



A

Man

Called

Out

**A SHORT STORY ABOUT
BROTHER WILLIAM SOWDERS**

WILLIAM SOWDERS

1879 - 1952

During the early years of the twentieth century, a young man was called to the ministry of Jesus Christ along the banks of the Ohio River in Southern Illinois.

This young, spiritually dedicated minister was Brother William Sowders, destined to accomplish a special work in the earth. The following pages reveal just a glimpse into his life. A very unique man indeed who had actually heard from God, and was called out by God to do a mighty work.

"THE OHIO IS FULL OF PUMPKINS"

Young William Sowders, lean and hungry, preaching the gospel by night and hunting food by day just to survive. One day, as he walked by the riverside, not knowing where his next meal would come from, he suddenly heard a man shouting at him with great excitement. "The Ohio is full of pumpkins." The young God called minister shouted back, "Could I use your skiff?" "You sure can," the man replied. He then took the skiff (boat) and gathered fourteen pumpkins that were floating down the river. He later said, "Those pumpkins looked like rubies and diamonds to me."

"HAVE YOU EVER FOUND HERE WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?"

William Sowders, of German descent, was the son of Charles and Florence Meeky Sowders. He was born in Louisville, Kentucky on September 13, 1879.

Young William served as a patrolman on the Louisville police force for several years. He also worked at building and caulking boats. At a young age, he became disgusted with life in the large city. Yet unsaved, he attended a vaudeville production. On the stage two actors, dressed as an aged couple sang, "Darling, I am growing old, silver threads among the gold, life is fading fast away." It was then that the Lord first spoke to the heart of this young man. The Lord said, "This is the first show of the season, have you ever found here what you were looking for?" Somewhat startled, William Sowders said, "No," and got up and walked out of the theater.

He decided to get away from it all by going to Southern Illinois and settling in a small town called Olmstead. His intention was to spend the rest of his life hunting and fishing. The man who had enforced the law as a policeman was later to study and proclaim the law of God. He who at one time was a builder of boats was to build an ark of safety for God's precious people. William Sowders was destined to become a "fisher of men."

NATION-WIDE REVIVAL

At the time William Sowders moved to Olmstead, Illinois, there was a great nation-wide revival underway, with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the emergence of the Pentecostal movement. This Pentecostal revival revolved around the central theme of receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, divine healing, and the soon coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, they were saying then that Jesus could come any night. This was about the extent of the knowledge of God that people had at that

time. God anointed many outstanding preachers during this great outpouring of the Spirit. Men like A. J. Tomlinson of Tennessee, Charles F. Parham of Kansas, Charles Seymour of California, and Bob Shelton of Illinois.

Bob Shelton received the baptism of the Holy Ghost in Bloomington, Illinois in 1909. After receiving this exhilarating experience, Brother Shelton drove to the house of his brother and sister-in-law, Bye and Clara Shelton in Olmstead, Illinois. Brother Shelton ran up to the front porch and still pulsating with joy from this experience he exclaimed with holy fervor, "I've just received the same experience they received on the Day of Pentecost according to Acts 2:4, with the same evidence of speaking in other tongues!" Shortly afterward, Bye and Clara received the same blessed experience.

Bob Shelton, Bye Shelton and their wives, and a few others began having meetings in Brother Bye Shelton's home on the riverbank at Olmstead. In those days they experienced powerful and miraculous outpourings of the Spirit of God. Miracles occurred in their midst as they worshipped in simplicity, and let God have His way in their meetings.

In their humble beginning, Brother Aubrey and his wife, Brother Knight and others would come into the meeting not knowing what God was going to do. They were simply led by the Spirit with nothing planned or programmed by man. Their worship was simple and unceremonial. It was not just the routine of: two or three songs, prayer request, prayer, offering, testimonies, sermon, altar call and dismissal. The meetings were adventurous and exciting, each person not knowing what wonderful thing God would do next. Prophecies came forth! Spiritual freedom prevailed and divine tranquility filled each happy heart with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

HE RECEIVED THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ACCORDING TO ACTS 2:4

During those meetings many were converted to Christ and filled with the Holy Ghost. William Sowders, not yet converted, was attending to his fishing up and down the river, when he heard the sounds of singing and rejoicing reverberating from the little riverside house of Brother Bye Shelton. Moved by the sincerity of these strange but humble people, he felt a compelling force constraining him to attend their meetings. After he had gone to several meetings, he became deeply convicted and earnestly sought the Lord for the forgiveness of his sins. His desire for the Lord was so great that he lost his desire to hunt and fish.

About nine months after his conversion in 1912, Brother William Sowders prayed for, and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4. He received it under the ministry of Bob Shelton and George Aubrey on the "Gospel Boat" at Paducah, Kentucky. The little group had moved their meetings to a boat that they named the "Gospel Boat." An old timer that was present during that time tells about Brother Sowders praying and tarrying for the Holy Spirit. "When the power of God would come into the midst of the saints, Brother Sowders would leap right in the middle of them. He would get right in the center of the group, thinking that the power would fall on him."

"I WANT YOU TO PREACH MY GOSPEL!"

One day, while working on his boat, Brother Sowders heard a voice thunder to him from Heaven. He was on his knees fitting the floor in the engine bed, when this tremendous experience took place. The Lord kept saying to him over and over, "I want you to do something." Finally in desperation he threw his tools down and said, "Lord, what is it you want me to do?" A voice like a clap of thunder over his head said, "Son, I want you to preach *MY GOSPEL!*" He later recalled that the voice was so loud it actually took the life out of his body and almost burst his eardrums, especially

when the Lord voiced, *"MY GOSPEL!"* When he came to himself, he looked up and a golden light was all around him. He then felt strength come back into his body and he rose to his feet.

Since a few people already thought he was losing his mind, becoming religious, he intended to keep this experience to himself, yet he felt a powerful compulsion to shout. Overwhelmed by surprise that God had spoken to him, he tried to muffle the sounds welling up within him by placing a handkerchief over his mouth.

All the time men stood by on the riverbank observing Brother Sowder's strange actions with wonderment. After all, his own brother thought he was already losing his mind going after religion. One man said, "He is acting awful funny, them Holy Rollers sure ruined that man. He will never be no more good."

As they were discussing among themselves, Brother Sowders became no longer able to constrain the divine impulses penetrating his being. Having heard the very voice of God, he began hollering at the top of his voice! Another witness standing nearby said, "Look at him, Poor Will, he's a goner." The man continued in earnest, "Will had a good reputation and people liked him, but now the poor fellow's mind is gone."

This was a shocking and unforgettable experience for the young river man, who had never even given a thought to the ministry. But from that wonderful experience he started out from there to study GOD'S GOSPEL. The gospel he received did not come from some seminary, but was given to him by the Lord, which included healing.

"TELL THE PEOPLE THAT I WANT TO BLESS THEM "

In one of those great powerful meetings by the riverside, the Lord again spoke to this "called out" man and said, "Tell the people that I want to bless them." Reluctant to obey, he was unable to sing as the Lord repeated the message. Finally the Lord began to shake him and kept shaking him. He then went to Brother Bob Shelton, telling him what the Lord had said. Brother Shelton said, "God didn't tell me to tell it. He told you! You abide in the calling wherein God called you." Finally Brother Sowders said, "Folks, I have a peculiar message. God chose me tonight to tell you that He wants to bless you. "Sister Aubrey said, "Come on children, let's go down and get it." But nothing happened, so Brother George Aubrey said, "Well, let's sing it down." They began to sing, "Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need; Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead." The longer they sang, the deader it became.

Brother Sowders, fearing he would be a false prophet, was now in serious prayer. Feeling pretty bad, he then got up even when he did not feel like getting up, and the Lord then began to bless.

Brother Bob Shelton shut his eyes, and began rubbing his hands, and put his foot out. This was his manifestation when the power of God came upon him. Everyone was wondering what Brother Shelton was going to do. The Lord spoke to Brother Sowders again and said, "I am going to ordain you tonight to preach the gospel." This was amazing, because at that time the young man didn't know what ordination was. When Brother Shelton stood in front of Brother Sowders, he raised his hand and said, "My Son, this night thou art ordained to preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ!" Brother Sowders later recalled, "Oh, it went to my feet like dynamite." "Something fell on me like a mantle, and I was a different man from that time on." During that experience, the Lord also spoke to Brother Sowders and said, "Notice the congregation." The saints were shouting and praising God together. The message Brother Sowders received that night about God

wanting to bless the people had definitely come to pass. Not by man's ways, but by the Lord's way.

God's blessing for His people was amply proven as the years went by, as God used Brother William Sowders to set apart "a people" for His name's sake.

"YOU'D BETTER GO HOME AND READ YOUR BIBLE"

The Bible was a different book from then on. There was nothing for him to do then but read the Bible. If he would go down to the river to talk to the men there, the Lord would say to him, "You'd better go home and read your Bible.

One day Brother Sowders decided to go hunting. He crossed from Illinois into Kentucky and all at once his knees locked. He said, "Lord, if You will unlock my knees, I won't go hunting any more."

As soon as he crossed back over into Illinois his knees were all right. Brother Sowders studied the Scriptures and communed with God day and night over a period of about two years before he launched his active ministry. God began to reveal knowledge to him from the Scriptures that was a revolutionary departure from the teachings of the Pentecostal movements of that time. His interpretations were different from the ordinary trend of the religious world. God gave him a fresh new approach to unlocking the hidden meanings of the Bible. Brother Sowders was finding out that "*MY GOSPEL*" was entirely different from the teachings of the religious world.

FROM THAT NIGHT ON BROTHER WILLIAM SOWDERS HELD HIS HEAD UP AND TAUGHT PRECISELY WHAT GOD IN HEAVEN WAS REVEALING TO HIM.

He was receiving one revelation from God after another. A man of progress, he was advancing beyond his colleagues in revealed truth. God was restoring to him the enlightened doctrines of the Early Church that were lost during the falling away and the long years of apostasy of the dark ages. He was moving beyond the knowledge of the Holy Ghost and the Second Coming of Christ. God began to open up truths from the Bible on the Godhead! Hell! Babylon! The Body of Christ! Charity! Water baptism! Eternal judgment! The number and qualifications to be a part of Christ's Bride! These all revealed and restored their original first century purity, as Christ delivered it to the Early Church.

This young man was not altogether aware of what was happening at the time. Filled with joy over each new revelation of truth, he could hardly wait to tell the other preachers what God was revealing to him.

Brother Sowders would join a group of preachers every morning at 9:00 a.m. for prayer. To his surprise, the older men were not so thrilled. They thought he was going off into heresy, going off the deep end. They would give him a good rebuking or exhort him to come on back to their old level of understanding.

Heartbroken and disappointed, he voiced his thoughts to the Lord, "I am not going to read the Bible any more because what You are revealing to me makes me so different from these other preachers. They are falling out with me and turning against me." For months afterward the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord was no longer upon him. Praying and crying, finally he asked the Lord why He had forsaken him? Why could he no longer feel His Spirit?

The answer came one night when he was out in the dark in his backyard praying. Out of Heaven the Lord said, "You won't take the Word of God as I give it to you. You want to be like other

men." Stunned by these admonitions from the Almighty God he said, "Lord, from now on I will be exactly what You want me to be, I will preach it exactly as You show it to me!" Suddenly he jumped up as the power of God came as a mighty lightning bolt from Heaven. The Spirit of God once again rested upon him. From that night on Brother William Sowders held his head up and taught precisely what God in Heaven was revealing to him.

"I WOULD LOOK AT THEM AND I WOULD JUST WEEP AND WEEP"

Brother Sowders, later, looking back upon his early ministry, said, "I tried, and I wanted to associate myself with other men. When I would go to their camp meetings, I could not find my place there for my myself or my ministry. God kept me isolated from everything like that." God was seeing to it that Brother Sowders did not become a part of organized denominationalism.

Many of them wanted him to come and bring his teachings to their meetings and lay them on their table in the varying Pentecostal bodies. The Assemblies of God were just then in the process of organizing, but he said he just could not do it. Only on one occasion does he mention even trying to attend other camp meetings of newly organized Pentecostal bodies. Even then, it was at the insistence of Brother George Lawson. At 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon of this particular meeting, Brother Sowders began to speak on David and his five smooth stones in his shepherd's bag. He intended to explain the true meaning of that Scripture as a type of something spiritual, the five smooth stones referring to the five offices of the ministry. He was surrounded by preachers in this meeting. As he began speaking, he began to cry and could not stop. He later recalls, "I would look at them and I would just weep and weep, until I actually had to back up and sit down. There was something in me that was crying over those men like a child when its mother had died. They didn't know their condition and where they were heading, and they wouldn't listen: They just would not listen!" One by one, Brother Sowders watched as more and more brethren were carried away into Babylon.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES ORGANIZE

It was at this time that papers began circulating, calling all the preachers to Hot Springs, Arkansas. The purpose was to establish a unified doctrine and establish an organization for those that had been a part of a loose-knit association. They had "come out" only to go "back in." Revelation 18:4.

While Brother Sowders was praying about going to the meeting, one brother in particular was very vocal in urging him to go. He stated that he was going and urged Brother Sowders to accompany him. One night, after much prayer over this matter, Brother Sowders tells us of a dream he had from the Lord as an answer to his prayer. In his dream Brother Sowders saw himself in the hayloft of a large barn. Hearing a noise he looked down, and there in the muck and mire of the dirt floor of the barn he saw this particular brother walking around in the mire with the beasts (animals) of the barnyard. He awakened and said, "Lord, what does this mean?" The Lord said to him, "Brother is going with the Beast." Revelation 17:3. That settled it for Brother Sowders.

When the General Council met in Hot Springs, Arkansas in April of 1914, Brother Sowders did not attend their meeting. By the perfect leading of the Lord, God's man was still free ... the Body of Christ was safe!

HE HELD HIS FIRST MEETING IN COLUMBUS, KENTUCKY - 1914

Brother Sowders held his first meeting in Columbus, Kentucky in the year of 1914. Many were converted and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost in this meeting. He then came back to Paducah, Kentucky, speaking with the power of the Holy Ghost sent from Heaven.

CAUGHT AWAY IN THE SPIRIT

In the beginning of his ministry, this fascinating man was caught away in the Spirit several times. He said it felt as if his soul actually left his body during these phenomenal experiences. Brother Sowders relates one of these experiences as follows:

"My wife and I were traveling through Kentucky and we came to a place called Sand Ridge where we spent the night at the home of the Butler family. We were all around in the living room, and when time came to go to bed, we all began to pray. We knelt down just like little children and began to pray. All at once I felt myself going and I couldn't catch myself. The Lord took me away before I could close in on it and hold myself, and away I went. It seemed as if I went through space and when I landed it was the most beautiful ceiling that I ever saw. Where I landed, was just like an amber light, just thick. Directly on the right side I saw four or five objects, but I couldn't tell who they were, just forms. I was pressed up against that ceiling. I drew my head up because I was pressed so tight against it. A second later the Lord said, 'The time has come for you to go into the ministry.' I said, 'Lord, what about Bertha?' (That was his wife.) 'Bertha doesn't want to go.' He said, 'I will have her ready when I get you ready.' I didn't say Amen or anything, only I was asking questions. I have been in Heaven enough to know that there are no idle words in Heaven. There is nothing going on up there but real business. I said, 'Lord, what about my nets?' I was yet a commercial fisherman at that time. The Lord said, 'Time is too short to bother with nets.' I thought, 'All right, it is.' I asked Him several questions and finally I asked about His coming. I said, 'Lord, what about Your coming, are You coming?' He answered me. I said, 'Shall I tell that?' He said, 'Tell no man,' and I then felt that I was coming back down, down, down, back to my body. I knew when I entered into my body for it was cool. When I returned back to my body, I heard the audible words of the others who were down praying. I was actually more conscious of things when I was caught out of my body, because I was in an atmosphere where there was so much Life. Actually it just seemed like I was floating, and so sensitive that everything I heard was just like a tune, like an instrument tuned up. I have never had any desire to tell what the Lord told me about His coming to this day."

POWERFUL MEETINGS

On another occasion Brother Sowders recalls, "We used to carry women and men off to one side under the power of God. Those were wonderful, grand, powerful meetings. They didn't take place in a church like this here today, but were generally when we had meetings in homes. Many saw Jesus in those days. The visions given were precious. I was lying on my back one time after failing down on the floor and Jesus came three times to me. He was so powerful that He took my breath and I would have died if He had stayed there. I couldn't have stood it. Every time I would get to where it seemed my breath was cut off entirely, He would leave and then come back again. I couldn't get up. He was as beautiful a man as you ever looked upon."

One night while Brother Sowders and Brother Bob Shelton were holding a meeting in Cairo, Illinois, a notable miracle occurred. Brother Shelton spoke in tongues in six or seven languages, the gift of tongues. There was a Jew there by the name of Mr. Riesman, who wrote down the languages. At his store the next day, Mr. Riesman told the people he understood what that Pentecostal preacher was saying in the meeting last night. After that, he had more customers coming in asking if he understood what that preacher said the other night. The Jew would reply, "Yes." He would then

go on to read from his notes what Bob Shelton had spoken, especially the Hebrew. He said it was the finest Hebrew that he had ever heard.

In those early meetings people would raise up in the Spirit, without a thought of a song, and open their mouth and begin to sing. This was the operation of the Spirit.

The dynamic and spiritually led fourth grade graduate, Brother Sowders, would on many occasions, speak in tongues while foreigners in the congregation would understand what he was saying. After a few years of enriched and spiritually versatile meetings in the home of Bye Shelton and on the "Gospel Boat," the little group moved up the hill to a church building in Olmstead.

In 1916, Brother Sowders and a few others began holding meetings in Anna, Illinois in the Old Potato House. They converted this building into a church for worship services. Stories have been told that on this very location, they would suffer persecution for going to church. The opposition would throw rotten tomatoes at them on their way to the church meetings.

GOD CONTINUED TO REVEAL ASTOUNDING TRUTHS TO BROTHER SOWDERS

In 1920 Brother Bob Shelton became a missionary in Jerusalem and did not return to the United States until about 1938. During his absence God continued to reveal astounding truths to Brother Sowders. The Lord blessed him with great success as he taught in many meetings around the United States. During his meetings, thousands became converted and filled with the Holy Ghost, while all manner of physical diseases were healed.

Brother George Aubrey was a prophet in those days. He was anointed to read the thoughts of an individual's mind, and that which was upon their heart. But the Lord was raising up Brother Sowders as a teacher in areas of restoration. He was very sensitive when it came to being led by the Spirit and listening to the voice of the Lord.

HER TONGUE WAS PARALYZED

At one early meeting held by Brother Sowders, a few Black people attended. This was a remarkable event for that time. Brother Sowders, with the love of God in his heart, opened his arms wide to all people, regardless of color or nationality. He was one of the first to integrate his churches. A young woman, who objected to this, made the remark she would never speak in tongues again. Shortly after the meeting Brother Sowders was helping to pack the tents, when some people came running up the hill hollering, "Brother Sowders, Sister _____ fell an, something terrible is the matter with her. Come quick, she wants you."

When he got there, he discovered she had fallen while ironing, and by now they had put her in bed. She couldn't say a word. Her tongue was paralyzed. As the woman lay suffering, he got down on his knees and said, "My God, heal her now." The Lord spoke to him and said, "Come back again in three days. She was fed chicken and beef broth with a spoon for three days.

After three days Brother Sowders returned. He knelt by her bedside and the Lord revealed to him that she had said something she should not have said. He instructed her to repent in her heart, and the Spirit of God began to come upon her. Within ten minutes of prayer her tongue was loosened and she began to speak in other tongues as fast as her tongue could move. The woman was healed sound and well! But only after she had gotten all the bitterness out of her heart toward her sister of a different nationality and color.

Again he went to pray for a young man who had a paralyzed tongue. Brother Sowders sang the song, "Here am 1, send me." He said to the young man, "Son, when we say "Here am 1, send me," you say it from your heart. "Here am 1, send me." Then, as they sang the song, Brother Sowders later testified, "I could feel something coming and all at once I saw a white cloud fill the entire room. It

looked just like white cotton packed in that room. When we got down on our knees, I saw that white cloud whirling and go up in a funnel shape. When it went up in a funnel shape that young man hollered, "Glory to God!" His tongue was completely loosed. From the heart he had accepted God's call to him for the ministry.

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

During the influenza epidemic following World War 1, thousands of people died throughout America. Doctors and nurses were trying to treat the contagious affliction as they went into homes wearing masks over their faces to avoid becoming infected with it themselves. During those days Brother Sowders went into homes without a mask over his face as he prayed for the sick. Dozens of men, women and children in Southern Illinois were miraculously healed when he prayed for them. This young preacher said there were as many as a family of five ready to die, and they were healed in a split second. We sat down right then to eat beans, bacon, and potatoes. He himself was practically immune by the supernatural power of God and was not infected with the flu germ. Tumors were dissolved, cancers fell away, and many incurable diseases were healed. There were miracles, hearings, visions and voices launching forth this great man's ministry.

It was at this time that Brother Sowders was stricken with influenza. He steadfastly refused all medical help. The saints did their best to get him to submit to a doctors attention. But while he was yet in bed with a raging fever, cried out, "I'll die before I take a drop of medicine!" In his testimony he tells us that when he said this, he felt a cool hand laid upon his fevered brow (it was of an angel) and immediately the fever left him and he arose healed! From that day on until his death over thirty years later, not one drop of medicine went down his throat, not even an aspirin. He trusted God for his healing until the day he died at the age of seventy-three.

"TELL THEM TO ASK A QUESTION."

One night, during a meeting at the Evansville Church, he couldn't think of a thing to talk on. He said, "Lord, what am I to do?" The Lord said, "Tell them to ask a question." This was the first time he had ever done this. This was unheard of in the church world of that day - giving the people freedom to ask a minister a direct question in public. Brother Sowders said, "The Lord told me to let you ask questions."

A very prominent man rose to his feet. "Brother Sowders, I have been in your meetings since you have been here. Is it a fact that speaking in tongues is the Bible evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost and no other?" Brother Sowders replied, "Thank you for asking the question." Then God inspired him with the spirit of wisdom and knowledge in answering the question, proving from the Scriptures that speaking in other tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. After he finished he said, "Are you satisfied?" The man said, "Yes, I believe it."

From that time on, every Sunday questions were written in or asked orally. These meetings were interesting, exciting, educational and edifying to the whole church. A great depth of understanding developed in this order of teaching. The children were benefited as well as the adults. For this reason, Brother Sowders did not separate the children into isolated Sunday School classes, but all the people; men, women and children, ate from the same basket of truth. Division, schism, is not good, not even in the local Church.

FIRST CAMP MEETING

In 1923 Brother Sowders conducted his first camp meeting on Elco Hill at Elco, Illinois. It was during the camp meetings on Elco Hill, primitive as they were, that this powerful teacher introduced many of his divinely revealed teachings on numerous subjects.

It was at Elco Hill that he came across much opposition and ridicule. His doctrinal views were bitterly attacked. He was challenged to defend his statements on every point, for his thoughts, his concepts, and Biblical analysis. He conflicted with the old established opinions and doctrines taken for granted as being correct by the masses. Brother Sowders could not accept a philosophy or doctrine simply because everyone thought that is the way it always was. He could not preach an assumed theory, or an old tradition, just because the masses felt the warm security of Babylon's womb. Everything had to be tried and proven by the Word of God.

THE FIRST MUSICAL BAND

The first musical band to grace the Body of Jesus Christ was formed by a very devoted man, Brother Len Johnson, at Karnac, Illinois, where Brother George Aubrey was pastoring. In fact, Brother Aubrey himself played a valve trombone in the band.

Brother Johnson would bring this band to furnish the music for the Elco camp meetings and for other meetings held by Brother Sowders. This was a great blessing to Brother Sowders, as he was always fond of good music.

THE THRESHINGFLOOR

It was on Elco Hill that many fundamental doctrines were threshed out and taught to ministers and saints. A threshing floor may be used by men seeking truth, but once truth is established, once the wheat has been separated from the chaff, the need for a threshing floor no longer exists. One of the doctrines discussed with arduous participation in those days was the "Godhead".

In 1915 numerous so-called "Jesus only" groups of both white and black races began to spring up throughout the country. This "oneness" doctrine originated with the preaching of a Black Church of God evangelist at Indianapolis, Indiana. These groups expressed the belief that there was only one person in the Godhead, that Jesus was the Eternal God. They also taught that His Spirit was the Holy Ghost, and that the Holy Ghost was not a person. This doctrine was in contrast to the older established "Trinitarians" who accepted three persons in the Godhead; God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Ghost as a person also.

The "oneness" people stressed using the ceremonial formula of baptizing in the name of "Jesus." The "Trinitarians" steadfastly uttered the words, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The Pentecostal churches split over these issues. Their people divided and bitterness prevailed. Many of the early twentieth century Pentecostal groups shattered as a result of the friction and fury generated by the Godhead and water baptism issues.

THE TRUTH OF THE "GODHEAD" IS IN THE MIDDLE

As Brother Sowders studied and prayed over these issues, the Lord revealed to him the truth of the "Godhead." He was lead by God to take the middle ground on these issues. Through the truth of the word of God he could reach out to both his "Oneness" and "Trinitarian" brethren. The

"Trinitarians" taught three persons in the Godhead. The "Oneness" people taught there was only one personal Deity. Brother Sowders contended that there were not three, not one, but rather, two separate persons in the Godhead. God the Father, which he alleged was "a Spirit (Being)," and Jesus the Son, a Heavenly Creature. Two separate and distinct souls, yet one greater than the other. He agreed with the "Oneness" element that the Holy Ghost was not a person, but rather the Spirit, or essence of God. He placed a distinction between "Spirit" and "a Spirit."

STARTLING TRUTHS CHALLENGE TRADITION AND CEREMONY

Concerning baptism, Brother Sowders explained that the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost was Jesus! Jesus was the family name since the Son possessed the same name as His Father. And the Holy Ghost was the spirit of them both. Jesus was the name given to the family of God in Heaven and in earth. "Father" and "Son" are not names, they are only titles. (A father can have a son, and yet be a son. It is therefore a title and not a name.) Thus, the name (which is singular) of the Father and the Son is one name given whereby man could be saved; that is, the name of Jesus.

As to ceremonial words being said over the convert being baptized; this wise man of God emphasized that it is neither important nor necessary to say audibly any certain words or ceremony over the convert, but to be led of the Spirit. He said, "The Bible does not tell us what to say, but rather tells us how to do!" The essential thing he taught was that one was to actually baptize IN the name of Jesus. There is no ceremonial formula prescribed or commanded in the New Testament. In Acts 2:38 Peter said to baptize in the name of Jesus. The word baptize signifies the action, not words. The apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of Jesus." He stresses the word "do" - whatsoever you do - not say. So whatever you do in word, or in preaching, or when performing an act, do it all in the name of Jesus. In other words, if you do something in word, do it in the name of Jesus. If you do something in deed, do it in the name of Jesus. Colossians 3:17. One cannot baptize IN the name of Jesus if he himself is operating IN, and belongs to, another name (such as a denomination).

At last, the hidden ingredients of this burning issue were discovered! The truth of the Godhead doctrine now restored, and a position acquired which could unify God's people on the subject. The controversial William Sowders boldly proclaimed the new revelatory interpretations of God's Word infused into his heart by the Holy Spirit.

The startled Pentecostal ministers in attendance on Elco Hill became filled with anguish, as their old traditions sown by the heathen world, were being ripped from their repertoire of sermons. Their traditions had been challenged. As the Pharisees and scribes of old, their foundation was falling apart. The divinely anointed teacher of God stood his ground and confounded the gainsayers. Titus 1:9.

The foundation of all that was taught by this wonderful man of God was: "CHARITY." Doctrines were taught and threshed out by this very tool. Brother Sowders continually emphasized the importance of Charity to the saints and ministers of God. It is through the doctrine (and Spirit) of Charity that The Body of Jesus Christ continued (and continues) to form and gain momentum in the earth.

GOD BLESSES BROTHER SOWDERS IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Brother Sowders moved from Evansville, Indiana in the fall of 1927 and erected a large tent on Northwestern Parkway in Louisville, Kentucky. He preached to hundreds of people under his tent, causing many of them to be converted and to receive the Holy Spirit. Cold weather made it necessary for him to find a building to house the people he had gathered during this tent meeting, so

he rented a store building at Sixteenth and Market Streets. The Lord continued to add to the number and in a few months it was necessary to find larger quarters.

In 1928 he moved into a larger building located at 912 West Market Street, where he remained for five years. Again it became necessary to move to still larger quarters, and on March 23, 1933, he moved his congregation to 2111 West Broadway, where he remained for twelve years. By that time his congregation consisted of several hundred members.

In the fall of 1945, he purchased a church building at 1432 South 28th Street, which he called "The Gospel Chapel." He remained in this location until the time of his death. This tabernacle had a seating capacity of over one thousand people and at the time of his death, God had blessed him to see the building filled to capacity.

In those days, that was considered an extraordinarily large church. In fact, a church of that size, with that many people in attendance, was almost unheard of.

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM CAMP GROUND

Following his vision, in 1935, Brother Sowders bought 350 acres of hilly land near Shepherdsville, Kentucky for \$2,245.00. He called it the Gospel of The Kingdom Camp Ground, his "City of God," the place of his vision to hold annual meetings for ministers and believers all over the country. A home for the aged and a sanctuary for retired ministers.

Gospel of The Kingdom Camp Ground was a haven for all of God's children regardless of color, nationality, or religious background. Brother Sowders, with the love of God in his heart, opened his arms wide to all people. He was one of the first to integrate his churches, which was controversial for that day.

To this day, the Gospel of The Kingdom Camp Ground is still a haven and a refuge for The Body of Jesus Christ, where meetings are held twice each year.

GREAT INSIGHT INTO THE FUTURE

Brother Sowders possessed great insight into the future, divinely focusing upon events to occur years ahead of his time. He prophesied great changes and episodes as much as forty years into the future. He was indeed a man of vision, with keen spiritual instincts, generated by divine direction.

One such prophesy that he delivered came at a time when clean, fresh water was easy to acquire and in abundance. He told how there would come a day when people would buy and sell water. It was unheard of in that day, but it has come to pass in our day.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE

One of the most frequent prophecies that he elaborated on was the emergence of the "beast" system, mentioned in the writings of Daniel and the apostle John. Beginning in the early years of his ministry, during the early part of the twentieth century, William Sowders prophesied about this "beast" system spoken of in the Bible. This "beast" system would consist of the formation of a world religious confederation, headed by the Roman Catholic Church, all under the Pope of Rome.

This "beast" system represented by the feet kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's image, as portrayed in the second chapter of Daniel. Being allied to cooperate with the civil powers, the ten toes of the image working through a world organization. Certainly the ecumenical religious movement, formed before the end of the 1960's, consisting of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, is a direct fulfillment of Scripture and this remarkable man's prophecy.

Looking at the totality of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the gold represents literal Babylon. The silver represents Persia. The brass represents Greece. The iron represents imperial Rome giving way to Papal Rome to the ankles. The feet represent the end-time ecumenical confederation. The iron still represents Romanism, and the moist clay representing Protestantism and Pentecostalism. He said this would be a time of church mergers, and again he was correct. These religions within the framework of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church are allied with the United Nations and are very active in working through that agency. They are striving for an eventual one world government.

SEVEN WOMEN

Brother Sowders also portrayed Isaiah 4:1-4 as a spiritual prophetic type. The seven women taking hold of one man to be an end-time ecumenical event. Seven, which means completeness. He said the seven women represented the complete, or whole church world, taking hold of one man - the Pope, saying: "We will eat our own bread (doctrine) and we will wear our own apparel (various names of church orders or covering); only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach." Certainly this prophecy is in the process of being fulfilled, for by 1965 all but one of the seven major world Protestant bodies had taken this position. It now seems fashionable to be allied with Rome. For instance, when the Pope visited the United Nations in December of 1965, the religious representatives of these bodies acknowledged the Pope, kissed his ring and called him Holy Father. They had been official observers at the Ecumenical Council at Rome. By the late 1960's leading church men of these groups were saying the Pope was the first among equals among them. Then by the end of 1960, with the Pope calling home the "separated brethren," the last great Protestant body (the Baptists) began to join the ranks. Not just Protestants are beating a path to Rome, but the charismatic renewal has now caused Pentecostals by the thousands to make the same trek also.

RACE RIOTS

William Sowders amazingly predicted the race riots of the 1960's at least thirty years before they occurred. He prophesied the rebellion, riots and turmoil of this age. He envisioned venereal epidemics and outbreaks of rare diseases, all as a result of sin, depravity, permissiveness, famine and war. He foresaw waves of crime moving across the world. To such an extent that if one were wearing a gold ring, thieves and depraved men would cut off the finger if necessary to remove the ring. Cases of this sort have already occurred in our declining society today. We have had riots, bombings, and many of these evils already.

WORLD WAR 11

During World War 11 when many were saying Hitler would use poison gas before being defeated by the Allied Powers, Brother Sowders held staunchly to his prophecy that Hitler would not use poison gas. Brother Sowders was right!

PEOPLE 989 YEARS OLD

This man of God in his day also envisioned marvelous events and conditions regarding the Church of the last days. He viewed the Church as it would be in the age to follow his dispensation. The following is an exact quotation of Brother William Sowders on the Church of the

future as given on April 27, 1947: "There are some in these last days, if they are not martyred, will live on in the body. There will be people 989 years old towards the end of the Millennial Age."

"THEY WON'T JUST BE QUOTING THE SCRIPTURES, THEY WILL BE LIVING EPISTLES"

August 5, 1951, Brother William Sowders said: "There is a qualification for this next dispensation, the same as there was for this dispensation. For this dispensation, people had to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost to come into it. The next one that is coming, as I said, it will be spearheaded by a people hid away with Christ in God. They won't just be quoting the Scriptures, they will be living epistles, known and read of all men. You say, 'Make time for music.' There will hardly be time for music, because the business of the Lord will be so great! Jesus said, 'If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.' John 15:18. Didn't it say that? And don't I tell the truth when I say that? Therefore I said there will not be much music, and the real reason is because of the fact that the angelic host is going to blend their voices with the people of God.

Wouldn't you rather for Jesus Christ and the angels to blend their voices with our singing? Wouldn't you rather hear that, rather than just listen to our church sing alone? That is exactly what is going to happen. Brother Johnson is a good musician, but he will never handle that horn sufficiently for Jesus Christ to stand beside him and let him accompany Jesus while He sings. 'Oh no', because the voice of Jesus Christ or the voices of the angels will be so much greater and grander than anything else put out by our musicians. I am glad that God has thrown the walls down, thrown the bars down, and said, 'Here is space, take it', and there are miles ahead of us yet, for us to go further in God and to bring out of Heaven what God has in store for us."

"WE ARE NOT YET THE CHURCH IN ITS FULLNESS"

"Every movement that has come into existence has always said, 'We have it all.' There are churches over the city today that are telling their people, 'we have it all. We are the Church.' I say that we are not yet the Church in its fullness, that is yet to be. I have never said we were it! But we are the people that in a short duration of time will be The Church! Revelation 11:3. This has been a wonderful dispensation, but watch what I tell you. There is one coming that will excel this one, and our way of worship then will be different from this. I will say again, if we do not keep our eyes and ears open we will not understand what is happening. We will prefer the past."

"WHEN WE STARTED THE MEETINGS THEY WERE THE MOST POWERFUL, RICHEST, GRANDEST MEETINGS THAT YOU EVER SAW."

"Let me say this: God brought me through something when I first started in the ministry that has been a great help to me. I have used many of those things down through the years. I look back to the time when we were having meetings and had no music, not even a guitar. I never did forget those days. We never even had a guitar. I never heard any sweeter singing in my life than it was then, and I watched it. Not only did we not have a guitar, but we didn't have a church house and we didn't have seats to sit in. When we started the meetings they were the most powerful, richest, grandest meetings that you ever saw. Would you believe that all of these meetings I have come through these forty years, that I can look back and say they were the richest meetings I was ever in."

"When they built a church building I told the saints right there, 'That settles the sweet spirit here in our meetings.' They said, 'Why, Brother Sowders?' I said, 'Here we are building a church house. We are taking it out of the humble home down there and we are moving it up here on the hill. We are going to have church, and the church means we have to have a pastor. And the pastor

means that everything will be orderly. He will be proud and we won't have it as common as we had it down there.'

When we started up there on the hill, it was just a battle day after day, battle after battle. Who is going to be the pastor? Who is going to do this? Who is going to do that? So and so wanted to sit here. So and so wanted to sit there. We lost the sweetest thing that Pentecost ever had in that day, and I was plenty active. I was investigating around, finding out what this fellow was doing, and that fellow, and what they had, etc. I was attending their camp meetings. I wanted to go to a big gathering, but God rebuked me and wouldn't let me go. I was doing all I could in the way of getting out among the people. But we lost the sweetest thing that we ever had back there. God alone knows how it will be again out here in the future when the 'beast' speaks. Revelation 13:15-17. Changes are coming but there is much that is yet to be done between here and there."

"I WANT TO BE PERFECT"

December 30, 1951, Brother William Sowders said: "Therefore, watch what I tell you. From here on out men are going to be sifted. Preachers have got to be sifted. (There was a great confirmation by the Spirit of God.) I know these things are coming, and pray for me. Pray for me, I want to be perfect. Ever since I have been in this Church and requests for prayer are made, I raise my hand when you say 'How many have a request.' I raise my hand and say in my heart, 'Lord, make me, before I die, a perfect man.' (Confirmation of the Spirit.) My God, that is what I am praying for now. That is what I am striving for - to be a perfect man. I believe I can make it! I have felt more progress in that direction lately than ever before. I just actually mean to be a perfect man before the last breath goes out of my body. Did you ever read the Scripture, 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' Psalms 37:37. "

"PRACTICE BEING MORE YIELDED TO THE SPIRIT"

July 8, 1952, Brother William Sowders said: "We are going to have to get together, study it, preach it, and practice being more yielded to the Spirit. Like other Holy Ghost people, we speak in tongues very little. It is sad to think of the mighty Spirit of God that is in our lives, and yet we, as far as being spiritually active is concerned, there is very little of it among us. Very little speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, revelations, and many such precious things. We, here of late, have not yet ventured out into those things as much as we should. And if we don't venture out into those things, we can only say we have gone half way into the things of God and don't have that to substantiate us. If ever we get those things, we must come together and start letting God have His way in our midst. It is hard for people to understand how to get hold of these things, but it is as simple as anything else we have done. We received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and have gone into several areas of spiritual activity, but there is more! And I declare that if we go into the depths of the Spirit of God, it would be no time until we would be shaking the city with the power of God! We will never shake anything, any more than we have been shaken with what we have. But if we will just move on in, and everybody get busy, and have a desire and a love in their hearts for the advancement of the things of God, then we will have something more wonderful to add to what God has already given us."

"THE GREAT OUTBURST OF THE SPIRIT- A MIGHTY OUTPOURING - 13 GOING TO COME THROUGH INDIVIDUALS AND THEN COLLECTIVELY."

"Don't you know; as a general thing, people begin to get tired after about twenty years in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. You look back under the law and the prophets, and you will find out that the judges, priests, etc., stood for just about twenty years, backslid, then died. They gave up, or something happened that prevented them from going on in God. Notice in our day, everyone that has had the baptism about twenty years, he is getting a little tired along the way, getting a little rusty in many things. For that reason we must brush up and begin to get hold of the 'worthwhile' things of God. (Great confirmation by the Spirit of God.) The great outburst of the Spirit - a mighty outpouring is going to come through individuals and then collectively. (Another great wave of glory.) When it is time to sing, the Spirit assists. When it is time to preach, the Spirit assists. When it is time to praise the Lord, those praises go deep down into our being, deeper than at any other time."

"OUTCRIES THAT DON'T GO TO THE FIFTH RIB"

"There are so many praises, so many shouts, so many outbursts, outcries that don't go to the fifth rib, don't go below the collar bone. Everybody can shout. Everybody can praise the Lord. But seldom we can get it below the collarbone. Jesus reminded the Jews one time of what Isaiah had said: 'This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' Mark 7:6. We don't want to be like that. No, I should say not. Therefore we are trying in our meetings, giving everyone an opportunity to press in closer to God to get something more from God than that which we have been having. You take me. I have a tremendous appetite, but I don't want our cook to continually put the same thing on the table every time. I don't want it. I get tired of it. So if we are not careful when we come together... had beans night before last, and we have beans tonight. So be careful, for it will have an effect on the hearts and the lives of the people, knowing it will just be the same thing night after night.

"OUT OF THIS GROUP WILL COME GIFTED MEN"

"To have the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we must learn when it is the time and when it is in order. And in doing so, the Holy Spirit will be glad then, to come down with us and direct, help, and assist, and bring forth many greater and better things than we have had up to the present time. Out of one group of men that are assembling themselves together today, you watch and see, out of this group will come gifted men - men that will be outstanding - men that will amount to something in the Kingdom of God! Watch what I tell you!"

"YOU CAN ALMOST FEEL THE BREEZE FROM THAT WONDERFUL KINGDOM COMING INTO EXISTENCE THAT IS GOING TO SHAKE THE WORLD."

"Paul declares that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. And, be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove that perfect and acceptable will of God. Men that have the opportunity to present themselves, and don't take advantage of that opportunity, are very foolish, for they are missing a chance to be an official in the Kingdom of God. You can almost feel the breeze from that wonderful Kingdom coming into existence that is going to shake the world. You will never get it by sitting down. You will never accomplish anything by sitting down. You will never prove what is the perfect and acceptable will of God by doing nothing. Watch what I tell you. Meetings of this nature will bring out something, and if you don't get busy, you will be left in the background, because this is something in the Church that has got to be."

"I AM JUST TEACHING THE OVERALL PLAN OF GOD."

When asked what the 153 fish caught by the disciples represented, Brother Sowders gave the following answer: "Ministers will receive the more technical details of the plan of God in the future. I am just teaching the overall plan of God. It is like this microphone, here is the mike, but inside are little wires and many details. So, the many intricate details will be revealed later by the ministry God will raise up to close out the age and the work I have begun."

ONE SMALL ROOM, FOUR SUITS, AND A HUMBLE MAN OF GOD. BROTHER SOWDERS DIED ON NOVEMBER 20,1952 AT THE AGE OF 73.

Brother Sowders, a widower for many years, lived quietly and modestly in a tiny corner room in his west end church. He lived in just enough room for a bed, a table, two or three chairs, and a wardrobe locker to hold his four suits. It was here he died on November 20, 1952 at the age of seventy-three.

He was a "specially called" and a "specially anointed" man of God, a leader, and teacher of men. He was called and sustained by God to further the work of restoring God's Church in the earth in these last days. Truly, in every sense of the word, he was God's man for the hour with a burning desire to restore the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. In this he never weakened nor faltered to his last breath on this earth.

TODAY THE WORK STILL GOES ON - TO PREPARE A BRIDE FOR JESUS CHRIST

His achievements were not small by any standard. Brother Sowders was the Gospel of the Kingdom's national leader, and founder of the Gospel of The Kingdom Camp Ground. He was a mediator, ethical guide, authority in Scriptural interpretation and a unifying force. He had taught and ordained many young men in his school. These men went out to thirty one states and rounded some two hundred churches, with about 25,000 adherents at the height of the movement. Many of them - up to 2,500 believers at a time - would flock to the camp ground each summer for annual services.

Today his work still goes on with the same spirit that he sowed in the hearts of God's people. God will see that it continues in the earth until the Body of Jesus Christ reaches maturity and the last remaining members that make up the Bride of Jesus Christ are made ready. To join the number that attained that high calling of God in the Early Church.