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Present Address: Dundee, New York)

December 12, 1981

J. C. McCloud:

Dr. Imes, I am very happy that you have consented to grant me this privilege of interviewing you. I wonder if we might begin with your telling me a little bit about your family background. Your parents and your early childhood--when you were born and so forth?

Dr. Imes:

I was born in the year 1889 in the parsonage of the Second Congregational Church of Memphis, Tennessee. I am not proud of my birth city. I am very proud of my home mission parents, Benjamin Albert Imes, a graduate of Oberlin College, Class of 1877, Seminary of the same institution of 1880. That same year, with his new bride, for he was married to Elizabeth Rachel Wallace who also was a student in several departments of Oberlin College. This brave, young couple knowing full well that going to such a city as Memphis, even with a well established home mission church--The Second Congregational Church--had its attractions. Nevertheless, he and his new bride had no illusions about the kind of city they were going to. A typical instance of the insults that passed between the races, so called black and white, was known to my father when he took a railroad journey of short duration. I understand that there was a little, tiny country village not far from Memphis where he was scheduled to preach, and they went into what was hoped to be a Jim Crow car. But this light skinned lady, as my mother was, and this brown skinned man, as my father was, looked otherwise to a silly, prejudiced white Southerner who at once attacked my father for a very wrong reason, indeed! My father wasn't the bravest man in the world and he was aware that he would be running risks if he resented such misconduct and he defended himself with not only arms and fists but with kicks and knees against this white Southerner or as the man who thought he was white. He may not have been anymore than my father was brown skin. But, it was typical of the kind of thing into which he went, and I was born in the parsonage, the youngest of three sons. Elmer Samuel Imes born in 1883, Albert Lovejoy Imes born in 1885. Both living to manhood to do useful occupa-

Dr. Imes:

tions. My oldest brother became an honor science student at his College, Fisk University, graduating from it in 1903. He also went for some of his graduate studies to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor famed for its fine physics department where he made first rank as a scholar and finally won his doctor's degree there and did a ten year term of service as head of the Physics Department at his Alma Mater, Fisk University. This was the decade leading up to the 40's. He was taken from us by death when we were in our last parish in New York City, and I officiated at his service by the wish of the family. I think that makes at least the starting point of my early life.

J. Oscar McCloud:

Tell me about your early education. You said your brother went to Fisk. Where did you go to College and Seminary?

Dr. Imes:

I went to College and Seminary partly at Knoxville College where I was interested enough, not only as a college student later on, but as a kindergarten student in the practice school of the teacher's department; and so I ought to know Knoxville College very much, in a thorough fashion. I know another side of Knoxville College that I would rather not speak of, but I must be frank. I think my happiest days there were my kindergarden days, before I realized how deeply racial feelings and discriminations can start even under so called christian auspices. The frightening aspect of it grew upon me with the years. I went back to be President of that same college years later. I loved, and my wife loved the boys and girls who came to us to that college. And not a single student in the quadrennium of years we spent on that campus went through our college course when I was its Administrator without being invited to our home, the President's house on the campus. My wife enjoyed nothing more than her ministry to the boys and girls of the graduating classes than going over the list carefully and seeing that not a single young man or young lady was left out of the invitee list. It was her dedicated task and the only crowning joy we had--if it can be a joy, it has its pain and sorrows--in the fact that my wife was good enough when my

Dr. Imes: mother had fallen and broken her hip in her old age. She lived to be in her early 90's, which I am now in my 92nd year. In a few days, God willing, I shall pass my 92nd birthday. But going back to the kindness that she showed to my mother, she made a room of the President's house her bedroom and she enjoyed, I think, being with us, as much as you can enjoy old age and pain. I'm undergoing some of it myself now, but I try not to complain because I have been so much on the fortunate side compared with many others who probably deserve a providence of God if we may presume on that. And, I'm glad we had the ability to do for my mother what we did at the last for her.

J. Oscar McCloud: And you went to Seminary where?

Dr. Imes: I went to Seminary at Union Seminary, New York City at the suggestion and active advice to, for he contacted persons who knew much more about Union Seminary in New York City than I ever would have known. He was my professor in Psychology at Fisk. His name was Professor Cornelius Wartendike Morrow. I do not know his background, otherwise. I know he made a good teacher of psychology and in those days college professors held not chairs but divans, and Professor Morrow was no exception. Incidentally, he had taught my brother, Elmer who graduated seven years before I did. His graduation being in 1903. So we made many friends among our teachers and enjoyed Fisk very much. To me it was a godsend. In the summer of 1908, our Father, the Rev. Benjamin Albert Imes of Oberlin, as I have stated, Class of '77 was taken from us. The only fortunate thing about the time and place of his funeral was that we three boys could all be there and one nephew of his, the Rev. Dr. G. Lake Imes, then a member of the President's staff at Tuskegee, Alabama. He came over to the service and made a sort of a fourth son at the funeral. My father's burial took place in one of the mission schools and churches where he was principal and pastor. The school and church at Prairie, Alabama, one of six mission stations of the United Presbyterian Church, at it called itself that. I enjoyed taking turns with my other

Dr. Imes: members of the family. Sometimes it looked as if the entire principal's and pastor's family were the sole representatives of the teaching profession in the mission.

J. Oscar McCloud: Did you teach there in Alabama Also?

Dr. Imes: I did teach in the mission schools. There was always work to do and particularly if you were pursuing your college course or even beyond college years. It was an interesting and valuable thing for us. We hope we did good work as teachers and some of us did. I learned a great deal from my father and from my older brothers, both of them. Although the scholarly brother and I say this in no light fashion was the older of the two older brothers, Elmer Samuel Imes and Albert Lovejoy Imes. By the way, you will notice that they have biblical and abolitionist names in their names, and my father named me for a man who was a victim of the northern haters of abolitionists. (J.O.M.--you don't get your name from William Lloyd Garrison?) I get my name from William Lloyd Garrison, but I never use the Garrison and my parents never used the Garrison. But everybody knew that I was a moral descendent from the man whom they tried to hang in Boston. Because being what the world calls a white man, he was just simply God's Gentlemen who couldn't bear to see unfairness to men and women of dark skins in American life.

J. Oscar McCloud: I want to return to the question of your name in a few minutes, but let me ask you about that seminary. You went to Union Seminary? (Dr. Imes--I went to Union.) When did you enter Union?

Dr. Imes: I entered in the fall of 1912. (J.C.M.--1912!) I had spent two years, after my father's death, trying to help my mother get settled so she could be self-supporting. She had no trouble in getting a teacher's position from her experience as well as her training she received at Oberlin College. But, she never looked out for number one first, it seemed she always got a job and she was welcomed in the home mission church and school fraternity.

J. Oscar McCloud: I entered Union exactly 46 years after you did. What was it like there when



J. Oscar McCloud: you entered in 1912?

Dr. Imes: In 1912, I found such giants as the man whom the Presbyterians had the bad judgment to turn out of the denomination and he fled to the Episcopalians who strangely enough although they had not any perfection to their operations, color line or whatever; but nevertheless, I found--give me my thread of thought there again--(J.O.M.--Union Seminary.) Union Seminary. It had such giants as McGifford in church history and it has ah yes, a man who was turned out of his denomination, and I believe he fled to the Episcopalians, but whatever it was (J.O.M.--what was his name, do you remember?) Yes, Yes. It will come to me. (J.O.M.--it wasn't Coffin now was it?) No. Coffin was much younger. Coffin was one of my teachers and a very beloved teacher. He was a good homiletics teacher and best of all, a good homiletics practitioner. Practitioner, I guess would not be amiss although it sounds like a medical term, doesn't it? Well, I enjoyed the friendship as well as the teachership of men like McGifford and the man whose name I cannot now recall, but he was turned out of the Presbyterian Church and fled to the Episcopalians who treated him as a scholar and a gentleman. I shall think of his name soon. (J.O.M.--was that out of some doctrinal question or something? Why was he put out of the Presbyterian Church?) He was put on trial. I know that much and I think his trial was in the '90's. (J.O.M.--that wasn't Northern, that was the Meacham thing that came much later.) No, that wasn't the Meacham trouble. No. No that was something else. I will think of it. I will think what it was and it was, oh, it was disgusting!

J. Oscar McCloud: When you went to Union in 1912, did you have any problems among the other students or housing problems or anything?

Dr. Imes: If I did have it with them, the accident of my complexion which is on the light side and which had been shown against my mother by the indecent attack on her new husband and all for reason of color prejudice. No. I found the Union atmosphere decent. I never had a fellow student for whatever reason--well the accident of my relatively light complexion which I neither used to

Dr. Imes: further my own interest, or to run away from. I couldn't understand because I had always been brought up by my parents to respect people for what they were in their minds and hearts and how well they were trying to adjust their lives and occupations towards a brotherly world. I felt it was a special insult to our educational institutions that they did not make this plain in the beginning and stick by it. From my babyhood up, I learned to respect people according to their minds and hearts. The fact that we had varying degrees of complexion right in my father's family would make it a natural thing in the world for the boys of that family, for there were only boys born to us, I was the youngest of three children. All our names bear, with the possible exception of the scientist, Elmer Samuel Imes, whose middle name was for his grandfather who was a dirt farmer in middle Pennsylvania and who rejoiced to have a son, a grandson, bear his name. (J.O.M.--when you finished Union, where did you go?) When I finished Union, I went to a testing ground for me and for the people too. I went to a church that had the wrong thing to boast of if it did, as I learned from the gossipers. I learned that the Crescent Avenue Church, Presbyterian U.S.A., had forty million heirs among its members, most of them commuting each day from our little City, for Plainfield was a commuter city in the New York orbit. As if that were some ideal to put up before people, the amount of this world's goods that they had amassed. I could not see it that way. I was no hothead arguer or promoter of anti-color bias, but I did take a stand against it. I was very glad that in appointing me to one of its five chapels that I could say that the chapel over which I was made pastor and where I was given a rightful place by the presbytery, I was installed by the presbytery, I was never made to feel by those who held the real authority in the church, the minister, John Sheridan Zelie. God bless him for a noble heart. He always felt for me deep respect I tried to return to him. I was not surprised then when a few years later before even I could stomach the system no longer bowing the head to the veil of wealth. Dr. Zelie found that those who criticized

Dr. Imes: him for not preaching Christ he says, "what kind of Christ do they want me to preach". He couldn't realize that men and women could let wealth corrupt their thinking about life and human beings and racial animosities or discriminations of any sort, whether they be racial or not. John Zelie was a good friend to me and I will not forget his memory. He and Mrs. Zelie treated me as a person and I enjoyed fellowship with them as minister and wife of the mother congregation. (J.O.M.--and how long were you there?) I was there for four years. I asked leave of absence in my last year because World War I had broken out and I understood that there was intense need for chaplaincy work for the thousands of Americans who were going abroad to fight an unnecessary war,--all wars are unnecessary. If we had right thinking people in our churches and in our denominations all over the world (J.O.M.--how long were you in the chaplaincy then?) I was allowed leave of absence for a year. I took a little less than that because my mind was getting set towards a church where an uncle of mine, a physician, my father's younger brother, Dr. Thomas Creigh Imes a graduate of the Honimman Hospital and Medical School in Philadelphia. My paths have crossed many years since those years when a graduate of the Honimman Medical School and my father's own younger brother and a good man in his own right as proved by being among the elders elected in the old Lombard Central Church which had, interestingly enough, a lot of the false pride against which I vigorously preached, but they never drove me out, they loved me in their own fashion. I loved them not because my uncle was an elder in that congregation. Indeed, I loved them for a very different reason. He never tried to use any influence over me, his nephew, as pastor of that congregation. He was also respectful to me. I tried to be respectful to him as my uncle but I was no imitator of him, faults or virtues, I hope. I always loved him in my own way. I found him never, never yielding the least to favor my position. Indeed my troubles were with one or two other elders, distinctly so. My uncle was reverent toward our position as ministers in the face of the problems that will crop

Dr. Imes: up between the clergy and laity. But he was a good uncle, a good physician and a good friend. (J.O.M.--and from Lombard, where did you go after that?) From Lombard Center, I went to my last pastorate. I was called to a little church that had been founded by a graduate of Lincoln University. By the way, that University did me the honor to offer me and did bestow on me in 1929, I think it was, the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. The man who was very, very interested in this honor which I did not discredit at all and I thanked them for the thought of me. I was more interested in my parish work. I hope I did not ill deserve the honor. I tried to honor it, and many, many people felt that I did so at least for them. I kept close to Dr. Roberts of my new congregation in New York City. It was he who wanted me to come to St. James. He had known of my interests in the church even before I was released to come to him. My congregation in Philadelphia, God bless them, was very dear to us. It seemed as if my whole family had a new kind of life. I think that was the congregation towards which are hearts inclined. It was in Philadelphia that our two daughters were born. Hope Mathilde, although she was really named for her grandmother who was called Matilda. We made the latter gesture as our interest in the fact that people can choose the spellings of their names as they so desire. That much has never to my mind been a problem. Our two daughters were born there. Hope Mathilde who still lives, and she and I are the only survivors of our family of five. I will name then now. My name is William Lloyd Imes, named for one of the great abolisionists of this country; my wife's name is Grace Virginia Frank Imes and I do not know all the goings and comings that gave her her names. I know she was very fond of her ancestors on her side of the family, the family of Franks in the tiny, little village where I still live in my extreme old age and I always enjoyed it. One thing that endears me to the little property that she and I bought in the year 1924 with some first earnings that I made as a starter; I won two or three, I forget the exact number it doesn't matter, limerick prizes of papers of Philadelphia.

Dr. Imes: The "Philadelphia Inquirer" and I think also the "Evening Bulletin", but I'm sure of the Inquirer on the one hand, because I had a young man in my congregation who himself was a newspaper reporter and I guess was one of the first black to enter that profession. It is not generally regarded as a profession, but I see no reason why it should not be. The late Mr. Orrin C. Evans and I cannot recall what the middle initial stood for, but he was a forthright young man and he responded to my particular type of preaching which tried to inculcate the social virtues. Not to pester people about my pet theories and pet doctrines but rather to win them by life and by work and by sacrifice, if necessary. I'm sure I did enough of that. (J.O.M.-- you mentioned there were five of you. You, your wife.) Yes, I will name them again. My wife's maiden name was Grace Virginia Frank and came of a medium sized family in this little village, highly respected. One of the few families not disdainful of the African blood that was in their veins. I enjoyed the fact that when I came to marry Miss Frank whom I met at Fisk University in the last two years of my collegiate experience there; she took her degree in Education and I took mine in the Liberal Arts, and we never regretted the step. I asked her to marry me when I went to my first parish and she said yes and she came to my first parish. My mother helped me to settle the first parsonage we had. The parsonage was a rented parsonage, and a part of my going away from the rented parsonage in Plainfield, New Jersey, the city of the forty million heirs, the fact that I did come to Dundee was because her family made me at home. I did no wiser thing than come to a family oriented church and with a level behind it that spoke louder than any other words could. I never regretted it. It was on Labor Day 1915, the same year in which I was ordained to the Bethel Chapel of the Crescent Avenue Church in Plainfield. It was to Dundee that I came to marry the girl of my choice and the girl who fortunately for me made a good wife. We had 54 years of happy married life. All things weren't smooth but neither were all things rough. We endured the roughness and we came out as we began. Victorious,

Dr. Imes: because we never disdained the commonplace things whether in human relationships, or otherwise. I found her a real help. I've already recited some of that but it is never too often told or too often looked up to. (J.O.M.--and you had three children?) We had three children. Wendell Phillips was born in 1916 and Hope Mathilde Imes was born in Philadelphia in 1924 and Jane Elizabeth Imes, the Elizabeth is for my mother, her grandmother, was born in 19, did I say '24? (J.O.M.--yes, that was Hope.) No, 1921 for Hope. Hope Mathilde Imes came in 1921 and Jane Elizabeth Imes, the youngest, whom we lost as a result of a tragedy in the home. A nurse girl was unaware that she had left the child near an old fashioned heater which was in the bathroom with exposed flame, and Jane suffered and was the first of our children to be taken from us. Her body lies buried in the family plot, here in Dundee, New York. Did I speak of all the children. (J.O.M.--Yes. She died in childhood then?) She died in childhood. (J.O.M.--and your son?) Son died in World War II. He was one of the new officers that came to the front and was given the position, but was also given the handicaps of the race line. Not a single black physician or nurse, so far as we can recall, came to the Army hospital where he passed away after the slaughter of the new troops that were sent into North Italy in the World War I. I think I won't go along that any longer.

J.Oscar McCloud: You were, at that point of your life and ministry, you were at St. James?  
(Dr. Imes--I was at St. James, Yes.) When did you go to St. James?

Dr. Imes: I went to St. James following my pastorate at Philadelphia. I was aware of St. James having Dr. Roberts there who knew my family and largely because of what reputation I had attained at the Lombard Street Church; considered with great respect by churches with much larger membership, but considered with great respect. No one was more faithful to these duties than those two elders, my uncle, Dr. Thomas Creigh Imes of Philadelphia, and Dr. Eugene Percy Roberts of New York. The founder of the St. James Presbyterian Church, as it liked to call itself, probably gave the name to it of St. James for

Dr. Imes: reasons best known to him. But he was the Reverend Pierce Buckner Tompkins. I do not know the meanings of the first two appellations, but he bore an excellent record as a student at Lincoln University of the older days and was highly recommended to that congregation that was to be founded in New York City. It, like most of the older churches--the churches established in the old century--came uptown to the new melting pot in the island of Manhattan called Harlem and became famous for jazz, and thank heaven for poets like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. I knew them both personally and indeed we entertained such dignitaries as these when they had acquired fame either in poetry or the arts. It was commonplace for us in our parsonages to open our doors and try to acquaint our congregations with those who were leading in the fight for the educated classes, knowing all the people that made up what we called the black people of American life. (J.O.M.--how long were you at St. James?) I was there between 1925, the Fall, and 1943, also the Fall. (J.O.M.--Then did you retire in '43?) No. Fortunately for me the call came to an inter-church job which was much more to my liking than even being a good presbyter. I heard flattering talk as every minister who wants to be appreciated, appreciates kind words if they are said honestly and many of these were said very honestly, that if I had remained in the presbytery... It was freely said and sometimes what could be just nothing but gossip has more than gossip to it, but I appreciated the fact that it was kindly said of me that there was little question that I could have gone with the strength of New York Presbytery behind me. I'm not in for church politics and it doesn't matter to me whether I'm honored with an honor or not or whether I deserved it or not. Maybe that's the wrong way to say it, but I am not indifferent to kindness and I'm thankful that I was thought worthy of it. Years before we had a succession of black people, including a black lady honored by being made the head of the General Assembly, The Moderator, as we call it, and they have all done their work well, the men and the ladies. I believe we have had two ladies? (J.O.M.--No, just one. Two men.)



Dr. Imes:

(J.O.M.--you said you left St. James and went to?) I left St. James and I went to the call of an inter-church agency. It called itself and still calls itself, The New York State Council of Churches. Its territory is a little bit changed, not much. That is influenced by the fact that the Synod of New York is no longer in existence. The Synod is enlarged, taking in parts of New England and New Jersey. Am I correct in that? (J.O.M.--that's right.) You would know as an Administrative Officer of our denomination. (J.O.M.--so were you working out of New York City, or where? When you were working with the Council.) When I was working with State Council of Churches we met first in the capital of the state. But that proved to be immoderate in its financial dimensions, and we felt that to go to the center of the state with the head office of the Council of Churches would be wiser. And we were right in that. We are closer to the other denominations. When I say we, I am speaking of the Presbyterian family of churches. I think I have witnessed more get togetherness and more reciprocity of a good ecclesiastical kind than ever before in all my many years in the ministry. I'm now honorably retired and have been for a longer time than some men's whole ministry. But I am thankful for reasonable health and not until recent years have there been serious physical ailments leading to a succession of surgical work on my abdomen. (J.O.M.--what were your responsibilities in the job with the Council of Churches?) My job was interesting. It was called--all jobs should be interesting or should be made so, or ought not to exist--I enjoyed it because it not only attacked the problem such as the labor problem or the race problem or class problem or even financial or other problems coming up to take the whip hand and drive the carriage, but I enjoyed the fellowship of people who were working and they called my work Social and Adult Education. It was my chief of staff's way of putting it. He was a Methodist minister and well liked in his denomination. He and I met in New York City where he was an officer of the New York City Council of Churches. He said to me, and it seemed almost jocular at the

Dr. Imes: time that he would like so much to have me in the larger fellowship. He said he was going to accept a position as head of the State Council of Churches, and said "Lloyd I hope that you will be available some day, if we should be able to add a member to the staff". Then he told me that he felt a department of Social and Adult Education...he emphasized both aspects, social and adult. He felt that not enough attention was being paid to the young adults of the church. That many of them were champing at the bit, wanting to get on with the procession. I don't know if that's mixing the metaphors too much but I give it out for what it's worth. I was interested and so I did let him know when I felt that I could no longer put up with the trifling that my Board of Trustees, made up largely of church men, some business men too, aiding and abetting them in their wrong attitude towards my administration of Knoxville College. Both my wife and I felt alike in that we owed a duty first of all to these students who had not only an educational battle to fight in America U.S.A., but we had a larger context in which we wanted to move and should move forward. Not backwards.

J. Oscar McCloud: You went from St. James to Knoxville?

Dr. Imes: I went from the pastorate, yes, of St. James...I let it be known early in the year that I had received a call and would like to offer my resignation, with regret. That I had enjoyed being with them very much and enjoyed especially the courtesy and kindness of men like Dr. Eugene Percy Roberts of Lincoln University and others. (J.O.M.--and you went to Knoxville?) I went to Knoxville. (J.O.M.--and you left Knoxville and came to the State Council.) I came to the State Council.

J. Oscar McCloud: Can you say a little bit more about the situation at Knoxville?

Dr. Imes: Well, my trustees in Knoxville wanted the little colored children who came from the back woods mainly...not altogether...from the cities of the South too where they were introduced, unfortunately, to many of the viler conditions. Thing that youngsters ought never to have to face when they come to a city, color line or no color line. Things that affect all people. They hadn't learned

Dr. Imes: to think. The whole milieu was arrayed against it. They wanted me to make the students over into little images of so called white people. I wouldn't do that. That wasn't my philosophy of life. It wasn't my philosophy concerning the so called race problems in all the countries of the world. I tried to give to the boys and girls the feeling of worthfulness for each one of them and my wife fortunately caught the same angle and loved it. As my telling you how she saw to it that not a single boy or girl that had come either from the big cities, for there are a few big cities and were a few big cities in the South then. But, students were coming from all over the land--north, east, south, west--we were becoming, although still a small college and with a very small budget... but we were making, we hoped, good men and women of them first of all. We wanted good in that ecumenical sense. Not a denominational college, although technically so, yes, but a good college under church auspices which enjoyed its students and wanted them to become responsible, self-respecting leaders among their people--among all people.

J. Oscar McCloud: So even back in the 1940's there was a little bit of a tension between you, as the President of a black college and a Board of Trustees. And I assume that Board of Trustees was all white?

Dr. Imes: Practically so...(J.O.M.--practically, yes.) Unfortunately, the few black ones kowtowed to the white majority. Some of my bitter enemies and would be defamers ...they came out the little end of the horn.

J. Oscar McCloud: How many years did you spend with the State Council?

Dr. Imes: With the State Council I spent seven and one-half years. I visited every county in New York State. I linked up, as far as I could, with the local or regional would be a better word perhaps, Councils of Churches and Councils of Adult Bible Classes. My strategy was very simple and not immoderate, not calculated to be over doing it. I saw that a great many men had lost their zeal for the church. So I made as large an impact as I could on the men of the Men's Bible Classes. I majored on that. Now maybe I narrowed it too much. Maybe if I gave them a broader social program, then they would have chosen for

Dr. Imes: themselves. I admit that I am not omniscient in such matters, not even yet with all my years of experience. There's always something new to learn. I still receive...I'm on the mailing list of both the National Council of Men's Bible Classes and other agencies like that. Well, I did work with them and I visited them and I cultivated them for the strength they had because they were bonafide members of congregations, and they were members of the Adult Bible Classes. And where those Adult Bible Classes could be group-wise, whether they stuck to one individual church or not, we didn't advocate one or the other, we felt the men could settle that better than we could settle it. What we felt was a general program where men could get together and use their manpower wisely as possible to help the social gospel get across. If by social gospel you meant not shrinking from any social betterment. When we spoke of men's work in the church, we spoke of it in a rounded fashion and we hoped that the men would not become so self-centered that either denominational interests or class interests or other interests would keep them from one steady march together. Not letting the church always come out for favoritism for one group or another. But democratizing, not in the political sense, but democratizing our religious faith and making it work. So that a Presbyterian -- to name one here who came by it honestly was really coming back to my grandparents original faith, although because of his contacts in Oberlin College and Seminary, my father, Benjamin Albert Imes, stayed pretty well in the congregational , even though he became a member of several presbyteries and I think in one city he became a member of a Methodist group. But he was ecumenical in mind and heart. When he joined a presbytery, it did not mean he was Presbyterian first, last and always or congregationalist first, last and always. Those to him were mere badges, and he felt that the core of the matter came in an ecumenical mind and heart in the church.

J. Oscar McCloud: You retired around the mid 50's or something?

Dr. Imes: Yes. Yes, I retired in '55. I became eligible then for Social Security, such as it is. It's going through a rugged time now, and Mr. Reagan hasn't

Dr. Imes: helped it much. He may have meant it for the best but after all life has been good to him, he is an actor by profession and I see nothing against that. I'm all for that side of the man but he should never have let the ultra-conservatives get hold of him.

J. Oscar McCloud: I gather that you as a retired person receiving Social Security feel that Mr. Reagan never consulted with the retired people about those changes?

Dr. Imes: Never to my mind has he done so. If he felt that life had its easy places without stern conflict against the greed that gets into us all and makes us less than the men and women we should be...

J. Oscar McCloud: Dr. Imes, many of our fellow black Presbyterian ministers who know of you have a great deal of respect and admiration for you and remember you or know you through word or hearsay, I guess, as one of the great preachers in this church. Not just one of the great black preachers but one of the great preachers. Could you say something about your preaching style? When you were in the pastorates did you do topical preaching or exegetical or... how would you describe your preaching style?

Dr. Imes: Well, I tried to make it a, and maybe this is over ambitious, but I tried to make it... embrace all those facets of the homiletics in the field of practice. That was one reason why I stayed as long as I felt I should in denominational work. I was very glad that the inter-denominational were, had come to the surface, not that it hadn't been with us in one form or another, even in the old century, the 19th century so called in which I was born I'm really a child of that century, my rootage is there and many of my tradition is there, especially the traditions of naming your children in part, at least, after great abolitionists' men and women who dared fight for the cause they felt to be just. You can see that from my little study in which we were going to hold this question and answer session today Dr. McCloud and I suppose you saw the government honor to that great and sainted lady whose name is a familiar name in New York State. You will find a home in which this lady lives. She was a government worker against slavery and she became a soldier and nurse and spy for the government in order that she might do the right thing

Dr. Imes: by her enslaved men and women. I have a poster of this brave and gallant woman who was not only a good person but a good abolitionist and I'm glad our government had the courage to print such a poster. I hold it in a place of honor although it may not look so.

J. Oscar McCloud: You were...a lot of your ministry was during the period of the depression and the period of the second world war. Did you find yourself confronted with a lot of social issues in your ministry, and if so how did you deal with those in terms of your preaching?

Dr. Imes: Well I tried to mention them without singling them out as the only sinners. That is, I felt that we could not condemn people as belonging to a certain class, an aristocratic class or so called or a monied class--sometimes those were interchangeable adjectives--but I tried to bring in the social issues because they were already there. They could not be lofted away. They could not be dragged in by force, you can't make a man sign a doctrine of what his beliefs are he must come to that of his own conclusion. We look on the christian gospel as bearing its own just share in the struggle for the good life.

J. Oscar McCloud: In this connection, can you mention what you might considered to have been the greatest or the most important sermon <sup>or sermons</sup> you may have preached during your ministry?

Dr. Imes: I think that one that wasn't intended to be a sermon at all, is the best thing I ever did when I attended at their invitation at Teacher's College chapel on Columbia campus, when I chose to say yes to the friends who asked me if I would speak concerning Mr. James Welden Johnson's great poetry. And I told them I thought that God's trombones was one of the finest books I had ever read. That it would have a high place of value in the world of literature whether it was recognized or not. And I've never changed my feelings. My feelings have been rightly brought out and I'm glad that Mr. Newbold had the courage. It took courage to do what he did. He wouldn't have just taken that out just because of me

Dr. Imes: because he knew something about my history in the church. (J.O.M.--you are referring to that collection of black preaching.) Yes. Not that collection so much as the very fact that there was the call for a literature of the kind that this poet philosopher was doing. I thought we should have more preaching like that and I feel that still. I feel we have left the prophetic school rather high and dry. We ought to have a succession of people. Now like judge that Mr. Bradford. I think I remember his father. (J.O.M.--which Bradford is this?) Mr. Bradford, the one who is <sup>at</sup> the head of the music department and also a part of the chaplaincy of the college (J.O.M.--which college?) A&M College there in Marylandville. (J.O.M.--I see.) My father use to be chaplain there years ago. He was a congregational minister. He never left his membership in that church. I don't think they demanded it of him, even when he became for reasons best known to him, that he wanted to be in fellowship with the Presbyterian Boards of Mission. He thought on some things that they were right and he was not a man easily to be misled. He thought carefully.

J. Oscar McCloud: In your day was there a great deal of preaching about sin and judgment?

Dr. Imes: Oh, the old fashion theology I suppose they'd call it. Coming down to the mourners bench all like that? (J.O.M.--yes.) I don't say a word against it if its honest. The main thing I find is that sometimes there are catch words and a man doesn't really believe in the conversion of a man and his money to...when he gives himself up to a religious life he makes it a real change of heart. Now some of the old fashioned preachers could show us, no matter how much degree holding we moderns might do or men who have lived over from one old age, old century style to another in one little lifetime. Being a member, of at least two different households of ancestral ties, I would imagine my grandfather would not feel very much at home with a sermon that I would preach. But he would be wiser than anything textbooks could give him about knowing whether it came from the heart. That I have seen many times. That the humblest people in your congregation know more about what we call



Dr. Imes: *the Evangelical mission of the church. We mustn't think that the world begins and ends with our theology or with our sermonizing or with our attitude towards sin or our belief in the great doctrines in the church.*

J. Oscar McCloud: *You have mentioned this word Evangelical and in my lifetime and ministry which has been very short, there has been considerable debate about social action versus evangelism and now, of course, in the past few months and years there has been this movement of the charismatics and the conservative evangelicals and now the moral majority. Do you have any thoughts on this?*

Dr. Imes: *I haven't studied their literature carefully to pass a judgment on it. It may have...my feeling is, now that you bring the subject up, that there are many points that are worth bringing up. So, therefore, I don't tear into pieces the magazine that calls itself "Ministry" when it comes to my desk as it probably comes to yours. (J.O.M.--it comes to mine also.) I say they want to emphasize some aspect of the christian faith as they see best. So I don't worry about them. I say heaven bless them, if they can help make a segment of our humanity in American better, God bless them and I won't quarrel with them. I will help them, but I certainly don't have to get down on my knees and thank them. They've made no new discovery. They are working on some aspect and they are hoping that the rest of us will help to pay the bill. I can't help them. I can't do that justice to their position, to the exclusion of anyone else. I think they will just have to take their own weltings in the marketplace---(J.O.M.--just like everybody else.)--like everyone else. Like I have done, like you have dauntless done. You haven't always liked it, but what could you do about it.*

J. Oscar McCloud: *Dr. Imes, a large part of your ministry in the church was during a period which is, as I read, about that period of the 20's and 30's and 40's, was when segregation and discrimination was very rampant in both church and society. Can you comment on given that kind of a social climate, what was it that drew you to the gospel ministry as a profession and as a way of life, service?*

Dr. Imes: Well, I guess it grew up in me because of the abolition background. You will notice that my father's naming of his children almost always brought in a name that honored an abolitionist standpoint and other cognate matters. I can't express that as fully as I would like to. Maybe I don't know enough about those who don't look at it in that way at all. Not interesting. Who would think that I evident overt emphasis on the abolitionists' names. For instance, they wouldn't know how to describe sojourner truths. I might. To me, she was a great worker. She said to Fredrick Douglass, it is credibly told I don't know where my source comes from, but I understand that in a public meeting when Fredrick Douglass himself, a valiant warrior against slavery and who said that he always prayed God for his freedom but somehow God never answered his prayer until his prayers got down into his feet. And that was literally true with him. He knew all of those other fellow abolitionists...

J. Oscar McCloud: But maybe God had answered his prayers. It was just a matter of Fredrick Douglass discovering.

Dr. Imes: Yes. He discovered the fact that God helps those who help themselves. I believe that's attributed to Ben Franklin but Douglass could have done it just as well.

J. Oscar McCloud: You mentioning Fredrick Douglass and the abolitionists, I want to ask you about someone whom I have only become, been introduced to since I got out of the Seminary. So that will tell you how recent it is. A man names Henry Highland Garnet. When did you first become aware of Henry Highland Garnet who was a kind of contemporary Fredrick Douglass?

Dr. Imes: Well. Henry Highland Garnet was minister of the little congregational church was it? (J.O.M.--Presbyterian.) In Troy. (J.O.M.--Liberty it was called.) He left a very good name and he left some children and grandchildren. I don't know just where to find them but I always had high respect for the name.

J. Oscar McCloud: When did you first become familiar, acquainted with that name?

Dr. Imes: When I first went to Troy. I was invited to Troy to preach in one of his churches and there I became acquainted with people who had known and fellowship

- Dr. Imes: with Henry Highland Garnet and over whom he had good influence. Never did I find a single thing that could be called actual church history on the local level that was against what he stood for and did.
- J. Oscar McCloud: There has been some recent research done and writing about Henry Highland Garnet I want to ask you another question about this great emphasis in your family and among your parents on the abolitionists. (Dr. Imes--naming children after them.) Can you comment on the extent to which you think that emphasis on the part of your parents influenced the kinds of concerns that you had when you became a man and was entering your own active ministry?
- Dr. Imes: I'm fairly sure that it had great influence. That I felt that these traditions if they were going to be really and truly traditions and not just play things or badges. I think there has been a tendency to use that latter as a motive which is not worthy of...we must have a learned profession as well as a profession that appeals to the senses and appeals to the feelings of people. I'm not against an honest passion, an honest love for what is right and willingness to stand up and be counted for. I think it's that latter thing that is often minimized and that people get in the habit of doing lip service to what we call true religion. That's what the spiritual sometimes bring in a half-jocular vein, "has he got good religion"? "Certainly, certainly, certainly, lord". I don't know whether that survived the musical department of Hampton or Fisk, my alma mater, or Teladega, or any of those older colleges who had their reterges<sup>?</sup> both in the evangelical message and in what one might always call it, the artistic beauty. I think both belong together. I don't think they ever should be divorced from each other. That's my feeling and that seems to come in some way from my father. Although he probably, I won't say that he would go far even if he were to come back to this earth alive again which I hope he does to some extent through me--I'm the only preacher in the family...my brother Elmer was somewhat skeptical about some of the statements of Paul. I think he was soured at the call to be the chief ? and, I don't so read Paul, he's a weakling because he caters to the school

- Dr. Imes: that would have you get out of the way and get out of his way.
- J. Oscar McCloud: You mentioned earlier and of course you finished your ministry in an inter-church, ecumenical job and the fact about your father, he was ecumenically involved. This is sort of unique in terms of the experience of black christians in this country to have a stand of ecumenical concern that covers the period as wide as yours, isn't it?
- Dr. Imes: Well I enjoyed my inter-denominational work. It taught me somethings I had not thought I had known but I did not know thoroughly enough. I would have gone back and done things there. I wouldn't have changed my point of view regarding the responsibility of an educational institution, like a college--like Knoxville College to be exact. To harbor both types for evidently what was the old United Presbyterian Church they were the ones that gave us that part of the title, you know. The United Presbyterian Church did some shameful things in the name of religion. Now I could find out only about five members of the faculty over which I presided for whom I could have intellectual respect. (J.O.M.--when you went to Knoxville?) When I went to Knoxville. (J.O.M.--and those were mostly what--black or white?) Most of them were white. (J.O.M.--really. But only five for whom you could have any intellectual respect I enjoyed the professor of the Classics--I enjoyed him very much. He was what the world's calls white. I think his widow is still living. His name will come to me presently but he was Professor of Latin and Greek. Subjects that were then pretty much earmarked and datemarked, perhaps would be a more accurate statement. Tilford was his name. Herbert Tilford was Professor of the Classics. Another man who had a profound influence over me and who I think was still there when I came back to be the President of the College. I know what they wanted me for. They thought I would be a drawing card to get more money, and I tried to do it! I went to Iowa and was in an ace of getting hold of several new centers of contributions from Iowa. I don't know what the reason was, I was no special attraction, they had heard nationwide people of every sort in Iowa, but well I hope I have at least part the answer to

Dr. Imes: to your question.

J. Oscar McCloud: Let me ask you a question about whether you have any views... I noticed here in your stack of books you are reading you have the Plan For Reunion with the Presbyterian Church U.S. and the UPC.

Dr. Imes: Yes, I'm doing that book before our annual meeting. I probably ought not to do it but I think I owe something, if the lord spares my life that long. Our annual meeting will come early in '82. (J.O.M.--that's the Presbytery meeting?) Yes. I have already put in a request to one of the elders' families that has both the husband and wife who are either going to attend that annual meeting or will see that I get there. I've made it a request. I hope to have an intelligent memorandum drawn up that the Presbytery may want. It may not need it. (J.O.M.--will you share a copy of that with me if you get it done? If I get it done.

J. Oscar McCloud: So far, what are your views about this reunion?

Dr. Imes: Well, I think that the main thing is that the Southerners want more power. I can say that to you without being critized because I think you would be broad minded in it. I hope I'm misjudging them. But if it means that the Southern Church or the U.S. as they call themselves now...if it means that they honestly want to see one united group and that united means yes, not uniform but united and there is a distinction. I start out with that as one of my preconceptions. I don't know what's in their minds and if you have any thoughts on it, I'd be glad to know them before the next annual meeting of our Presbytery. It may shed some light on what I'm trying...in that volume, I have it here, and I shall read it, not that I think every word of it or every phrase of it is commendable. I may find some shock disagreements and it will be a rare document if it wouldn't have something in it that just... well, grow sour on you.

J. Oscar McCloud: But the fact that you are reading it, suggests to me that you take it very seriously and you're very interested in the subject.

Dr. Imes: Oh, I think it's very serious. I don't know all the motives of the Southern

Dr. Imes: Church. I know they want more power. They may bring a natural majority to the actual membership. I don't know. You who are in the places of authority and in what we now call agencies, would know that better or <sup>perhaps</sup> perha it would be a better statement to say you know the texts from which we are getting our sermons. We're going to have sermons on them and maybe it's going to mean digging deeper beneath the surface. Maybe we've been too superficial and taken things for granted. Now maybe the very things that you have been pulling out of me as best you could and I'm not saying that to reflect on the quality of your searching--I think it's good, I think it's wholesome--I'll say that before I say anything else. We should have executives of agencies, if the other denominations...Now I'll ask you a question. Do you know how the other denominations are doing with their nomenclatures? Are they following our example, as Presbyterians?

J. Oscar McCloud: Well let me answer you so that answer is not on the tape. Let me answer that for you after we finish this. Is that alright? (Dr. Imes--yes.) Since they want this tape as an interview of you but let me answer your question after. Let me go and ask you another question. You mentioned something earlier, almost as a kind of a passing statement about...you were talking about your request to be relieved to go and serve as a chaplain and you made some comments about the whole question of war, the question of peace. What are your views today on...I gathered from what you said that you have some views today which are decidedly different than they were at the time you asked to be relieved to go serve as a chaplain. What are you views about the whole threat of world peace?

Dr. Imes: Well my motive for asking to go as a chaplain was I couldn't think of men, even if they had been out and out anti-black...(Tape II) Well, now for instance, let me give a very homely instance. A certain person in the Crescent Avenue Church, not necessarily among the 40 million hiers they boasted about--and that's no idle statement. I heard that statement used and it was used by people who were plain spoken, but were terribly mistaken in their

Dr. Imes: attitude and in their ethics, in their practical ethics. A certain family lived back to back<sup>g<sup>m</sup> 4</sup> lot with the little chapel which I administered as one of the chaplains, you might call me for a moment, of the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church; which ostensibly was paying my salary to be over one of the chapels. They would like that impression to go along but I happen to know because I knew what was coming in at the little chapel. I knew the treasurer and I knew that he was an honest man and would give a good report. We were practically self-supporting, and they never made much of it even to themselves in the chapel, much less their 40 million hiers. They wouldn't want that to get out. As a matter of fact, my first treasurer happened to be a black man. He was one of the Wormleys of Washington and you know what a high place of regard the Wormleys' families have in that bailiwick, I'm sure or you know of it if you don't know it. Dr. Wormley never came out and was, to my mind kowtowing although he might not have been wanted to be considered in that light, because he was a nice person. He was well spoken and he knew what was right and he was raising a little family of his own and I hope they have done well and I feel they would. I don't remember the mother in that family half as well as I do the father because I saw more of him. I think he was my dentist. I'm not quite sure. It doesn't matter. I'm sure he would do conscientiously whether it were in the professional field of care of the teeth or not.

J. Oscar McCloud: But you were pastor of that church, chapel when you went into service?

Dr. Imes: When I went into service. I think I went because I felt touched that there was so little care for the boys who were dying then and to us were a new kind of disease. It was just going through the camps. Through the... I guess you'd call them military hospitals. Men dying like flies! I was called upon to see a young, white Southerner. I know blessed well-- I think I know-- that there would have been a lot of hoopla if they had known I happened to be what the world doesn't know. I'm a black man. I'm not sorry of it. I don't think its any disgrace to be a black man. I think quite the contrary.



Dr. Imes: I think it's to his credit that he knows what is good whether he sees it observed by the general public or not. Part of his ministry is to minister to those in need. Here was a man dying of...we'll call it the flu, I guess (they called it that too back in 1918. I went through those barracks, hospitals I'll call them and wondered now what's going to become of our petty conceits and deceits regarding this infernal race question. It's ? in my family because we've seen so much of the ruin of it, and deliberately, my father, my wife and myself...no, I'm getting ahead of my story. My father and his wife, Elizabeth Rachel Wallace Imes went to the hardest place they could find. They had all kinds of questions to come up in their parish. They had discriminatory practices among themselves, and sometimes they had it on the accidental color line. I know reputable families who became disreputable in their conduct and they were aware of that dichotomy between themselves all over this black-white question .

J.Oscar McCloud: Do you think we have moved considerably beyond that today? The whole feeling about color.

Dr. Imes: Some. Yes, some. I wish I could say we've made better progress. I had a very dear friend whose skin was if anything lighter than mine, and I think his hair was in his youth on the brown side. Now where did he get that terribly large mixture of fleshly personalities? He was a lovely fellow and I loved him but he thought that I was snitching on him when I said that he was going with a rather careless crowd. I thought he felt that I was going beyond my desserts. He was born in the same month and year that I was which was December of 1889. His name was Ramsay Washington. An old family of... well on the father's side they weren't so old in church history or local history. I didn't know the father very well, but I did know his mother because his mother and my mother were good friends. They were both light skinned women, but I never had any reason to feel that they were playing off their accidental color for any advantage in the congregation or not. I rather feel my mother would not be party to anything like that. I felt she had gone through enough. Do you know. You don't know but I'll tell it

Dr. Imes: now. Will this get on the record? (J.O.M.--yes.) My mother through a man by the name of Missionary Wright that was his name. Did you ever hear of him? (J.O.M.--no.) Well, he was ?light after a fashion. Missionary Wright took my grandmother on the Wallace side, my wife's side, and she was selling pies--someone must have made those pies, it must have been my grandmother on that side--to the Union Soldiers when they were in camp in ?, Mississippi. Can you beat that? Missionary Wright worked among those people. Brought them to the North again and brought others each way. I never could understand the complexity of it but maybe I'll understand some day. They had their own reasons for it. But they labored with those questions. Why shouldn't we be just as diligent in our approach and in our solution? Was I demeaned in anything, anyway because I saw young youth writhing in pain in a barricks' hospital--and that's the wrong term, I realize but I acknowledge my being yet in my A.B.C.'s as well as to military outlines and equipment.

J. Oscar McCloud: Do you believe...how do you feel that the church has dealt with issues like the racial justice issue say compared to the '30's or '40's? Do you have any opinions on that?

Dr. Imes: I think we meant well but I found comparatively few who in those days of 1918 could feel that there should be any discrimination in the treatment of those just about to go abroad to a very uncertain future. They did not know what that they or their fellow soldiers or other army personnel would be the next to be in line for a crueler death than ordinary. Because you're carrying a double weight, your're carrying a weight of racial discrimination and you're carrying the ordinary physical difficulty that comes to us all, whether you are white or black. What poet was it who says, "my grandpap(pause)died in the palace --someone died in a shack--wonder where I'm going to die being neither white nor black". I don't think it started with Dunbar, it sounds like Dunbar. I won't trifle with it. I'm sorry this is getting on the tape.

J. Oscar McCloud: Let me ask you a different kind of question. In the future as blacks and others read the history of New York State and the history of the Presbyterian

J. Oscar McCloud: Church and read about William Lloyd Imes. How do you wish to be remembered by those who come after you?

Dr. Imes: Well, I haven't thought much about it. I just took it for granted that <sup>then</sup> the ~~the~~ would know that I was a plain journeyman preacher and I believed in it and it was a hard life, it wasn't easy intellectually or practically. I never thought of it as an easy job. I never coveted <sup>it</sup> from that standpoint for if I had I would have been sadly disappointed because my people in every congregation loved me, but they kept me reasonably poor. Some were just as good as gold--God bless them. Others were trifling with it. They treated the church as a luxury or as a toy or what have you. I don't want to say more to their ~~discredit~~. Maybe I deserve many of the criticisms that I got behind my back but I tried conscientiously never to sell any individual or any family or any group of persons that may have made an association of some sort within or without the church. When I say without the church, I don't say that in any derogatory sense because there are many outside associations that will be glad to acknowledge that if it hadn't been for the workability of their plans within the framework of the church, there would not have been any plans. Many of them have been turned to a life of good works because they have seen that the church has made for it and God bless those who were willing to do that without stint or limit, without reckoning the cost either in this life or the future.

J. Oscar McCloud: There are those in the church today, like myself, black brothers and sisters who feel that we owe a great deal to people like you, Dr. Underhill and Dr. Harris and others whose ministries came in those very tough years. As you look at the way in which this denomination has responded to racial justice issues, do you feel relatively happy in the way the church today deals with racial justice?

Dr. Imes: I don't feel happy but at the same time, I'm not despairing. It's a mixed situation and it's up to each one of us to be willing to beat the critic to the punch. Who was that man who was imitating the so called black dialect

Dr. Imes: he said, "well"...well I won't try to quote it, because I'll miss the mark like I did with the poetry.

J. Oscar McCloud: Let me ask you another question that might bring some thoughts to mind. About ten years ago, just a short distance from here in Rochester, New York the General Assembly was meeting and it was that year that there was a lot of debate about a grant that was made by the then, Council on Church and Race for the defense of Angela Davis. Did you follow any of that discussion at all?

Dr. Imes: Not that specifically. I remember the name, Angela Davis and I think they had as one of the major feelings against her that she was a Communist. I don't know whether she was a crypto-communist or not. I suppose if she were, well that too would not be the right thing to criticize her for to let her be the judge or to let people who would be willing and able to give her fair and just criticism, yes; but unfair and uninformed criticism, no. I don't hate the Communists as a Communist. I simply dislike his philosophy of politics and I certainly dislike his philosophy of living conditions. That's what I'm really against and I'm against the things he's helped to make possible and it may be some good will come out of this present altercation which we are said to be, in talking about each other and coming closer together. I understand the German people of the Eastern portion of the nation and of the West are trying to get together on as many issues as they can, and they may really repair some of the damage that was made after the Nazi regime. If so, I wish them well. Everything that can be done for making good feelings between people who formerly had been estranged on theological questions or political questions--everything that can be done to bring things out in the open, I would share and credit. I think they deserve our prayers that they at least can be assured of sympathy with their understanding their world better than I can.

J. Oscar McCloud: I know Dr. Imes, you have...you sat here and have allowed me to question you for quite a bit. I have just a couple more questions and I will...(Dr. Imes--that's all right) Have you done any writing in your life and ministry?

Dr. Imes:

I've done an essay in "The Hills Beyond The Hills". That's the latest. Now that came to pass early in this decade which is...is it still? (J.O.M.-- this is the eighties now.) No, this is a new decade. Well, going to that (last decade, that 1971 to '79...would 1980 be in that decade? (J.O.M.-- you mean 1980.) 1980. (J.O.M.--yes, '71 through '80.) Well, I don't...(J.O.M.-- was that Hills Beyond...) "Hills Beyond The Hills" was definitely of that decade. (J.O.M.--what kind of writing was that? Was that autobiographical?) It was largely autobiographical. For some, it was an exercise in showing how their theological thinking had gone. I preferred to note that/<sup>it's</sup>just the pedestrian things we've talked about today--parishes, where were they? what were they like? who were their leaders? (religious leaders, that is the ordained ministers) We haven't touched the feminine subject either that we are glad at least, I assume we are--I know I'm glad to live to see the day when women are called to the ministry. One of them came to offer me the holy communion here in my own home in this very front living room this past week. I was very glad that I could look to her and say that I was glad she was pastor of the congregation where my late wife was a member all of her years since we left and came to live year round in this little home. My wife enjoyed it and only a tragedy took her away. God's providence knows best. I feel that I neglected her for the moment and it was a sad unguarded moment. We were calling to see two families particularly that afternoon. One was a so called white family--we made no distinctions in our friendships, if we felt that friendships were right. We visited...first of all we visited our son-in-law's mother and next we visited this so called white family. It was at the latter building where neglect of the builder to ...the front entrance was carpented or built or rebuilt or the one thing they didn't do, they didn't put hand railings on the front steps and my wife lost her footing and fell and broke her hip. She was one of the unlucky, if there can be such a term used, that took her away from us suddenly. Just like a clap of thunder from ...well, I'll not quarrel with God's providence.

J. Oscar McCloud: You were talking about the writings and mentioned the one. Have you written other things than "Hills Beyond The Hills"?

Dr. Imes: That's the last writing I did that's been published that I know of. Excepting let's see...who's asked me for other statements? I've given a statement to Frank Wilson. Is he still on the staff of one of the agencies? (J.O.M.-- Oh no, he's been retired for many years now. He is 81 years old. Next month he'll be 82.) Well he came and interviewed me and his writeup is in the Historical Society.

J. Oscar McCloud: Let me ask you one final question Dr. Imes. If you were giving some advice to young black men and women today in the Presbyterian Church, as they look up their future as either lay persons or ministers of the gospel, what advice would you give them?

Dr. Imes: Well, I would tell them try to be not so overly anxious in trying to make a brave new world to express a title...I think it took the headlines a few years ago, I forgot whether by a book publication or newspaper correspondent or anything, it doesn't matter. I would say don't be overanxious. Do the very best you know how and be frank with others, be open, be open to criticism if it calls for that (you're not the only person in the world who has been or will be criticized) and don't lose your hold on God. God and life are in some mysterious way one. We don't know all the secrets of the universe, we don't know the secrets even of our own selves, bodily or spiritual. We are having a hard time catching up with ourselves. I would say that we are learning more than every before and we are showing a desire to learn more and that's a good trait. I hope I'm wrong in feeling a doubt that some will take the attitude that my boyhood chums, you can call Ramsay Washington of Memphis that--the last touch I had with him was when he was a college student at Fisk and I know I felt anxious for him but I didn't want to be a little Mr. self-righteous man, presuming on our friendship since our babyhood and the friendship of our mothers for each other (I suppose some people have that from the other angle, from fathers to sons) but it just happened to be in the case of our mothers

Dr. Imes:

who were very close together. I did not write to her about it--my feelings about anxiety for Ramsay who was getting in with a silly crowd there. Campus dwellers are under severe temptations to do so. There's a false friend at ( every corner it seems who wants to take a decent boy and turn him into a good-timer and I'm afraid that happened to Ramsay, I don't know. I hope not. I said to the matron of the building--they were having college matrons then that was the day, I suppose because they could get them at a cheaper price. I'm telling tales out of school because there may be still living members of that family. I don't know that there was, were any other children, excepting Ramsay. I think he was the only child in that family. I wouldn't want him to feel I was betraying any secrets because every student has his solicitations to lower his thinking about life, beauty and what ones friendships should be and do for us. I hope nothing in this I've said to you today will mar it. If so, if you can delete it in anyway, I would ask you to do so. The Washington family was very dear to our family and I know they were members of my father's first charge, regular church charge. I have heard from members of that congregation. We gave, this is not boasting because we weren't asked to give a, an extraordinarily large sum--I think it wasn't more than \$100 in all, but that was much for us and we boys gave it gladly to have a memorial window in one of the windows of the new church that has moved out together with Lemoines College. They have one college and church complex there in Memphis. I have seen that. I have not been able to go back in recent years nor to give any further gifts, except a memorial window. But, I'm very much pleased that its former minister and his family were willing to go back to the church that he had served so long there. Some men can do that and some cannot, but I don't justify the one plan--it wouldn't work in all cases and it's no sign of merit or demerit.

J. Oscar McCloud:

Dr. Imes you have been overly generous with your time and your willingness to share... (Dr. Imes--well I felt I'd better take it easy and I thank you for allowing me to do so, and for taking our assistant housekeeper who Mrs. Imes



J.Oscar McCloud: approves of and you could see from her conduct and from her talk that she means what she says evidently. She has a good name in the Village and has done many families kind services.) She thinks a great deal of you as she talked about having known you and your family connection since her childhood, so I'm glad that you have somebody like that to assist you.

Dr. Imes: Well, it's kind of her to hold onto us as a family and we are equally glad that such families as hers with her brothers I think at least 5 brothers-- I'm not quite sure of my calculations but they have been useful men. One a farmer, living in Vermont, 265 miles away. He came here recently and came here to see me and I was unable to go out to see him. I had taken a back set of some sort then, and couldn't see anybody.

J.Oscar McCloud: Well, on behalf of the Presbyterian Historical Society and myself, I'd like to say thanks to you and I wish you a very blessed holiday and a good, 1982!

Dr. Imes: Well thank you. I need all the good wishes I can get. I thank you for your visit and I thank Dr. Wilson, Frank Wilson and I thank others who have come. Do you know an historical worker in Pennsylvania? I think he is in Philadelphia. James G. Spadee.....End of Tape