

CLARENCE JORDAN COLLECTION

AR 39



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Clarence Jordan Collection

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Summary

Main Entry: Clarence Jordan Collection

Date Span: 1939 – 1987

Abstract: The collection contains articles, clippings, correspondence, and newsletters from organizations related to Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Farms. The material discusses the impact that Clarence Jordan had on racial views and spirituality.

Size: One linear ft. (one box)

Collection #: AR 39

Biographical Sketch

Southern Baptist advocate for racial equality, Clarence Jordan was born in Talbotton, Georgia, July 29, 1912. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Agriculture in 1933 and a Ph.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1939. Clarence married Florence Kroger in 1936, and they had four children. Jordan founded Koinonia Farms near Americus, Georgia in 1942. The farm's purpose was to teach agriculture to poor rural farmers and to demonstrate brotherhood and peace through community. Jordan is also known for "Cotton Patch" translations of Paul's Epistles, Luke and Acts, which were published in 1968 and 1969. Jordan died in Sumter County, Georgia, October 29, 1969.

Jordan grew up in the Baptist church in a Christian family. He was the seventh of 10 children. When he was 12 years old, he made a profession of faith after a revival at his church. His parents wanted him to be a lawyer, and Jordan's intention was to come back to the South and bring legal justice to the area. Jordan soon realized, however, that the people were not having legal issues – they were hungry and oppressed.

Jordan attended the University of Georgia and earned a degree in agriculture. He participated in many extracurricular activities including the Baptist Student Union and the R.O.T.C. program. While attending R.O.T.C camp, Jordan was convicted that he could not kill. He could not do something that went against everything that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, and he chose to go to Seminary.

Jordan decided to become a minister of reconciliation, and he attended the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and received a degree in Greek New Testament. He wanted to be able to translate the original text of scriptures. Jordan taught English New Testament at a Negro school, Simmons University. In 1939, the

Long Run Baptist Association asked him to be the director of the Sunshine Center located in the west end ghetto area of Louisville. He changed the name to The Fellowship Center and worked there from 1939 to 1941. He worked with Negroes who had moved to the city from farms in search of a better life and realized that their problems did not start in the ghetto, but on the farm. They were poor farmers who knew little about the scientific part of farming.

In 1942, the Jordans, along with American Baptist missionaries Martin and Mable England, bought a 440-acre rundown farm, in Americus, Georgia, that they named Koinonia Farms. Their idea was to create a witness community for reconciliation between races and between the rich and poor. The community grew and became very successful in its mission. The Jordans joined the Rehoboth Baptist church, but, in 1948, the church told them that they were no longer welcome at their church because of their racial views. Jordan received more hostility when he agreed to help two Negroes enroll in the Georgia Business College.

The Americus community decided it no longer wanted Koinonia Farms in the area, and every local business began to boycott the farm. While the farm was struggling to make ends meet, it was plagued with numerous charges and violent attacks. The roadside market that produced a large percentage of the profit was bombed. Guns were fired at the market and at the homes of people living on the farm. Eventually, all but two of the families left the farm in fear of their lives.

During this time, Jordan was writing his own version of the New Testament – called the Cotton Patch Version. Profits from the publication of the Cotton Patch Versions helped the farm tremendously, and, with the addition of new families to Koinonia Farms, the establishment began to rebuild. The name was changed to Koinonia Partners, and they started filling mail orders for pecans, holiday candies, and cakes. Eventually, two new organizations were formed – Fund for Humanity and Habitat for Humanity.

Clarence Jordan died at age 57 in the writing shack behind his house while he was translating the gospel of John. He was buried in his work clothes in a cedar coffin on Koinonia Farms. The funeral was small, with members of the farm attending. Clarence Jordan once said that what he hoped to achieve in life was “To have been faithful.”

Scope and Content Note

The Clarence Jordan collection is an artificial archival collection that was previously maintained as part of the files in the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. The collection consists primarily of articles, clippings, correspondence, and newsletters from various organizations related to Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Farms. The material in the collection discusses the impact Clarence Jordan had on racial views and on the spiritual community. Information on Koinonia Farms, its struggles as well as successes, are also included. Information on Clarence Jordan, from his childhood until his death, supports the idea that Clarence Jordan was an advocate for racial equality. The material in the collection dates from 1939 to 1987. The collection contains one linear foot of material, which is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Arrangement

Arranged in alphabetical order by folder title

Provenance

Collected and compiled by Archives staff, 2003.

Preferred Citation

Clarence Jordan Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

Access Restrictions

None

Subject Terms

Koinonia Farms (Americus, Georgia)

Baptists – Georgia

Church and race relations

Race relations – Religious aspects – Baptists

Georgia – Race relations

Georgia – Social conditions – 20th century

Related Materials

Barnette, Henlee H. *Clarence Jordan : a prophet in blue jeans*, 1986.

Barnette, Henlee. *Clarence Jordan : turning dreams into deeds* , 1992.

Container List**Box 1**

- 1.1 Articles by Clarence Jordan
- 1.2 Articles – Clarence Jordan
- 1.3 Articles – Clarence Jordan’s Death
- 1.4 Articles – Koinonia Farm
- 1.5 Baptist Fellowship Center – The Hand of Fellowship, 1941
- 1.6 Baptist Fellowship Center – Miss Lucile Lynch
- 1.7 Baptist Fellowship Center – Negro Baptist Night, 1940
- 1.8 Biographical Information – Clarence Jordan
- 1.9 The Christian Century
- 1.10 Christian Community in the South, by Clarence Jordan
- 1.11 Correspondence
- 1.12 “Cotton Patch Version”
- 1.13 Interview – Clarence Jordan
- 1.14 Interview – Landon Sheats
- 1.15 Jordan, Jan – “Why I Missed My Graduation”
- 1.16 Kendrick, Timothy S. – Clarence Jordan’s Racial Views as Reflected in His Scripture Translations, other writings, and his life

- 1.17 Koinonia Community – Newsletters
- 1.18 Koinonia Partners
- 1.19 Koinonia Products from the farm
- 1.20 Memorabilia – Louisville Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
- 1.21 Negro Books
- 1.22 References
- 1.23 Sojourners – The Legacy of Clarence Jordan
- 1.24 Statement of Koinonia Farm In Response to Sumter County Grand Jury Presentments
- 1.25 Translations – Records, Books, and Pamphlets