded. He does not think, however, that his enumeration is as much as two thousand short of the aggregate number of children in the parish.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Official notice in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, August 10, 1878.

<sup>19</sup>The Courier, January 5, 1878, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Report on Public Education, op. cit., p. 177.

The writer, Z. Z., said that Adolphe Stagg listed eight thousand five hundred, when the correct figure probably should have been sixteen thousand. Adolphe Stagg defended his figure by surmizing that the people deliberately refused to report the correct number to him for fear of having a higher tax assessment since it was the Assessor who was taking the census.

While conscientiously serving in an appointive position of government service with small compensation and something less than the full cooperation of the people of the parish, Adolphe continued to serve as a Baptist minister, serving the small congregations of the French area and establishing a beachhead for Baptists, whenever possible.

Service as Anti-Lottery candidate for Representative. In keeping with the constitution of 1864, the Louisiana Lottery Company was chartered for a twenty-five year period beginning in 1868.<sup>21</sup> This charter granted to the Lottery Company the exclusive right to operate a lottery business based in Louisiana for an annual fee of \$40,000. In addition to the fee paid the State Government, the Lottery Company made many contributions to educational institutions, churches and other charitable causes as well as to certain individuals in the public eye. Oneal Savant was such a person. He was given a grant for medical aid, as reported in The Opelousas Courier of October 31, 1891.<sup>22</sup> Gambling interests had

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<sup>21</sup>First Louisiana Legislature, First Session, loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>News item in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, October 31, 1891.

reached into every area of the state and nation. These interests were making a renewed bid for political favor in the state elections of 1892. The lottery charter was to expire in 1893. Governor Francis T. Nichols in his message to the 1892 state legislature said of his administration of the State of Louisiana:

It entered upon its trust amidst the plaudits of a people filled with hope and encouragement from reiterated promises of service well to be performed . . . of a people resting securely upon pledges solemnly declared, as most surely to be redeemed. Have these pledges been in part redeemed? There was a time when, without a moment's hesitation I would have answered, Yes . . . they have, truly, fairly, squarely. There was another, later period, when referring to our State in her then existing condition I wrote to your immediate predecessors, 'Moving forward to an era of assured prosperity, suddenly the dark shadow of a deep disgrace is thrown across her path, and the honor of Louisiana, maintained in the past on the field and in the council by the patriotism, the valor and the sacrifices of her sons, living and dead, is to be tarnished forever, and her position among her sister States to be tested, not by what she has been, exalted and justly proud, but in the dust as the degenerate partner of a gambling corporation, designed, organized and to be carried out, not for her good and her advancement, but for the personal and selfish interests of a handful of man, many of them connected with the darkest days of the 'reconstruction period'.'

Today, as she emerges from the struggle to which I was then alluding, a struggle so fierce, so profound as to attract the attention of the whole Union, I feel I am justified again to say, 'The pledges given have been redeemed, truly, fairly and squarely.'

From that contest Louisiana emerges victorious, her virtues vindicated, her morality strengthened, her future, I trust, assured. Again she stands among her sister States as fair as any . . . as pure as any . . . as proud as any. The shadow has passed away. Once more she is moving to the front, and it will be for you to see that her course be steadfast and true. It will be for you to see that what has been faithfully<sup>23</sup> and gloriously won shall be firmly and successfully maintained.

In June 1890, the Louisiana Lottery Company offered the State of Louisiana an annual fee of one million dollars for a twenty-five year

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<sup>23</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 31.

renewal of the charter granted in 1868. Benjamin Newgass offered one million two hundred fifty thousand dollars for a similar charter for his company operating under the same conditions. His offer was not even considered, but in a Senate-House compromise a constitutional amendment was approved to grant the Louisiana Lottery Company a renewed twenty-five year permit for one million two hundred fifty thousand dollars. The bill was sent to Governor Francis T. Nichols for his signature. With terse comments, the Governor vetoed the bill, which was promptly passed over his veto. This amendment was submitted to the voters in the election on April 19, 1892.<sup>24</sup>

The lines of political battle were drawn. The electorate of the state was given an opportunity to express itself on the lottery issue. Four candidates for Governor were listed on the ballot in 1892. The State Democratic Party was split between the Lottery supporters and the Anti-Lottery group.<sup>25</sup> The People's Party of the hill parishes was just coming into being. This party nominated Tannehill as their candidate for Governor. The Farmer's Alliance was active in the 1890 general election for Congress; however, for the state election of 1892, they formed a coalition with the Anti-Lottery group and supported Murphy J. Foster for Governor. The Lottery candidate was S. D. McEnery and the Republican candidate was Leonard.<sup>26</sup> The parish candidates alligned themselves with

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<sup>24</sup>Alcee' Fortier, Louisiana (Atlanta: Southern Historical Society, 1909), II, pp. 89-92.

<sup>25</sup>Fortier, Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>26</sup>Perry H. Howard, Political Tendencies in Louisiana: 1812-1952 Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1956), p. 94.

the various state party groups for their parish elections.

In St. Landry Parish, ten men were in the contest for three seats in the Louisiana House of Representatives.<sup>27</sup> One candidate reported another of the candidates to be a Negro physician.<sup>28</sup> Three were aligned with the regular Democratic Party which supported the Lottery candidate for Governor. Three were affiliated with the Anti-Lottery froces of the Democratic Party. Adolphe Stagg was identified with this division of the parish party, as indicated by Dupree,<sup>29</sup> who was one of the Lottery candidates.

The campaign for Representative was vigorously contested as indicated by the election returns. The local paper, The Opelousas Courier, mentioned very little about the seven candidates opposing the regular Democratic (Lottery) ticket. Adolphe Stagg, from a rural area, received the third largest number of votes in the race. His former services as Tax Assessor played an important role in his election.

By the time of the election campaign of 1892, Adolphe had been recognized as a minister of the Baptist denomination throughout the parish and surrounding area. This was in a predominantly French Catholic area of the state. He traveled extensively in his religious work and thereby aroused opposition on the part of the Roman Catholic Church leadership. William L. Stagg, Sr., referred to debates involving Catholic pastors of

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<sup>27</sup> Dupree, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

the area.<sup>30</sup> The evidence of the confidence of the people in the character of the man, in spite of his religious defection, was indicated by his winning the election in an area overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, even though the candidate was actively opposed by the official church leadership and was considered a traitor to his childhood religion.

Adolphe Stagg had been persuaded by his personal friends to enter the fight. Because of his family history of involvement in local politics he was unable to decline the call to this opportunity for public service. He was an outspoken individual and reveled in debate on moral issues.<sup>31</sup> He was surely engaged in heated campaign speeches in which he castigated the Louisiana Lottery Company and its' advocates.

His success in the campaign resulted from his familiarity with every area of the parish. As Tax Assessor and Supervisor of Registration, he was personally acquainted with a majority of the voters. His integrity in discharging his duties had won for him the respect, if not the friendship, of many. His outspoken opposition to the Lottery amendment offered the voters a clear-cut choice. For him to poll forty-four percent of the total vote cast was an indication of his popularity as a man, regardless of his identity as a Baptist minister in a predominately Roman Catholic area.

Final returns of the election, according to Dupree, were as follows:<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Dupree, op. cit., p. 72.

Official Returns	Party Affiliation
2834 G. L. Dupree	Regular Democrat (Lottery)
3066 P. Donahy	Anti-Lottery Democrat
1156 A. V. Lastrapes	Unidentified
2190 Jack Beauchamp	Unidentified
1251 Eli Clark	Regular Democrat (Lottery)
3229 George Pulford	Anti-Lottery Democrat
3094 Adolphe Stagg	Anti-Lottery Democrat
1328 Placide Robin	Regular Democrat (Lottery)
3467 N. McBride	Unidentified

A physician, unidentified as to party affiliation, and two anti-lottery candidates were elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives from St. Landry Parish.<sup>33</sup> The Opelousas Courier lamented this election, not only in the parish, but statewide, as indicated in the following comment. "As to the General Assembly, it is decidedly uncertain as to which faction has secured a majority of its members."<sup>34</sup> In the first session of the Assembly the paper criticized the three St. Landry Representatives, accusing them of not living up to their campaign promises.<sup>35</sup> This same article complained of the coalition of some twenty-three members of the Assembly from the Farmer's Alliance and Anti-Lottery forces which blocked the proposals of the Democratic (Lottery) party. Why was the official parish journal so critical of elected representatives? The editorial of January 2, 1892, indicated that the regular Democratic ticket had supported the Lottery amendment, which Governor Nichols had vetoed. The 1890 Assembly

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<sup>33</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 698.

<sup>34</sup>Editorial in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, April 23, 1892.

<sup>35</sup>Editorial in The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, June 11, 1892.

had passed the amendment over his veto.<sup>36</sup> The paper strongly supported the regular Democratic Party and made no mention of any other candidates during the campaign. It did, however, carry an endorsement of the lottery amendment in the following statement:

The adoption of the revenue amendment will bring to the State of Louisiana by the Lottery Company an amount of \$1,250,000 for a period of twenty-five years, or a total of \$31,250,000, set apart as follows:

	<u>Each Year</u>	<u>Entire Period</u>
For public schools	\$350,000.00	\$8,750,000.00
For levees	350,000.00	8,750,000.00
For charity hospital	80,000.00	2,000,000.00
For state insane asylum	40,000.00	1,000,000.00
For deaf and dumb asylum	25,000.00	625,000.00
For soldiers home	5,000.00	125,000.00
For pensions to Confederate soldiers	50,000.00	1,250,000.00
For drainage of New Orleans and other sanitary purposes	100,000.00	2,500,000.00 <sup>37</sup>
For the general fund	250,000.00	6,250,000.00 <sup>37</sup>

Such an easy source of revenue was not easily rejected, especially in an atmosphere of political expediency such as prevailed in the early decade of 1890. The editor had misread his public. Adolphe Stagg and George Pulford were elected as Anti-Lottery candidates. They, with McBride, the physician, defeated the three men supported by The Courier.

In the 1892 general election, the Lottery amendment was defeated by a vote of one hundred fifty-seven thousand four hundred twenty-two to four thousand two hundred twenty-five.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Fortier, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>37</sup>Feature article, The Opelousas [Louisiana] Courier, January 2, 1892.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Prichard, "Louisiana Lottery," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly (New Orleans: Louisiana Historical Society, 1945), p. 1163.



Results of the race for Governor were:

(a) For Foster, the anti-Lottery Democratic candidate	79,388
(b) For McEnery, the Lottery Democratic candidate	47,037
(c) For Leonard, the Republican candidate	29,459
(d) For Breaux, affiliation unknown	12,359 <sup>39</sup>
(e) For Tannehill, the People's Party candidate	9,792

The legislature was composed of truly diverse factions. This made an interesting session, especially when the joint sessions of the legislature were held to elect a United States Senator. The session ended without electing any nominee. The appointment of a United States Senator was the Governor's responsibility.<sup>40</sup>

Service in the Legislature. On May 9, 1892, the Fourth General Assembly of the Louisiana State Legislature began its first session. Adolphe Stagg was present when the oath of office was administered.<sup>41</sup> He accepted committee responsibilities on the committee on parochial (county) affairs, the committee on federal relations, and the committee on the penitentiary.<sup>42</sup>

A search of the proceedings of the session of 1892 has indicated that Adolphe offered only one bill for action, but was very vocal and active throughout the session.<sup>43</sup> As a member of the committee on federal relations, he presented a joint House-Senate resolution requesting United

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<sup>39</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>40</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 663.

<sup>41</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>42</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., pp. 72, 101.

<sup>43</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 77.

States Senators and Representatives to use their influence in securing federal assistance. This assistance would authorize the return of lands which were granted to railroad companies for building purposes to the parishes. This was sought because of non-performance on the part of the railroad companies.<sup>44</sup>

A survey of his voting record indicated that he consistently supported bills which were fiscally conservative and those which concerned high moral conduct or sought to control matters of moral question.<sup>45</sup> He favored public works, such as flood control and transportation improvement for the protection of the citizenry. He opposed measures which he believed were against public interest. He voted against a constitutional amendment which would authorize election of a State Superintendent of Education.<sup>46</sup>

One interesting aspect of the 1892 legislative session was failure of the General Assembly to elect a member of the United States Senate to begin service in March 1895. The procedure was that each House would nominate men for the position, vote on the nominations and then convene in a joint session to compare results. On May 24, the House proceeded to nominate and ballot for the office of United States Senator. Six men were nominated. Adolphe Stagg nominated one of them, Honorable Scott Adams.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>45</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 416.

<sup>47</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 108.

The balloting was completed and an announcement was made of a joint session to be held with the Senate on the following day.

In the joint session of May 25, meeting at twelve noon, the journal of each house was read, the results indicated that there was no election, since no nominee had received a majority of the combined vote. The joint session then proceeded to nominate and elect a United States Senator, and, again, Adolphe Stagg nominated Honorable Scott Adams.<sup>48</sup> Upon a roll call vote, none of the six nominees received a majority of the votes cast. This situation continued each date of these joint sessions until July 7, when the legislature terminated the session.

Representative H. L. Brian of Winnfield has referred to this deadlock as the result of a coalition of some twenty-two members of the legislature known as the "Old Guard". He stated that the purpose of this group was to block the election of the nominee supported by the existing political machine. He said that the "Old Guard" knew that they could not elect their candidate, but that they could keep the "party" candidate from being elected.<sup>49</sup>

Alcee' Fortier has referred to a coalition between the Farmer's Alliance, a national organization, and the Anti-Lottery division of the Democratic Party of Louisiana in the election campaign. In this coalition he has suggested that the Farmer's Alliance candidate for Governor, Scott Adams, was offered the support of the Anti-Lottery forces for United

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<sup>48</sup>Official Journal, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>49</sup>Josephine Harris, "H. L. Brian Looks Back on Life of Stormy Politics," The Shreveport [Louisiana] Times, March 13, 1939.

States Senator if the Farmer's Alliance would withdraw from the Governor's race and support Murphy J. Foster, the Anti-Lottery candidate.<sup>50</sup>

Adolphe Stagg was identified by Dupree as an Anti-Lottery candidate and supporter.<sup>51</sup> His nomination of Adams for Senator has given credence to the coalition theory. William L. Stagg, Sr., referred to the "Old Guard". This has been substantiated by Representative Brian's statement.<sup>52</sup>

A study of the balloting for Senator has indicated that Stagg voted for Adams consistently through June 22. After this time, Adams was not included in the list of nominees. Stagg voted for E. T. Lewis on June 23,<sup>53</sup> and through the remainder of the session he voted for several other nominees. No reason was given for the discontinuance of balloting for Adams and the others who were first nominated; however, the final balloting was for thirty nominees.<sup>54</sup> The objective of the "Old Guard" regarding the United States Senate position was accomplished. Brian stated that Governor Foster appointed his own man to the Senate.<sup>55</sup>

The first session of the Fourth General Assembly ended with the Legislature deadlocked regarding a United States Senator. The second session began in May 1894. According to the Official Journal of the

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<sup>50</sup>Fortier, op. cit., pp. 89-92.

<sup>51</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>52</sup>Harris, loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 663.

<sup>55</sup>Harris, loc. cit.

Louisiana House of Representatives, Adolphe Stagg was present in this second session. All of his committee assignments were the same as in the first session.

On May 29, 1894, he introduced two bills, one to re-enact Section 2924 of the Revised Civil Code of Louisiana, the other to make usury a misdemeanor.<sup>56</sup> Both bills were reported unfavorably by the committee on judiciary. On June 19, he introduced another bill. This one was to reimburse the heirs of one of his constituents of St. Landry Parish.<sup>57</sup> This bill was favorably considered and passed on June 28 and sent to the Senate.

In this session no deadlock occurred as in the 1892 session. Adolphe Stagg seemed to be on the "nay" side in his voting record in this session. Another difference has been noted in the record of the House proceedings. In 1892, Stagg's occupation was listed as accountant.<sup>58</sup> In the 1894 record, it was listed as minister.<sup>59</sup>

He manifested a special interest in legislation to prevent combination of public and parochial school pupils or teaching personnel<sup>60</sup> and in regulating disturbances near places of worship. He suggested a measure, which passed, making it a felony to tie a noisy stallion or

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<sup>56</sup>Official Journal, 1894, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>58</sup>Official Journal, 1892, op. cit., p. 686.

<sup>59</sup>Official Journal, 1894, op. cit., unnumbered page following page 669.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

other animal within eight hundred feet of a place of worship during services.<sup>61</sup> He continued to support public works for drainage and flood control.

The second session appeared to be an anti-climax to the fight in the first session. Perhaps the outstanding accomplishment which he supported was the enactment of House Bill No. 424, which later became Act No. 169 of the Second Session of the Fourth General Assembly. This act was for the purpose of suppressing lotteries and setting penalties and controls for lotteries.<sup>62</sup>

The lottery continued to be an issue during this session of the Legislature, in spite of the fact that the constitutional amendment had been defeated. Adolphe Stagg reported that he was offered a bribe to change his position from an Anti-Lottery Democrat to one which favored the lottery forces. He reported that he wrote across a signed blank check which was left on his desk the words "not for sale at any price".<sup>63</sup> This occurred in the 1894 legislative session which enacted Act No. 169.<sup>64</sup> An example of the extent of bribery attempts has been shown in the following anecdotes taken from the Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Volume 27, Number 4, October 1944, page 1049.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>62</sup>Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, 2nd Session, 4th Legislature (Baton Rouge: The Advocate, 1894), p. 207.

<sup>63</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>64</sup>Acts of the Legislature, 1894, loc. cit.

Tradition tells of several instances of bribery. One story is that a member of the Senate who had to borrow money to get to Baton Rouge to attend the session of 1890 died during that year, and willed his widow \$50,000 in cash.

The anti-Lottery members in caucus pledged their honor not to be bought, or wheedled into support of the bill. A senator who had given that pledge, who had been imprisoned, who was in poor health, and harrassed as to the support of his family, was the last man needed for a lottery victory. He voted to submit the question to the people, sank into his chair, and in shame buried his face in his hands. Nearly a year afterwards this pitiable man was carried ill to the Hotel Dieu in New Orleans. After his death a belt containing \$18,000 was found on his body.

These referred to the 1890 session, but similar tactics were tried on the 1892 and 1894 sessions as well.

At the age of sixty-two Adolphe Stagg retired from politics and devoted the remainder of his life to the ministry of the Gospel, and to his family. He had served the public by teaching school, as Tax Assessor, and Voter Registration officer simultaneously, and served for one term as Representative in the Louisiana Legislature. A less versatile individual would not have been able to make these transitions. Throughout the twenty years in public service, he had continued to serve as a minister of the Gospel.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary. Adolphe Stagg was a man of varied interests, abilities, and involvements. His public service was rendered at a time when his state desperately needed men of his mettle in responsible places. His religious ministry was strategic, unique and productive.

In a society dominated in cultural and social life by the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, Adolphe Stagg's contribution in the social and cultural area could not be divorced from religious implications.

In the area of public service, he responded to the call of the Governor of the State of Louisiana to provide his parish with a Tax Assessor and voter registration officer who would bring to the office diligence, honesty, efficiency and ability. His service in the parish in this capacity softened the impact of the highest state tax in the nation.

When the State of Louisiana was threatened with the extension of the Lottery syndicate, he sounded the warning, offered himself in service as a Representative in 1892 and faithfully discharged his duties as a member of the Louisiana Legislature. When in the minority, he continued to stand firm, spoke his convictions and refused the offers of the Lottery supporters. Adolphe Stagg offered the constituents a choice. He stood for clean and honest government.



In the area of religious service, Adolphe Stagg, probably, contributed more to the social and cultural change which transpired in the latter part of the nineteenth century than any single individual living in the area around Opelousas, Louisiana. He was fully acquainted with the French Catholic culture and the social activities of those under its influence. He had participated in or consented to such practices for more than thirty-five years. For a new French Baptist culture, he was, indeed, an "opening wedge". He fluently spoke the language of both the French and the English. He was completely at ease in the French community. His thought processes were much akin to those of the native people of the area. His reasoning and persuasion was logical and effective because he was one of them. This led to the changes which took place in numerous rural communities where he served as missionary and pastor.

Knowing the love of French people for community gatherings, he used such gatherings to preach the Gospel instead of for the weekly dance in the home. Knowing the firm control of the Catholic priests over the people of the Catholic churches, he accepted and offered challenges to debate Biblical teachings. Knowing the prohibition of the official church leadership against the reading of the Scriptures, he made available to the people copies of the Bible, New Testament, and religious tracts printed in the French language. Realizing the prominence of his family, he used this prominence as an argument in favor of the solution he had found for his personal inner conflicts.

Realizing the opposition and ostracization experienced by new converts, he was ever ready to encourage and assist them in their new-found faith.

With the entry of Baptist missionaries into the area, a spirit of at least recognition of another religious faith developed. More emphasis was placed upon education.

The establishment of Baptist missions by existing local Baptist churches was practiced and recommended by Stagg to the mission boards of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. The program of Baptist mission work in predominately Roman Catholic communities today has been almost identical to the program used by Adolphe Stagg, pioneer in Baptist missions to the French in Louisiana during the latter nineteenth century.

In summarizing the contributions of Adolphe Stagg during his lifetime, the following have been listed:

1. He provided honesty, ability, efficiency and diligent service in the office of the tax assessor and as voter registration officer.
2. He offered the voter in the 1892 state election a choice other than the lottery supported candidate for state representative from St. Landry Parish.
3. He discharged his duties as a Representative honestly and according to his best understanding of the issues, even though he was often found in the minority.
4. He resisted the bribery efforts of the lottery supporters in their bid for control of the state legislature.

5. He utilized the community gathering for worship instead of recreation.

6. He proclaimed the Gospel in the language understood by the majority of the residents of the community, speaking both French and English fluently.

7. He accepted their challenge and also challenged the Roman Catholic priests of the communities to open debate and discussion of Bible truths.

8. He placed the Bible, New Testament, and religious tracts which were printed in the French language in the hands of the French speaking people.

9. He offered a living example of the faith to which he called his fellow Frenchmen.

10. He offered encouragement to those who followed his way when they were opposed or ostracized.

11. He developed and pioneered a type of mission program to reach the French which has been used by Louisiana Baptists to the present time.

12. He gained recognition for Baptists in a French Catholic culture.

13. He proved that one could serve in religious service and public life at the same time.

14. He taught not only religious matter, but, for a time, academic subjects in a private school.

Evaluation of his contribution. An evaluation of the contribution of Adolphe Stagg to the social, cultural and religious life of South Central Louisiana has been based upon those factors, innovations, practices and principles in his life which have survived him.

In the area of public service, the continued resistance to a statewide lottery syndicate, even to the present time, has indicated that, along with other legislators, Adolphe Stagg helped influence integrity and freedom from control of special interests in state government. His concern for morality in every phase of government has been passed on to succeeding generations.

In the area of social customs, the innovation of religious service in the home in the French Catholic area has continued through the decades indicating its value. The toleration, at least, of those of Non-Catholic religious persuasion in the area of Louisiana began with his work. Perhaps the extreme social implication was strict opposition to the social dance, card playing, drinking and other social actions which were identified with the general practices of those affiliated with the Catholic Church. These practices were named and an effort was made to indoctrinate the younger generation against them. Those who participated in these socially accepted practices were denied Baptist church membership, or were dismissed from church fellowship if they were members. This has indicated the influence of reaction to practices condoned by the Catholic Church.

Because the social and cultural life of the area was centered in the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings and because Adolphe Stagg

was a leader who was opposed to the teachings of this dominant church, his contribution to the cultural changes in the area has been considered synonymous with the religious changes. Influence of his work was found throughout the area around Opelousas, Louisiana. The churches which he established and served have continued to function and have grown.

In the area of religious influence, the service of his descendants and close relatives in the role of religious leadership has been considered. Directly and indirectly, each of them has been influenced by Adolphe, his philosophy, his personality, and the hereditary characteristics passed from generation to generation. These men reflected many of the same characteristics found in the life of Adolphe Stagg.

William L. Stagg, Sr., a son, served in places of responsibility in Baptist churches, Associations, and on State Convention committees and boards. Harry P., a grandson, served the New Mexico Baptist State Convention as Executive Secretary for more than a quarter of a century. William L., Jr., a grandson, served churches in Louisiana and Mississippi, and served as Baptist State Convention President. He served most recently as State Secretary of Stewardship and Promotion. Hurchell, a grandson, served in Louisiana and Texas and was employed by the Home Mission Board as Director of City Mission work in the San Francisco Bay area of California. He also served California Baptists as Secretary of Evangelism. Frank, a great-nephew, served as Professor of Greek and New Testament in both New Orleans and Southern Baptist Seminaries. Paul Leonard, a great-nephew, served the American Baptist Convention as a National Secretary of Missions. Louis A., Jr., a great-nephew, served churches in Louisiana

and as a leader in Association and State Convention work. Robert, a great-grandson, served as Professor of Greek and Religion at East Texas Baptist College and has been engaged for a similar position at Ouachita Baptist University. The writer, a great-grandson, served churches in Louisiana and California, served as a Chaplain in the United States Air Force, and served as Director of Missions for the Louisiana Baptist Convention in the same French Catholic area of Louisiana which has been described in this study. An evaluation of the contribution of Adolphe Stagg to the religious life of South Central Louisiana has been based upon his influence perpetuated in the lives of the above mentioned men. Others who have served in the area were pastors, deacons and teachers, whose lives were influenced directly and indirectly by him.

Conclusion. This study has led the writer to conclude that the oral tradition regarding Adolphe Stagg is substantiated by evidence recorded in various sources. He was a man of action, not one who recorded his actions or thoughts. He was a person of character and vitality, conscientious in the discharge of his obligations. He was versatile as evidenced by his many roles of responsibility. He was a "patriarch" of Baptists in an area where they were few. His contribution has been substantiated in the realm of Baptist work in the French area of Louisiana by many persons who continue in his tradition of service.

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From Eva Westberry Soileau.

From A. M. Stagg, Pineville, Louisiana.

From L. E. Stagg, Beaumont, Texas.

From Katherine Stagg Love, Lafayette, Louisiana.

8. Other

Soldiers Application for Pension Submitted by Adolphe Stagg.

## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A



Adolphe Stagg  
(1834-1914)

The pictured group, Adolphe Stagg, second down, center column, was referred to in Chapter IV. This group successfully blocked election of a United States Senator in the 1892 legislative session.



APPENDIX B

# Louisiana

PARISHES - PARISH SEATS - OTHER CITIES AND TOWNS

RAPIDES - PARISH NAMES

- ☆ Parish Seats
- ★ State Capital

POPULATION KEY

- Over 100,000
- 25,000 to 100,000
- 5,000 to 25,000

ASSOCIATIONS OF LOUISIANA BAPTIST CONVENTION  
WINN - ASSOCIATION NAMES



Area in which Adolphe Stagg lived and served.

# Transcript of Baptismal Record

Name of Child Adolphe Stag  
 Place of Birth St. Landry Parish  
 Date of Birth Dec. 17, 1834 Date of Baptism Apr. 16, 1836  
 Name of Father Philippe Stag  
 Maiden Name of Mother Josephine Guillory  
 Name of Sponsors Isac Stag, Euphemie Stag  
 Name of Officiating Priest F. H. Rossi

The undersigned RECTOR OF ST. LANDRY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH in the City of Opelousas, State of Louisiana, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript of and from the Baptismal Record of the Book of Records kept by the said Church of St. Landry of the entry therein relating to the Baptism of the above named child and the whole of said entry.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal

*Baptism Book V p. 330 no. 44*

this 20 day of Nov., 1967

*names copied as recorded in French*

Paul A. Rost

Rector

ST. LANDRY'S CHURCH

OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA

## Certificate of Marriage

*This is to certify*

THAT Adolphe Stag of St. Landry Parish  
 son of Philippe Stag & Josephine Guillory  
 and Virginie Germain of St. Landry Parish  
 daughter of Benjamin Germain & Pirahie Gentgen (very hard to decipher this)  
 were lawfully married on the 29 day of October, 1856  
 according to the rites of the Catholic Church and in conformity with the laws of the State of Louisiana.

Rev. Pimont officiating in  
 the presence of E. Dubuisson, Octave,  
Philippe Stag  
 witnesses, as appears from the marriage register of this church.  
 Dated Nov 20, 1967  
 Vol. C  
 P. 82  
 No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul A. Rost  
 Assistant Pastor

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Soldier, parish tax assessor, private school teacher, state legislator, pastor, missionary, elder confidant—these were facets of service in the life of Adolphe Stagg (1834-1914), who lived and worked in the area surrounding Opelousas in South Central Louisiana and who has been recognized as pioneer Baptist missionary to the French speaking people of South Central Louisiana. He served in public office for a total of eight years and as an ordained Baptist minister for forty years. The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate his contribution to the cultural and social life of the area.

A biographical approach to the study was made. Public records on file in the St. Landry Parish Court House, Opelousas, Louisiana, and the Louisiana State Archives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and newspaper accounts and other records of the area on file in the Louisiana Room at the University of Southwest Louisiana, in Lafayette, Louisiana, depicted the times and conditions in which he lived. Official records of the St. Landry Roman Catholic Church, Opelousas, Louisiana, served to establish ages and family relationships. The official minutes of the Louisiana Baptist Association and the Louisiana Baptist Convention recorded his religious ministry.

A review of records of the time and personal interviews and correspondence indicated that Stagg was born of French Catholic parentage in 1834, and remained a Roman Catholic for thirty-six years. As a teenager he and a younger brother attended a private school operated by Thomas



Rand, an ordained Baptist minister. In 1867 he became a member of a Masonic lodge, a departure from Roman Catholic practice. In 1870 he and his wife became Baptists. This caused their families to turn against them and to ostracize them. In 1877 he was appointed by the Governor of Louisiana to serve as parish tax assessor and voter registration officer for St. Landry Parish. In 1892 he campaigned as an anti-lottery candidate for a seat in the Louisiana State House of Representatives and was elected. He served a four year term in this legislative position, joining with other anti-lottery forces to rid the state of a state chartered lottery syndicate and thwart the objective of the regular Democrat Party in electing a United States Senator in 1892.

In 1872 Adolphe Stagg was ordained as a Baptist minister and became very active as a pastor and missionary to the French of his home area. He was recognized as an "opening wedge" for Baptists in an area religiously dominated by Roman Catholicism. He was instrumental in establishing a number of churches in rural and village areas while employed by the Louisiana Baptist Association for four years and the Louisiana Baptist Convention for eleven years.

Stagg's influence continued in the lives of his descendants and close relatives and friends who were won to his persuasion. His contribution was in the area of faithful service in public responsibility and in introducing new dimensions in religious service and worship for Baptists among the French. He was described by one as a "Patriarch" of Baptists in an area where they were few. The change which resulted

from the influence of Baptists in a French Catholic area has been attributed to Adolphe Stagg. A study of the record of his service has substantiated the oral tradition concerning him and validated the tribute accorded him.