

Centering on Ministry



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I Appreciate My Christian Heritage

Adam W. Miller

Whatever that is good in my life, and whatever of value I have contributed to the work of God in the world, I owe to Jesus Christ who redeemed me, and to the Church of God that opened wide her door of opportunity to me to serve in so many ways. My appreciation is deep and real.

During these months leading to our Centennial Year of 1980 we are thinking a great deal about our heritage in the Church of God Movement, along with our individual Christian heritage. This month of March, 1978 marks sixty-five years since I first came into contact with the Church of God. It was in a store-front church in the city of Baltimore, Maryland that I first assembled with a group of Church of God believers. A short while before that I had been awakened to my need through a gospel-wagon evangelistic service conducted in the neighborhood where I lived. The tracts they distributed especially guided me in how to trust Christ for forgiveness and salvation. I yielded myself to Christ to the best of my ability. Later, when I attended special meetings of the Church of God, I understood more fully how to yield myself to Christ, and then I made a full commitment of my life.

My Lutheran Heritage

I must not overlook my earlier Christian training in expressing appreciation for my Christian heritage. My parents were associated with the Lutheran Church, and were careful to see that I attended Sunday school. Then at the age of thir-

teen I studied Luther's catechism and was confirmed by the pastor of the church. I look back upon those months of study before Confirmation, and the early impressions I had of Martin Luther, with a great deal of appreciation. Today, after years of study of the sixteenth century reformation, I have great appreciation for Luther's stormy vigor that made him a great reformer. Out of this appreciation has come a strong feeling that with such qualities we could pour into the stream of the Christian movement that which will give newness and freshness to the ideals of the Church of God Movement.

Russell R. Byrum

Four years after I met the Church of God I began to feel the enriching influences of Russell R. Byrum. In 1917 he prepared an extensive list of books for ministers to study at home while pursuing their ministry, and for evangelists to study while away in meetings. This list of books grew out of extensive research Russell Byrum had done in preparation for developing a curriculum for Anderson Bible Training School. The list was published in the 1917 Ministerial List, a copy of which had come to my attention. Most of the books on the list were available to me through the Enoch Pratt City Library in Baltimore. That was the beginning of my biblical and theological studies.

Later, while serving as a missionary in Japan (1922-1927), I began to write articles for the *Gospel Trumpet*. Russell Byrum was the managing editor at the time, and after a few of my

A Centennial Caution

Barry L. Callen

It may well be that all centennial celebrations have certain things in common beyond the obvious fact that, in all cases, one hundred years have passed. One such point of commonality may be the presence of more parades and glowing words than there is serious analysis, disciplined understanding and true appreciation.

In 1876 the United States flooded itself with oratory, sermons and editorials that featured the relentless and unparalleled march of *Progress*. Was it not obvious in many dramatic forms? The land itself had been conquered from coast to coast. The population, swollen with the immigrants of many lands, had expanded to meet the challenge of a new age. With a working model of Bell's first telephone on display in Philadelphia and the telegraph and railroad in full operation, the triumph of technology was at hand. The Northern press even cited with pride the then recent preservation of the Union and the abolition of slavery. It was the national cen-

articles were published, he wrote letters from time to time encouraging me to keep on writing. He made helpful suggestions of topics to consider in my writing. What writing I have done since then has been due in no small part to the encouragement he gave in the very beginning. He is still living in Anderson and will be 90 years old in April. In recent years he has made frequent visits to my home to discuss many aspects of the development of the work of the church, especially of those early formative years. My appreciation for his interest in my development is deep. He has been an inspiration to me in my continuing study and research. He also encouraged me to contribute to the preparation of men and women for the ministry and other areas of service.

Opportunity for Missionary Service

The opportunity to serve the church in Japan was possible because of the church's faith in me and my wife, for which I am deeply grateful. Those years gave me insight and understanding of what God was doing in the world. The contact I had with missionaries of deep dedication and extensive education and preparation challenged me to better prepare myself for service to the

tenennial, the time to celebrate the ripe fruits of progress!

In 1980 the Church of God Reformation Movement will mark the end of its first century. Centering on the theme of *Progress* is tempting and, to an extent, justified. It has been a long way from singing teams in spring wagons and protracted meetings under grape arbors to plush sanctuaries, accredited institutions and seasoned mission efforts on several continents. "Babylon" has indeed been assaulted and has yielded thousands to a high vision of God's will for his people. Our Movement has survived periods of internal dissension and, with some considerable success, has assimilated into its ranks religious "immigrants" from many foreign shores. In various ways this Movement certainly has moved a long way in its first century of life.

Now comes the crucial question. Exactly *what* will we choose to emphasize in our celebration and precisely *why* will we choose what we do? Unfortunately, such questions as these are so

church. My appreciation for that opportunity for service is deep and abiding. Again and again I recall those years in Japan and what they contributed to my preparation in the years that followed.

Seminary Training for Ministers

During the years I worked with ministerial students in Anderson College, I became greatly concerned about providing graduate training for those preparing for full time service as ministers, missionaries and in other fields. I was only one among a number who felt the same end, and the School of Theology became a reality.

Words cannot express how deep and real is my appreciation for my Christian heritage, especially as I found it illuminated for me in the Church of God Movement.

Dr. Adam W. Miller, Dean Emeritus of the School of Theology, has served as Executive Secretary of the Missionary Board, honored teacher in Anderson College and in the School of Theology, missionary, pastor, and as elder statesman in the Church of God is known and loved far and wide for his leadership, writings, preaching, teaching and creative leadership.

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basic that seldom are they addressed. Both courage and caution are in order.

An analogy from modern Israel may help us grasp the real meaning of these questions. This small country in the Middle East was born about thirty years ago, largely out of the power drawn from what was believed to be a divine ordaining—as was, in differing ways, the United States and the Church of God Reformation Movement. Israel has survived in recent decades by sacrifice and determination and a persistent belief in its own legitimacy and destiny, despite the economic odds and the violent opposition of her neighbors. Common life in these circumstances has ranged from the exhilaration of pioneers to the drudgery of everyday existence, all in the context of the constant dread of terrorism and war. It is therefore understandable that Israelis would react to the stark reality of their lot by searching for various ways to be released from it all. One way to react to the frustration of present circumstances is to discover a way of escaping them. The method used may be subtle and abortive; but it may also be warmly welcomed!

Alan Mintz, teacher of Hebrew literature at Columbia, concludes that recent examples of Israel's literature reflect two forms of escapism, one *a reaching back to happier times* and the other *a reaching forward to some new vision of the end in which all of the anxieties and present paradoxes will be delightfully dissolved*. Indeed, Mintz concludes, "ever since the pioneer period, one of the chief functions of Israel's literature . . . has been to represent and also to criticize this dual urge toward nostalgia and apocalypse in Israeli consciousness."¹

I am all for progress and I have no hesitancy to join in its celebration. But I am also cautious and concerned, particularly at centennial time. Progress must be measured by the right standards. Celebration must take care that glory is showered only where it really belongs. To succumb to a stale pool of nostalgia for the supposed simplicities and purities of pioneer times tends to be false and fruitless affection that undercuts for our times the dynamic meanings of being a "Movement" of God. To yield to visionary enticements of the end of the road tends to be an abortive apocalypse, something like an old prophet gone senile with the words now only dribblings of pessimism about what is possible until the Lord bursts in at the end of the age. One view is imprisoned in the past; the other is immobilized until some ideal future arrives. Both have found a way of escaping the challenges of the present.

Both are regular visitors at centennial celebrations.

As a movement among God's people, the Church of God can look back with pride and look forward with hope. But the worthy substance of our yesterdays must be made into building blocks for our tomorrows and our view of the ultimate goal must be protected from mere dreaming and made to shape our presents, not catapult us out of them.

What has been for the Church of God Movement a *painful paradox* must not now be permitted to become a paralyzing one. For a century we have championed the *divine dimension* of the processes of organizing and governing the Church. At the same time we have become involved in the *increasing institutionalization* of our own reform movement. This delicate process of designing the life of the Movement into an effective vehicle for the vision certainly has had a legitimacy and even an inevitability. We have wanted to be faithful stewards in our call to share Christ and true biblical understandings about His Church with fellow Christians and with the world at large. Even so, we have been aware that there is a point at which structuring the Movement can itself become an outright violation of the burden of the Movement's message. Now we must avoid the temptation to revert to an admirable, but impractical and inappropriate view of the way God accomplishes His work in this world by denying the legitimacy of our own institutions and our own present responsibilities to and through them.

We are faced with a theological and tactical tension. Our response must not be escapist in nature. It must reach beyond a *paralyzed* idealism. And, it must do so without abandoning the idealism itself!

¹In the journal *Commentary* (January, 1978), p. 64.

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The Biblical Perspective on Appreciation of Heritage

Gustav Jeeninga

A special characteristic of the Hebrews was that they were a remembering people and the Hebrew leaders felt that if future generations were to appreciate and understand their heritage, certain practices and beliefs needed to be passed on. This they accomplished in several ways. First of all they did it through the family. The education of Hebrew children was the responsibility of the mother who taught her children the rudiments of moral teachings and family consciousness. After boys had reached their teens the father became responsible to teach his sons the truths of religion (Exodus 10:2, 12:26; 13:8), and the national traditions (Joshua 4:19-24).

Training in matters of heritage and religion was accomplished during the attendance of special religious ceremonies at sacred localities. These times provided occasion for the children to ask "why?", "whence?", "to what purpose?". It was the duty of the father to answer. "When your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover.'" (Exodus 12:25-27a; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; 6:20ff).

Occasions for questions and instructions relating to Hebrew heritage arose daily in the Hebrew's life. In the pasture stood a boundary stone. Why is it there? On the border of the property one might see a group of sacred stones or trees. Why are they sacred? (Joshua 4:1-7). In this manner children became conscious of a special place and descent from ancestors among whom God had performed mighty deeds. The whole Hebrew life was permeated with this psychology of remembrance. We find it in the historical books, the prophets, the Psalms, and even in its wisdom literature (Exodus 13:3; Deuteronomy 24:18; Joshua 1:13).

Fastened to the entrance of the tent or doorpost of the Hebrew dwelling was a *mezuzah* with a roll of parchment inside a container. On the roll was written the fundamental Jewish prayer, the *shema*: "Shema, Israel, Adonai elohenu, Adonai ehad" (Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one") Deuteronomy 6:9. After a child was three years old his coat bore the *sisit*, or fringe as required by Deuteronomy 22:12, "You

shall make yourselves tassels on the four corners of your cloak . . ."

The heritage of the people was also kept alive and passed on from generation to generation in its worship. Strikingly interesting is that the book of Psalms, the Hebrew Hymnal, begins with the keynote of Israel's faith. Psalms 1 extols the virtue of meditating on the Law. Psalm 2 makes reference to "The Anointed One" that is, the Messiah. The two themes—God's will in the Torah (Law) and the coming of the Messiah—constitute the two cardinal beliefs of the Jewish people.

Another avenue through which the Hebrew community kept alive and participated in the meaning and values of its heritage was through the teachings of Hebrew wisdom. Hebrew wisdom was passed on through the home, the village gatherings, the religious institutions and through wisdom schools (II Samuel 1:18; 16:15, 23; Isaiah 8:16; Proverbs 25; Jeremiah 8:18; 18:18). It is well for the younger generation to listen to and to incorporate into their life styles the wisdom suggestions placed before them by the older generation.

"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?" Proverbs 1:22 "A prudent man sees danger and hides himself" Proverbs 22:3. In a number of proverbs the wise person is he who chooses righteousness (Proverbs 1:7). The goal of the wise man is to teach his younger generation how not to be a fool. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7).

The Old Testament's understanding of the importance of passing on one's heritage is continued in the New Testament. Paul calls on Timothy to continue to study the Scripture, to continue in what he has learned during his childhood, and to remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (II Timothy 2:1-10; 3:14-17).

Dr. Gustav Jeeninga is Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies of Anderson College, Director of the Museum of Bible and Near Eastern Studies and a member of the Administrative Committee of the Center for Pastoral Studies.

A Rich Christian Heritage Is Mine

David L. Montague

The year 1980 is of significance historically not only for the Church of God in the United States, but for the Church of God in Kenya as well. As the church in America prepares to celebrate its centennial, the church in Kenya anticipates its 75th anniversary. The church in each of these two countries has had a rich history. Many are the saints who have contributed to our Christian heritage in the Church of God. It is during these days of anticipated celebration that many of us will be taking a look into our past in an attempt to gain a more complete understanding of the realities of this heritage.

Webster describes heritage as "property that descends to an heir," or "something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor." We in the Church of God are all heirs to that which has been handed to us by those who have gone before. We are part of an on-going history that includes theological controversy, personality differences, and an occasional parting of the ways. Such seems to be found in the church around the world in all periods of time. But this alone does not characterize our heritage. There are those who have made deep impressions for the good on each of our lives. We walk in the footsteps of our spiritual forefathers.

I have now ministered with the Church of God in Kenya for a bit over eight years. I have seen the church in this country develop remarkably. It has passed through the "mission" stage to that of national churchhood. It is never easy growing up. But just as there are many who aid the individual in this process, so it has been for the church.

The Church of God in Kenya has a rich heritage, one of which I am proud to be a part, and one which is now part of me. The work in this country began in 1905 with the arrival of Robert Wilson, of the South African Compounds and Interior Mission, from Johannesburg. He was commissioned by A. W. Baker, the founder of the Mission, to open a mission station in this new part of the continent. He was joined a year later by Johana Bila, a Shangaan by tribe, from South Africa. They labored side by side, a White and a Black from South Africa, for three years. After an unfortunate accident, Bila died in 1909. The following year Wilson left Kenya for home in ill

health. It is part of our history that no converts were made during the time of Wilson and Bila. One gave his life for the cause of Christ in Kenya; the other departed from the scene broken in body. But a beginning had been made. The seeds of the Gospel had been planted. The missionary who carried on with the work, Edward Richardson, an Australian, baptized the first two Christian converts in 1911. The church was being born anew. It quickly grew under the leadership of H. C. and Gertrude Kramer, Americans who arrived at Kima in 1912, and Mabel Baker, daughter of the mission founder, who came from Johannesburg in 1914.

The Kramers went home on furlough in 1920. They went with a commission from A. W. Baker: they were to seek out a like-minded evangelical body of Christians in the States who would be willing to assume responsibility for oversight of the mission work in Kenya. The Church of God was contacted and agreed to do this, becoming fully involved with the Kenya work in 1922. Since that time a large number of faithful missionaries, primarily from North America, have given of themselves in service to God with the church in Kenya. The best years of many lives have been sacrificially given here. Most eventually returned home with a satisfying sense of fulfillment. Some, like the family of the five Murrays, lie buried at Kima, having given their all for the cause of the Great Commission. I am conscious of this part of my Christian heritage, and that of the church in this corner of the world. I am aware of the fact that many good men and women of different cultural and national backgrounds have labored strenuously in faith and out of love in order to bring the church to where it is today. The foundation upon which we are building is a firm one, having been laid over a period of time by the dedicated hands of those chosen by God to be His ministers in a distant place.

I have often marvelled at the privilege which has been mine to have served with the church in Kenya for these past eight years. However, it must be recognized that one does nothing in life out of a vacuum. There have been many whose influence upon my life has been great over the years. I remember the parents who often reminded me as a child, and then as a youth, of

Right Reasons To Celebrate the Centennial of the Church of God Reformation Movement

John W. V. Smith

It is possible to do good things for bad reasons. To give to a good cause just to impress people, to perform a needed social service only to achieve a selfish purpose, or to participate in a worthy project solely to satisfy one's ego needs would all be examples of noble actions with ignoble motives behind them. The reason why one does something is often just as important as the act itself.

For all of us associated with the Church of God Reformation Movement an especially significant and potentially exciting event or series of events is only two short years in the future—the celebration of the one hundredth year since the Movement's beginning around the year 1880. In order to allow time for a wide variety of celebrative activities, and also to encompass the dates of several notable events in the early development of the Movement, the General Assembly of the Church of God has designated the sixteen month period from June, 1980 through October, 1981 as a time for celebrating the Movement's centennial. Already a committee is at work and preliminary plans are developing.

how they dedicated me to the service of God when I was new-born, and that my life was not my own. I remember the pastor who during the period of time I sat under his ministry maintained a regular missions' emphasis in his preaching. I remember the cousins who would visit in our home while on furlough and share excitedly with me, boy to boy, of their experiences in a foreign land. I remember my developing friendship with a young African student who lived down the hall during the dormitory days of college life. He repeatedly challenged me to consider working with his people in his country, issuing to me what he has since referred to as my "Macedonian call." I remember the professor who, having just returned from a summer with the church in Kenya, delivered a stirring message in chapel concerning the needs and opportunities for service in that land far from my home. I remember the Missionary Board executive who listened sympathetically to my expressed interest in

At this early stage in the planning process, while we are only anticipating all that might be done to make this a meaningful time for every person and every congregation in the Church of God, it is well that we ask ourselves why we look forward to this time of celebration. It is possible we too could do many "good things", but for the wrong reasons. For instance, if our study of the pioneers should be for the purpose of either idolizing them or debunking them, it would be for the wrong reason. If our digging into the past should be simply to "air the dirty linen" by researching old controversies and problems it would be for the wrong reason. If our celebrating should be primarily to boast, to parade, or to put down any other group then we would be doing it for wrong reasons.

There is little value in taking time to suggest more wrong reasons, however, when there are so many right ones. A little reflection brings to mind seven positive and wholesome reasons for looking forward to and planning for a really significant celebration in 1980-81.

becoming a missionary, and who gave me good advice as to how to prepare adequately for such work.

I did become a missionary. I am part of the church universal. But I quickly give credit to those individuals chosen and used by God to help give direction to my life. I am the heir of a great inheritance. So are we all. As I am the recipient of a rich Christian heritage, I am mindful of the fact that my life is touching those of others. Thus the heritage is passed on.

David Montague, with his wife Margaret, has been serving in Kenya, East Africa as missionary and teacher since early 1970. He is a graduate of Anderson College and of the Wheaton Graduate School of Theology, having attended Fresno State College, Warner Pacific College and the Anderson School of Theology; he is involved in a doctoral program in Church History at the Claremont Graduate School in California.

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(1) *To Recover* our past. This Movement has not been historically minded in regard to itself. Written records are at best sketchy and often non-existent. The earliest pioneers are gone and later ones are rapidly joining them. Now is the time to locate and preserve all remaining sources of information. Ask questions of the "old-timers" and get a tape recording or careful notes about their recollections. Search out all written records about congregations, camp meetings, conventions, leaders, etc. Locate diaries, correspondence files, family records and personal data about significant leaders, both lay persons and preachers. In short, make the Movement's centennial the occasion to seek out, verify, and put together all possible information about the history of any and all aspects of the Church of God.

(2) *To Remember* our heritage. We owe a great debt to a multitude of dedicated and insightful people—some known and many unknown. They are important to us for the biblical truth which they comprehended and the dedication which led them to proclaim it. We need not idolize them or canonize their teachings, but we *recall* what they did and said; we can *respect* their integrity, *reflect* on the content of their message, *recognize* their zeal and commitment, and *remind* ourselves we have a precious heritage to appreciate and pass along.

(3) *To Reassess* our past. Tradition is important, but we are under no divine obligation to blindly accept a belief or a method simply because it is what has been said or done in the past. A Reformation Movement cannot reject the principle of continuing reform. There are new evils to be remedied, new occasions for the application of truth, and changing contexts which require revision in the understanding of truth itself. It may even be necessary to repent of failures, to uphold, to apply, or to revise that which has come to us from the past. The "open to the Holy Spirit" attitude of the pioneers was a rejection of any static "nailed down" approach to theological understanding. The centennial gives an excellent opportunity for reflective reassessment.

(4) *To Reaffirm* our convictions. Reassessment does not always demand change. In-depth investigation of truth can lead only to reaffirmation. Examination and review of past strongly held views, including a study of why these views were formulated, will result in a new understanding of the intended deep meanings and a new appreciation of the insight of those who

proclaimed them. Truths have significance only when they are held with assurance and expressed with force. This can happen only when we really understand and become excited about the import of our own deeply held convictions.

(5) *To Reunite* us in thought and action. As a movement grows and expands to many countries and cultures, there are inevitable tendencies toward the formation of definable, internal groupings built around special doctrinal interests, variant methodologies, racial and cultural differences, or certain leaders with particular appeal. These tendencies are not necessarily divisive, but they are potentially so. The centennial can be a time when we all rise above any inclination toward the party spirit and demonstrate the unity which has been so significant a part of our message from the beginning.

(6) *To Reach Out*. We miss the point of celebration if we do nothing more than look at ourselves and our accomplishments. Our ultimate focus must turn outward—to a still shamefully divided Christian church, to spiritual ignorance and indifference, to the hungry people of the world, to the unevangelized, to systems which foster injustice, to victims of war and violence, and to all the areas of human need in every part of our world. The centennial is a time to ask ourselves the hard questions about Christian responsibility and strategize for fulfillment of our Christ mandated mission.

(7) *To Rejoice!* The centennial, in the final analysis, is an occasion for celebration, so let's celebrate—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. While it would not be appropriate to engage in boisterous "whoop-de-la" we can and will do many things which are thoughtfully and joyfully celebrative. We'll have a world convention and many other special events. We'll honor some people who deserve it. We'll involve the children and youth. We'll have pageants and perhaps a drama or two. We'll sing the old songs and we'll write some new ones. We'll look back and our eyes will glisten; we'll look to the future and the glisten will change to a gleam. We'll Rejoice—for what has been, for what is, but most of all, for what is going to be.

Dr. John W. V. Smith is Professor of Church History and Associate Dean of the School of Theology, Archivist for the Warner Memorial Historical Collection and a member of the Centennial Celebration Committee.

Comment . . .

Two events in 1881 are being recognized in the Centennial Celebration of the Church of God Movement. In January 1881, D. S. Warner published the first issue of *The Gospel Trumpet*, now *Vital Christianity*. In October of 1881 Warner and some of his associates publicly declared their separation from all denominational affiliation.

While it is difficult to establish the exact date of the beginning of this Movement, these two events in January and October 1881 were significant happenings in the early days. Both are embraced in the sixteen month period starting in June 1980, when the Centennial Celebration will get under way.

In a way the celebration has already started. Dr. John W. V. Smith's book dealing with the *History of the Church of God Reformation Movement* is being read and studied widely. Three of the six books in the Church of God Heritage Series, edited by Dr. Barry L. Callen, are published and now being widely distributed. Other manuscripts are in publishing processes. Several states have prepared and published a state history of the Church of God. Many congrega-

tions are preparing their own histories. Dr. Smith has, at considerable time and effort, been able to tape interviews with scores of persons whose memories go back to early days of the Church of God Movement. Regional and state ministers' meetings are examining our heritage and looking at horizons that beckon us to move into the future.

The articles in this issue of "Centering on Ministry" appropriately call us to examine our heritage, recall it with appreciation, and prove our worthiness by the way we address the tasks and opportunities of the future. There will be celebration locally, in states, and nationally.

Perhaps the finest thing that can happen in this centennial observance will not be these celebrations, delightful and humbling as they surely will be; rather it will be the redefining of our mission as a movement under God, speaking articulately and with relevance to the present world, and committing ourselves to the fulfillment of God's call as we look to the beginning of a new century of service.

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