

Newsletter

Of the Historical Society of the Church of God

Vol 1, No 2,

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“WRITE THE VISION”

“And the Lord answered me and said, ‘Write the vision and make it plain’” Habakkuk 2:2a).

Some years ago, a friend who had retired from the Gospel Trumpet Company (now Warner Press Inc.) called me with an offer and an usual, but exciting, question: “Would you be embarrassed if I brought to your house some boxes of first-run Warner Press books?” She had been a long-time employee of our national publishing house. It was the Company’s policy in those days, to give all employees a copy of each book that came off the press. Of course, I didn’t have to “pray about it” (let alone think about it) It was an offer I could not refuse. Although I am listing only some of the books, consider the names of the authors:

Ahrendt, E. H., *We Need Ministers*, 1939. **Berry, Robert L.**, *Adventures in the Land of Canaan*, 1924. **Brown, Charles Ewing**, *A New Approach to Christian Unity*, 1931. **Byrum, E. E.**, *Life Experiences*, 1928; *Miracles and Healing*, 1919; *Problems of the Local Church*, 1927; *The Secret of Salvation*, 1898; *Shadows of Good Things*, 1923; *Startling Incidents and Experiences in the Christian Life*, 1915; *200 Genuine Instances of Divine Healing: the Doctrine Explained*, 1911.

Naylor, C.W., *When Adversity Comes*, 1944; **Riggle, Herbert M.**, *Beyond the Tomb*, 1929; *The Kingdom of God*, 1899; *Roman Catholicism in Light of Their Own Scriptures and Authorities*, 1917; *Pioneer Evangelism*, 1924; **Roark, Warren C.**, *Divine Healing*, 1945.

Smith, F.G., *The Last Reformation*, 1919; *The Revelation Explained*, 1908; **Byers, A.L.**, *The Birth of a Reformation, or the Life and Labors of Daniel S. Warner*, 1921. **Riggle H.M. and Warner, D.S.**, *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary*, 1903; **Publication Committee**, *Camp-Meeting Sermons: (Sermons preached at the general camp meeting of the Church of God at Anderson Indiana, June 6-15, 1913)*.

* * * *

There is a great need in our generation for biographical and historical writers! Suppose the brethren of the yesteryears had not written? The challenge is with us to create a *legacy of recorded historical facts for posterity*. Let this generation be pioneers in passing on to the next, biographical/autobiographical and historical information of the life and times of contemporary leaders and congregations among us and how the Lord has faithfully led them on the way. As the Lord spoke to the prophet Habakkuk: **write the vision!**

—Wilfred Jordan

**NEWSLETTER
of the Historical Society of
the Church of God (Anderson)**

Volume 1, Number 2, Winter 2001

This newsletter is published three times a year: Fall; Winter; and Spring. It is published by the Society on behalf of its members and printed by Church of God Archives, Anderson University, Anderson, Indiana 46012.

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The Newsletter is managed by the Executive Committee of the Society: Merle Strege, President; David Markle, Vice-President; Douglas Welch, Secretary-Treasurer; and Wilfred Jordan, Editor.

The Historical Society . . .

The Historical Society exists to encourage within the Church of God (Anderson) interest in Church of God history; to facilitate the collection and preservation of Church of God books, historical documents (letters, diaries, journals, minutes, reports) and photographs; to assist members whenever and wherever possible with historical research and writing; and to provide for those concerned with Church of God history and heritage association with others of like mind.

Membership is open to all who are vitally interested in that which the Historical Society desires to accomplish. Membership dues are \$25 per year. The Society's "year" runs from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. (Held at the annual Convention of the Church of God in North America in Anderson IN during the month of June.) Checks should be mailed to:

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As I Was Thinking...



**The Twisting and
Turning Syndrome**

**SIGN OVER THE ENTRANCE
OF A COBBLER'S SHOP**

**ALL TYPES OF TWISTING AND
TURNING DONE HERE**

Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa made reference to the *past* as "history," *tomorrow* as "mystery," and *today* as "a gift." He then said, "that's why *today* is considered to be a *present*." The church of the present has always been and will always be faced with the questions about mores. During the formative period of the Church of God, many questions/debates in the community had to do with personal dress. There was a lot of **twistin' and turnin'** taking place.

Historically, the church has always had her share of controversy. Jesus asked his disciples "Who are the people saying I am?" "Well," they replied, "some say, John the Baptist; some Elijah; some Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16:13f NEB).

They answered rightly! **The Church of God has never claimed to have all the answers. Now, even some of the questions seem to confuse us!** For decades, we boasted that we are not a denomination, then, lately someone comes along and says "it ain't necessarily so!" Twisting and turning is not new for churches at all. Take, for example, the church's controversial views and teaching on **conscience questions**, such as "personal dress."

The doctrine of holiness carried with it the emphasis that the people of God are a "peculiar people" (Titus

2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). We were that, and thought the second coming of Jesus was imminent. In fact, some of us were nicknamed *separatists*. Our lifestyles were modest when it came to fashions and keeping up with dress codes. Much of the material wealth, beyond necessities, was dedicated to evangelizing. Consider some of the evidences of this historical "Twistin' and Turnin'"

"There are some fashions that are a disgrace to the beautiful human form and others that physicians of both sexes condemn; and if they do, surely it is time for Christians to give the people warning from God. If we do anything to injure our bodies, which are God-given, we will be held responsible" (Jennie C. Rutty, *Letters of Love and Counsel for "Our Girls,"* 1899, p.159)

"Another instrument of torture is the high-heeled shoe, that throws the body into a position that is uncomely and extremely injurious, as it causes internal misplacements affecting the spine and head, with all their delicate attachments of organs" (Jennie C. Rutty, p.162).

"Modesty, comfort and health must not be exchanged for fashion and style." ... "Too many daughters and mothers are sacrificed to the goddess of Fashion on the altar of silly pride. . ." (Thomas Nelson).

"By modesty we mean that she shall not say, do not wear anything that would cause her to appear 'loud,' 'vulgar,' or 'unchaste.' There should be nothing about her that attracts unfavorable attention" (Mable Hale).

A reference made in *Our Ministerial Letter*. "Christian Attire or the Morals of Dress: Embracing a General Discussion of the Necktie Question in the Light of Reason and Truth" (D.O. Teasley, IV, February, 1917). The conclusion: "those who opposed the practice must have been . . . proven out of God's order," while those who wore ties were "men of God . . . notwithstanding their ties."

"How shall we ever preach against our women wearing hobble-skirts if we permit men to wear ties" (author unknown). D.O. Teasley, however, held that no person should be con-

demned for wearing ties, since the practice did not come under an absolute precept of the New Testament.

*“The whole world is also intoxicated with pride, fashion, and love of display . . . I have seen . . . people that profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ all decked out in the foolish vanities of this world: flowers, feathers, ribbons, and bracelets, rings and ear-rings. I have seen, actually, old gray-haired women wearing bangs” (Allie R. Fisher, *Gospel Trumpet*, March 15, 1885).*

In His-story, there is neither twisting nor “shadow of turning.”

-Wilfred Jordan, Editor



Remember . . .

TRYING AND PREGNANT TIMES

The first twenty years of the Church of God movement's life were anything but easy. Both D.S. Warner and E.E. Byrum, Editors of the *Gospel Trumpet* during those two decades, faced one crisis after another. It is not too much to say that the first five or six years were a constant crisis. Cash was always in short supply and the work of publishing the paper was made more difficult by the scarcity of hands volunteered to share in the labor. Although some souls caught the vision of a truly restored church, by and large they were few and far between.

In those first years, Warner also

faced two specific crises. First, some rising young ministers tried to force him to relinquish control of the *Trumpet*. When he refused, he faced a second, more personal crisis. His wife's views were in sympathy with those who wanted control of the paper, and Warner's refusal prompted her to leave him.

After 1866, both the movement and the *Gospel Trumpet* stabilized. Prospects were brighter after the paper's move to Michigan. However, further crises were just around the corner. During the decade from 1895 to 1905, the movement was rocked by Warner's death at age 53, the Anti-cleansing Heresy, the Necktie Controversy, and the defection of key leaders.

New faces, some of them untried, faced the challenges of leadership transition, serious doctrinal differences, and schism. When Byrum assumed control of the paper and thus became the *de facto* leader of the movement, he might have been forgiven for wondering whether he had what it took to keep the ship on course.

Crises do not, however, tell the whole story of the Church of God during those years. While folks in Grand Junction listened to W.G. Schell preach Warner's funeral and wondered who could possibly replace him, B.F. Elliott busily went about his missionary work in Mexico. In India, a young Muslim named A.D. Khan had converted to Christianity and had embarked on a spiritual quest that soon would lead him to a vision of the church shared by Church of God people in far off America.

In the United States, missionary homes were being founded in cities and towns all across the country. In and from these homes, the witness to holiness and unity shaped future generations of ministerial leadership and spread the word. Shortly after 1905, the *Gospel Trumpet* Company published its first large, all purpose hymnal, *Select Hymns*, full of gospel songs that tutored singers in doctrine while they sang. Even in the midst of crisis multiplied upon crisis, there were signs that the work was going forward.

-Merle D. Strege



Church of
God Archives

Jottings

D.E. Welch

▶ How can we encourage local congregations to write their stories? As the older generation passes on, much of the history of the congregation is lost. (Quite often we receive requests here in the Archives for historical information relating to specific congregations. In quite a large percentage of the cases, we have to tell inquirers that about all we have is a file with that church's name on it and little or nothing inside.)

▶ Perhaps part of the answer is to be found in *local volunteers* who can put in the time and effort—and perhaps some expense—to collect the information and put it into narrative form. But what a gift to the younger generations of the community! (The Historical Society is very interested in having members undertake such research—even for congregations other than their own.)

▶ Since much of this history is *oral* in nature, we must face the question of its reliability. Well, it all depends on human memory, which in itself is not terribly reliable. Oral traditions—so I'm discovering in this area—are not infrequently wrong. My memory is quite good for a budding old-timer, but my reconstructions of events, and particularly dates, are often quite wrong, sometimes embarrassingly so. However, oral traditions are at least a starting point for rigorous research. The only way they can be confirmed is by finding out what did happen and when and where. As I said, a good starting point. All the same, stories need pretty stiff cross-checking.

▶ State and regional histories are also very important. Some of these might even be worthy of publication in book—something this Society might want to think about.



A PIVOTAL NEW PUBLICATION

About April 15, 2001, Anderson University Press will release a new book authored by Dr. Douglas Welch titled *Ahead of His Times: A Life of George P. Tasker*. Anderson University Press is a new venture on the Anderson campus and will be publishing this and other significant books related to the themes of *holiness* and *unity*.

George P. Tasker (1872-1958) was a leader in the Gospel Trumpet Company early in the 20th century and was first appointed as a missionary to India in 1912. His career as an international representative of the Church of God Movement was distinguished indeed, except for one crucial thing. The Missionary Board in the United States began pressuring him to "thresh Babylon" in India by preaching and practicing strict "comeoutism." This led to a sharp difference of opinion concerning the nature of the Movement and the message of the Church of God among Christians generally. The result is hardly one of the highpoints of the Movement's history. Tasker was discontinued as a missionary in 1924, but remained in India for many years, later retiring in Canada, and mentoring gifted young Church of God leaders such as Douglas Welch. Dr. Welch now tells this dramatic Tasker story in a carefully-researched, well-written way. The result is a window on the Movement's history that offers wisdom and caution for its present and future.

It is an irony (but an understandable one) that until the early 1980s Tasker was virtually written out of the histories of the Church of God Movement. But his story needs to be told. The only way to avoid the pitfalls of the past is to do our historical homework—even when it is a little painful. Dr. Welch has done this for us in the readable book *Ahead of His Times*. It includes a Foreword by Dr. Merle D. Stregé, current historian of the Church of God—who has also been guided by the Tasker legacy. As the Movement in North America moves through an awkward time of transition today, may it remember and learn from the unusual wisdom of an early giant like George P. Tasker.

Anderson University Press is grateful to the Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) for assistance with the publishing of the Tasker story. To secure a copy after April 15, you may contact Warner Press (1-800-741-7721; Email: wporders@warnerpress.org; Fax: 1-800-347-6411.)

BULLETIN BOARD

■ Anderson University Press now has a webpage. To learn more about the Press and its publications, visit www.anderson.edu/aupress. Or you may reach the Press by contacting Editor Barry L. Callen at (765) 641-4559, or through his email address: bcallen@anderson.edu.

■ The Annual Meeting of the Historical Society will be held in June as it was last year during the Annual Convention of the Church of God in North America. As we did last year, we will meet on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. The date this year is June 16. The room will be announced in our Spring newsletter (which should reach you, we hope, by mid-May).

■ We still have not received dues for 2000-2001 from many of you. We have not sent out mailings to remind you, due to the cost of doing so. If you have not sent in your check for \$25 following the Annual Meeting this past June (our membership year runs from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting), please take a few minutes to do this. We sincerely value your participation in the Society's work.

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