

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson IN) Vol 4 No 3 Spring

Daniel Moyer worked for the Gospel Trumpet Company for many years. He came from Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario as a very young man to work in the Gospel Trumpet Company in Grand Junction, Michigan. We judge that to be in 1896 or 1897. He was one of a considerable group of Canadians who were part of the Gospel Trumpet Family in Grand Junction, Moundsville, and Anderson.



The Evelyn (Moyer) Preston Collection

Recently, Evelyn Preston, long time member of Park Place Church of God in Anderson IN turned over to Church of God Archives her collection of photos, books, and some personal papers that had belonged to her father,

Daniel Moyer. Sister Preston is now nearly 93 years of age and still has a keen interest in Church of God history. She is a grandniece of Enoch and Noah Byrum. Her grandfather was Fletcher Byrum.

Sister Preston is one of our few remaining connections with our past as a movement. Her memory of those early Anderson days is unusual and it is a delight for us to work with her. Church of God Archives is enriched by her gift.

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

Vol 4 No 3 Spring 2004

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

All correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson), 1612 East 10th Street, Anderson IN 46012. Or email: wiljordan@msn.com.

Church of God Historian 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 of the Church of God (Anderson) exists: to encourage within the Church of God (Anderson) interest in Church of God history; to help facilitate the collection and preservation of Church of God books, historical documents (letters, diaries, journals, minutes, reports) and photographs; to assist members whenever and where ever possible with historical research and writing; and to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 what the Society desires to accomplish. Membership dues are \$15 per year (\$10 for students). 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, Indiana in the month of June). Checks should be mailed to:

Historical Society
P.O. Box 702
Anderson IN 46015-0702
Telephone 765-641-4285
Email: dewelch@anderson.edu

From the Editor

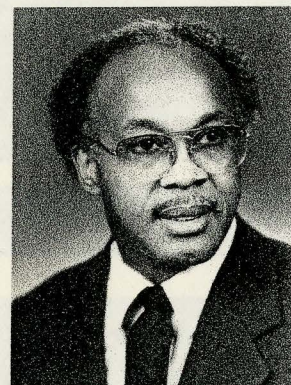
It is evident that some of our readers are confused about the publication known as *The Shining Light*. This problem arises because in the Church of God movement two publications by that name have existed.

The first *Shining Light* was a children's magazine published by the Gospel Trumpet Company. It first appeared in 1891 on a somewhat irregular basis. By 1906 after the Gospel Trumpet Company moved to Anderson, the magazine appeared on a weekly basis, edited by Bessie Hittle. In 1948 its name was changed to *Stories for Children*, then in 1963 discontinued altogether.

The second *Shining Light* did not begin with that name, but rather as the *Shining Light Survey*. This was in reality an individual effort begun in 1932 by Theodore R. Wilson, who was associated with the National Association of the Church of God, West Middlesex, Pennsylvania. However, by his own admission, he did not receive very much official encouragement and support from the Association.

In 1943, Dr. Evans Marshall took over as Editor of the *Shining Light Survey*. He was to continue to serve in this important ministry until 1983, when I assumed the position of Acting Editor, then Managing Editor in 1984. In my first editorial, January, 1984, I wrote the following:

"And in the beginning God . . . God does a lot of good things when He begins. When the *Shining Light Survey* began, it did so under the leadership of Theodore Wilson, whose name is a 'household' word



around the National Association of the Church of God. For health reasons, Brother Wilson relinquished the responsibilities as editor of the publication to a young man named Evans Marshall. For 40 years the magazine has been edited and published by Dr. Evans Marshall of Brooklyn, New York. Now Dr. Marshall has decided to give priority to his health. He will be identified with the *Shining Light* as its Editor-in-Chief Emeritus."

When I assumed the position of Managing Editor, the name of the publication was changed to the *Shining Light*. I was a volunteer and received no salary or other support for this work. It was completely a labor of love and remained so until the last issue I produced, May-June 2000.

Shortly thereafter, the *Shining Light* was discontinued. Like the first *Shining Light*, the *Gospel Trumpet*, the *Missionary Herald*, and *Vital Christianity*, it simply fell by the way. This part of our story as a movement is not a happy one. What God began as a good thing somehow ended in failure. In their time, however, these magazines were part of the life blood of the movement. We wonder what God will begin next.

— Wilfred Jordan

CULTURE, MARKETPLACE, AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

In the past month or two, I have read a couple of very interesting studies of two different aspects of American religious history. *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (Yale University Press, 2003) is Mark Oppenheimer's historical account of the impact of the counterculture on American religion during the late '60s and '70s.

Alan Wolfe, a fine sociological researcher and writer, recently published *The Transformation of American Religion* (Free Press, 2003). Taken together, Wolfe and Oppenheimer offer insightful observations that we ought to bear in mind as we research, read, or otherwise consider the history of the Church of God movement.

First, there is the distinction that Wolfe draws between the way Americans think about religion and the ways in which they actually live it. To describe the religious lives of Americans Wolfe draws on the idea of social practices. Philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and the late theologian James W. McClendon have applied the notion of practices to their work. Especially in traditions like the Church of God, where theology as intellectual discipline has grown in very thin soil, practices have shaped religion profoundly because in these traditions religion has been understood as something to be lived rather than a set of intellectual propositions to which we merely assent. Thus, in *I Saw the Church*, I attempted to shape the movement's theological history primarily by reference to our practices rather than to theological statements.

However, Wolfe sharpens the distinction between beliefs and practices, contending that Americans often believe one set of ideas and yet live their religion in ways that run counter to—if not flatly contradict—those beliefs. For example, 'doctrine' is, formally speaking, crucial to adherents of many forms

of American Christianity. However, the same people who affirmed the importance of doctrine could not state many elementary points out of their own church tradition.

It would be like saying of the Church of God that even though we affirm that "the Bible is our rule of faith," the level of biblical literacy among laypersons and even some ministers is only minimal. Wolfe therefore contends that those who want to assess the level and intensity of the faith of religious Americans should attend even more carefully to what they do than what they say.

A second observation made by Wolfe concerns the overwhelming power of American culture to reshape religions to conform to that culture. In the most succinct statement of this view: "In American society, religions do as Americans do." If that is so, then the dominant culture is a kind of homogenizing influence that will work to make religions in America resemble each other more than they do their co-religionists who live in the southern hemisphere.

Again, to apply Wolfe's observations to the Church of God: the democratic, individualistic, and consumer-oriented drives of our culture tend to make Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Church of God people more alike than Church of God people resemble their brothers and sisters from countries and cultures south of the equator of Asia. Do not misunderstand me. Wolfe makes observations—not iron laws that inevitably govern the destinies of religions.

Nevertheless, we ought to pay heed to this observation. Are there countervailing themes or elements within the theology and experience of the Church of God that require a modification of Wolfe's observations with respect to our understanding of the movement? This question cannot

be answered in a day and requires continuous historical and sociological research in our history.

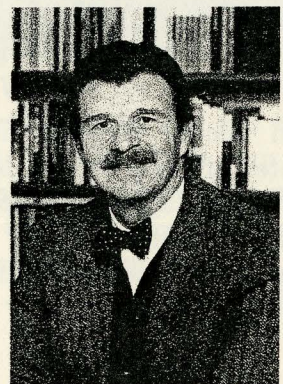
The third point connected to these is Oppenheimer's observation that in America religions must sell themselves. This is not news, nor does Oppenheimer claim it to be such. Ever since Martin Marty stated that the First Amendment threw religion into the marketplace, historians have been examining the way in which a market society has influenced religions in America.

Nobody I've read has put the matter quite as starkly as Oppenheimer. To gain acceptance and adherents in America religion must sell itself. Students of 19th century Protestantism have considered one aspect of this selling in the manner in which some religious leaders, including D.S. Warner, adopted the democratic, popular language of common everyday Americans as the idiom in which to advance their message.

If we are to understand better and appreciate the history of the Church of God, we will need to take account of the observations of scholars like Wolfe, Oppenheimer, and scores of others. In the process we ought not to abandon the theological language that has often been used to articulate its aims.

But if we wish to understand the history of the Church of God—and by such effort better understand ourselves—then we cannot afford to analyze that history only in theological categories; we will need to apply the categories and methods of a wide variety of scholarly disciplines to see past, to borrow a phrase from former days, the cloudy day into clearer light.

—Merle D. Strege



A Journey Back in Time

On May 1, 2004, our volunteer Archives assistant, Dale Stultz drove Evelyn Preston and her daughter, Jane Graham, to Randolph County, Indiana, to visit the site of the Lucinda Byrum home. Lucinda, widow of Eli Byrum senior, was the mother of the large Byrum family (14 children in all, only 8 of whom survived childhood) from which came Enoch and Noah, who assumed control of the Gospel Trumpet Company from D.S. Warner and J.C. Fisher and put it on a sound long-term financial footing.



This is a photograph of the Eli and Lucinda Byrum home in Randolph County, eastern Indiana. The front porch is a later addition. This house later burned down and only the trees are there today. On more than one occasion, D.S. Warner was a guest in this home and was remembered by the young Noah Byrum as a kind, personable, interesting man, with a good sense of humor. The photo below shows Jane Graham, daughter of Evelyn Preston, reading the gravestone of "Celia, Wife of E.E. Byrum," who died in 1888 at the age of 24. She apparently was Byrum's first wife. We can find nothing about her in the records. To the right is the gravestone of Lucinda, mother of the Byrum brothers.



Evelyn Moyer Preston is the daughter of Elsie Byrum Moyer, who was the daughter of an older brother, Fletcher Byrum. Thus Evelyn is the grandniece of E.E. and Noah Byrum.



Oldest Continuous Church

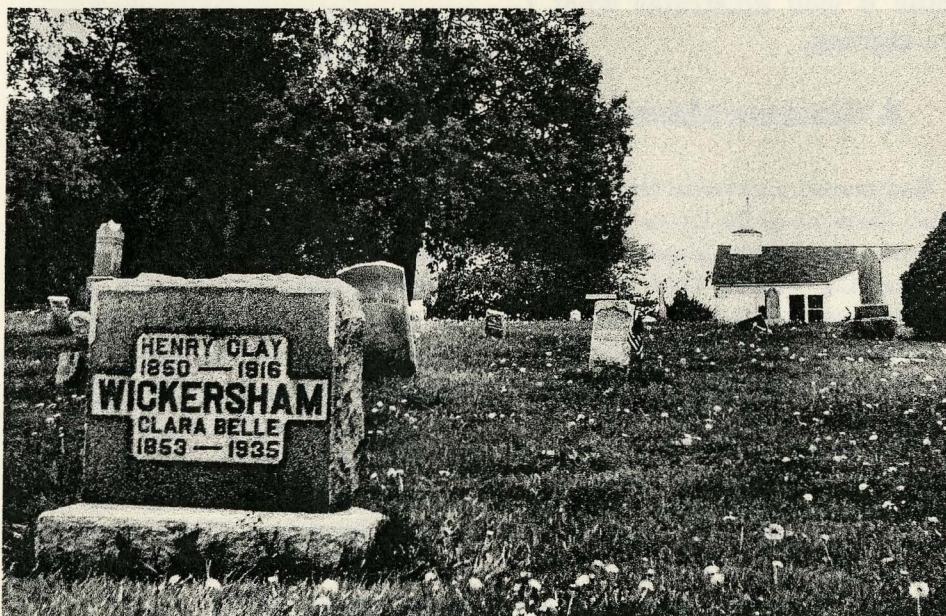


PRAISE CHAPEL

As best we can determine, Praise Chapel, near Union City, Randolph County, Indiana is the oldest continuous congregation in the Church of God (Anderson). Its address was originally New Pittsburg, Indiana. The original building, pictured above, was

erected in 1887, a short distance from the Byrum farm.

The current building (the third) is shown in the photo below. On the left, front, is the gravestone of H.C. Wickersham, who was among the first converts to the Church of God message. For a number of years, he served as pastor of Praise Chapel—which was named by his wife.



The story of Praise Chapel is fascinating indeed. It began in January, 1886, with the preaching of D.S. Warner. A man living near the Byrums, while on a train trip to Michigan, was handed a *Gospel Trumpet*. He and his friends in Indiana read it carefully and wanted to know more about its message. Thus they invited Warner to come to Randolph County and hold meetings, which were held in a United Brethren church to which the man and his friends—and the Byrum family—belonged. Several converted to the Church of God as preached by Warner.

In the latter part of May Warner and his evangelistic team returned for another series of meetings, held in the barn of Jesse Wickersham, an uncle of the Byrum brothers. J.C. Fisher and Samuel Speck were among the preachers participating.

As a result of these meetings, many of those attending were moved to sever their relationship with the United Brethren church. This included several trustees and prominent members. Henry C. Wickersham, a UB preacher and owner of a sawmill (and who was later to write a book on church history published by the Gospel Trumpet Company) was one of them.

Enoch Byrum, home from college for a brief visit, attended a Sunday afternoon meeting and heard Warner for the first time. In short order, he and the entire Byrum family took up the Church of God reformation cause. Praise Chapel is thus very much a part of our heritage.

—By D. Welch and D. Stultz

Jottings

From the Archives

Douglas E. Welch

A Research Question

A researcher engaged in a doctoral program recently called to ask a rather unusual question: "What was the philosophy and theology of worship in the early Church of God reformation movement?" He went on to ask: "What articles and books do you have on the subject?"

This one had me floundering more than usual. In the first place, I think best in writing. On the phone—and on the spot—my clutch tends to slip. (Thus email works better for me than phone calls.) I responded by saying that I had never seen any books or articles on the subject. I spend a lot of time in early Gospel Trumpets, but I cannot recall ever seeing anything on that particular subject.

I noted that the Saints in Evening Light did not talk about worship, they simply did it. Who, after all, teaches ducks to quack and their infant offspring to take to the water and swim? Undoubtedly, so I suggested to this researcher, much can be learned by inference, by reading between the lines of many different kinds of articles in the Gospel Trumpet. But specific instruction on how to conduct worship services probably does not exist in those early years (and I am quite willing to be proven wrong).

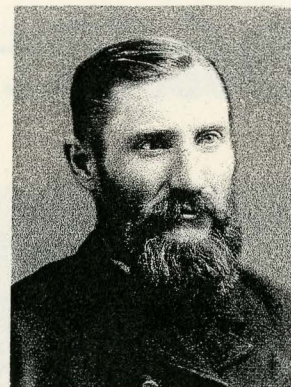
Subsequent reflection (generally a good idea in most cases) led me to suggest that a general notion I had gotten from my reading in the early literature was that worship in all of the settings talked about was generally impromptu, unstructured, and charismatic. This involved the spontaneous singing of hymns and spiritual songs, the giving of exhortations and testimonies from the participants, and extemporaneous sermons—often more than one and usually lengthy. (Back in my early days they were called "stem-winders," referring to the stems by which watches were wound.)

Evidences of this abound in some of the earliest issues of the Gospel Trumpet. Descriptions of camp meetings and evangelistic meetings very often refer to such spontaneous and highly charismatic events. (We do not really know if this was true in local congregations where they did exist. Very little is written about them.)

As Exhibit A, I thought I would reproduce here a brief article by D.S. Warner I came across in an early *Trumpet*. I think it well illustrates what I am arguing.

A Glorious Meeting

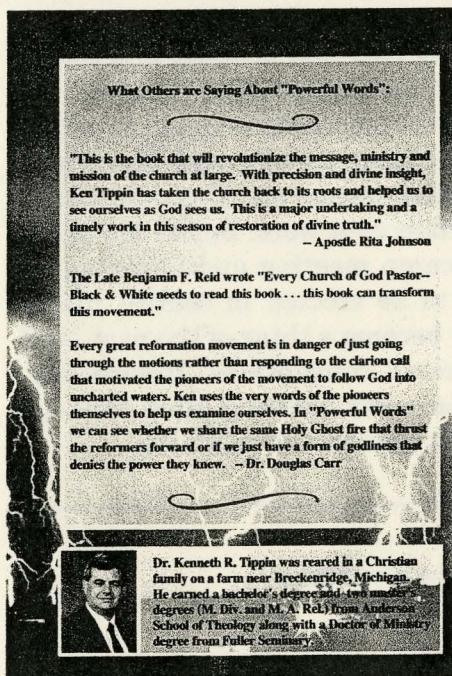
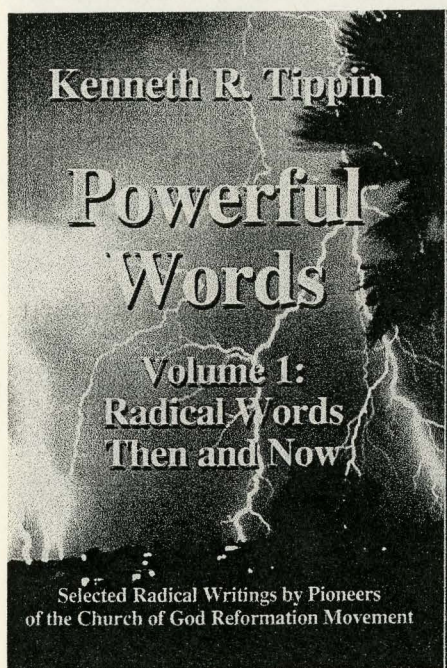
God moved a sister in Gratiot Co. Mich. To write to the Lyons brethren a few miles from Maple Rapids, Clinton Co., saying that the Holy Spirit impressed her there should be a meeting at their place over June 21, 22, and that they were coming down: at the same time the Lord moved a certain brother and sister in Eaton Co. to the same thing. The appointment came from the two points, each unknown to the other. A bowery was prepared, and though the notice was short and no



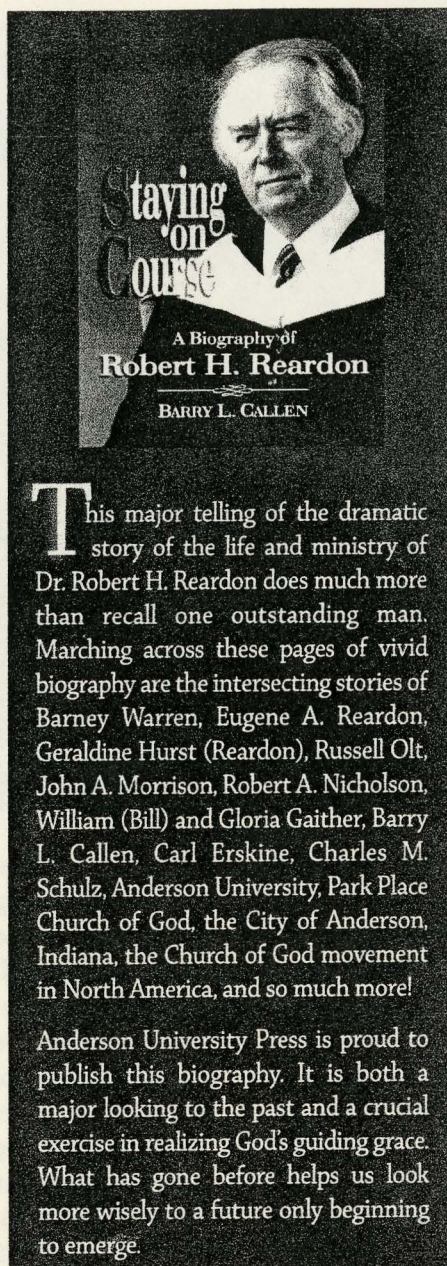
chance to announce it in the Trumpet, the Lord who appointed the meeting flashed the news in various ways to the Saints, and they came together like fire brands, into one blazing bonfire of divine glory. How the wonderful love of Jesus thrilled every heart and glowed on every face. We were astonished to meet such a host. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision," and surely "the Lord is nigh in the valley of decision." We left the meeting still in progress, Tuesday morn. 24th. Several had been wonderfully Sanctified. One man lay nearly an hour like a dead man after he expired on the cross with Christ, and then arose with shouts of Glory. Several who were maintaining the faith and testimony of holiness received a wonderful baptism of Holy Spirit fire and power. Two sisters who had been called of God to preach the everlasting Gospel of Christ, made a special consecration to that great and solemn calling and received a glorious anointing for the work. (*From a Gospel Trumpet, published in Williamston, Michigan, July 1, 1884.*)

Perhaps all of this is more unstructured than many of us would be comfortable with. But it is what their theology taught them to expect. So they had a theology of worship after all, just not one they articulated as such. As Merle Strege likes to say, theology was something they did, not something they formally wrote and endlessly discussed as is our custom today.

NEW BOOKS BY SOCIETY MEMBERS



A manuscript by Kenneth R. Tippin being published posthumously in six slim volumes by Douglas Carr of Gateway of Life Ministries. This first volume costs \$10 plus shipping and handling. It may be obtained from Gateway River of Life Ministries, 30755 E. US 12, Sturgis MI 49091. Basically an edited collection of *Gospel Trumpet* quotations.



This major telling of the dramatic story of the life and ministry of Dr. Robert H. Reardon does much more than recall one outstanding man. Marching across these pages of vivid biography are the intersecting stories of Barney Warren, Eugene A. Reardon, Geraldine Hurst (Reardon), Russell Olt, John A. Morrison, Robert A. Nicholson, William (Bill) and Gloria Gaither, Barry L. Callen, Carl Erskine, Charles M. Schulz, Anderson University, Park Place Church of God, the City of Anderson, Indiana, the Church of God movement in North America, and so much more!

Anderson University Press is proud to publish this biography. It is both a major looking to the past and a crucial exercise in realizing God's guiding grace. What has gone before helps us look more wisely to a future only beginning to emerge.

Staying on Course: A Biography of Robert H. Reardon, by Barry L. Callen, was recently released as a hardback edition by Anderson University Press. All books published by Anderson University Press are distributed by Warner Press, in Anderson Indiana. Retail price of this book is \$19.95. To order: call 1-800-741-7721 or Fax 1-800-347-6411 or you can order by Email at wporders@warnerpress.org. The Warner Press Stock No. is Y9013.

What began as Anderson Bible Training School in 1917 under J.T. Wilson and moved toward full university status under Robert Reardon is central to much of our history.

F.Y.I.

Annual Meeting

The fifth Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) will take place on Saturday June 26, 2004 during the North American Convention of the Church of God. We will meet in Fine Arts 167 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

The annual address will be given this year by Dr. Barry Callen. The title is: "*Two Roads Diverged, And He Took . . .*" And the subtitle: "Key Course Corrections Made Over the Years by President Robert H. Reardon for the Benefit of Campus, Church, and City."

Local Histories

If you or anyone you know has produced, or is working on, a history of a local Church of God congregation, or the history of the Church of God in a state or region, we urge you to let us know. While some efforts are underway and some excellent work has been done, the majority of our local areas have done little to record their history. This is a major loss to future generations of our adherents.



Camp meetings were an early and important means both for spreading the message of the Church of God reformation and for strengthening the saints in the various regions of the country. The photo above was taken at an Illinois camp meeting held at Metamora in 1909. This was in a time when camp meetings were 'camp' meetings. Tents ('tabernacles' as they were called then) were set up for eating, sleeping, and congregating to hear various preachers expound the truths dear to the fledgling movement. Every Spring, a great many "meeting notices" began to appear in every issue of the Gospel Trumpet, announcing camp meetings in various places. These

often gave directions for travel and requested that those attending bring food and bedding if possible. Many leaders of the movement spent much of the summer attending as many of these camp meetings as possible. Some of their travels took them long distances in the United States and Canada—a kind of camp meeting circuit as it were. Before too many years had passed, camp meeting auditoriums and dormitories began to be erected in central places and tents gradually became a thing of the past. And 'camp meetings' became 'conventions.' Historically, however, it was the camp meeting that was our major engine of early growth and solidarity.

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