

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God

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The Effects of the First World War on the Church of God

By Nic Don Stanton-Roark

November 11, 2018, marked the 100th centennial of the Armistice of the First World War. In many ways, the war was a decisive pivot in the life of the movement. It is widely understood that the first generation of Church of God ministers, writers, and evangelists intuitively rejected participation in war as incompatible with Christian discipleship. In 1898 in the Questions Answered section of the Gospel Trumpet, a writer asked, "Provided there should be war in the United States, would it be right for a holy man of God to go as a soldier?" The answer provided: "We answer no. Emphatically no. There is no place in the New Testament wherein Christ gave instruction to his followers to take the life of a fellow-man" (GT, 14 April, p. 4). As late as 1916, we read in the Trumpet that "War is cruel, and devastation, with foul murder, disease, destruction of property, breaking-up of homes, follows in its tracks" (GT, 27 April, p. 3). The emergence of the United States into the war, along with national

suspicions of people of German heritage, who composed a large constituency of the early movement, challenged these sentiments, and leadership gradually moved to a prevailing view that each person should settle the question according to their own conscience, effectively making participation in war a matter of moral indifference.

Yet even at this point, the issue remained complex. Secretary of the Missionary Board J.W. Phelps wrote to missionary Lillian Beebe in August of 1916, "I suppose you know from reading the news papers, [sic] that the United States soldiers are getting ready now to go to the front. Some of the church [sic] of God will doubtless have to go although I think they will not be compelled to take life but will go only as noncombatant [sic], such as hospitals attendants, teamsters, etc." He then adds, "I believe the boys who go from the church will do an excellent work if they live christianity [sic] before their comrades. They will have an excellent opportunity, too, of rendering service to the Lord in distrib-

uting literature to the boys in the trenches. Of course, there is danger of losing their lives but sometimes God expects us to give our lives for the good of his cause" (Letter to Lillian Beebe, 16 August, 1917, Missionary Board Correspondence, AU&CHOG Archives CHOG 71). This strikes me as a sophisticated analysis and presentation, a way of co-opting the perceived killing intent of war for the self-sacrificial intent of evangelism.

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The war impacted the life of the movement in more mundane ways as well, such as curbing interna-

In this issue

Introducing a new series of never-before-published reminiscences by Robert Rardon

A look at the 100th centennial of the Armistice

News from the Church of God Archives

President's Pen



Dr. Gary Agee, President

Before his death in 2007, Robert A. Reardon, former president of Anderson University, transferred a manila file containing sixteen, typed biographical sketches to his friend and collaborator Dale Stultz. It appears that Reardon had once hoped to publish these same remembrances in book form. He subsequently decided against the idea. When he gifted the material to Stultz, he gave him the permission to publish them, but insisted that he wait until after the aging Reardon's passing.

In this study the former Anderson University president writes reflections on the following individuals, E.E. Byrum, I.K. Dawson, Earl Martin, Charles Naylor, C.W. Hatch, Elver Adcock, Dale Oldham, Charles E. Brown, Russell Olt, Nora Hunter, John A. Morrison, C.E. Byers, F. G. Smith, Otto Lynn, H.M. Riggle and his father E.A. Reardon. Robert Reardon grew up in close proximity to these influential movement leaders. He knew them well, their strengths, their challenges, their gifts as well as their shortcomings. Over the next several issues, we plan to publish these remembrances in serialized form.

The first installment of this collection (see opposite) will feature Reardon's own introduction penned from Nairobi, Kenya, in

1989.



Robert Reardon with Historical Society Vice-President Dale Stultz (Photo courtesy Dale Stultz)

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Please send your family stories and photos to the same address. We would love to print them in future issues.

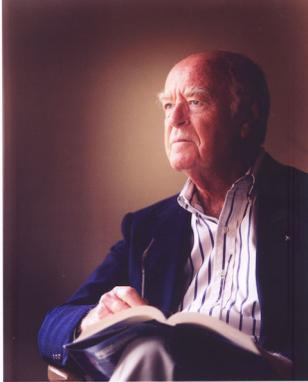
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Movers and Shapers in the Church of God

By Robert Reardon

The short essays which follow are about significant people, people in the life of the Church of God who played a definitive role in fashioning its life. They are now gone and, as the years go by, those who know the, personally become fewer and fewer, and those who are curious about them will find it more and more necessary to rely on written sources.



So, in my seventieth year, I have been drawn to think about these friends and colleagues, all of whom I have known personally. In some cases they were associated during my fifty years in the ministry, thirty-six of which were spent at Anderson College. Some were close family friends, while others I came to know as a young pastor in the arena where national church issues were engaged.

I have attempted to address the question, "Who are the persons who have shaped the Movement in my lifetime?" From the beginning I have recognized the precarious nature of this task for it opens the writer to a legitimate criticism of drawing up a list based on his own biases and eliminating scores of greatly beloved leaders prominent in the life of the church. Originally I put this project aside for this very reason, but it would not rest. So, I have picked it up again, writing about people I know, omitting such persons as A. L. Byers, D. O. Teasley and Barney Warren who were often in our home but I knew only as a child. Readers will also miss persons active in the Black church, leaders of gigantic proportions who, though known to me, need a far deeper perspective than I can give. Added to this disclaimer are the remarkable leaders who have emerged in the church abroad and are movers and shapers in their countries. Also there are my own contemporaries and emerging young leaders. It may be premature to make any comment about them without the verdict of time. So, I have come back

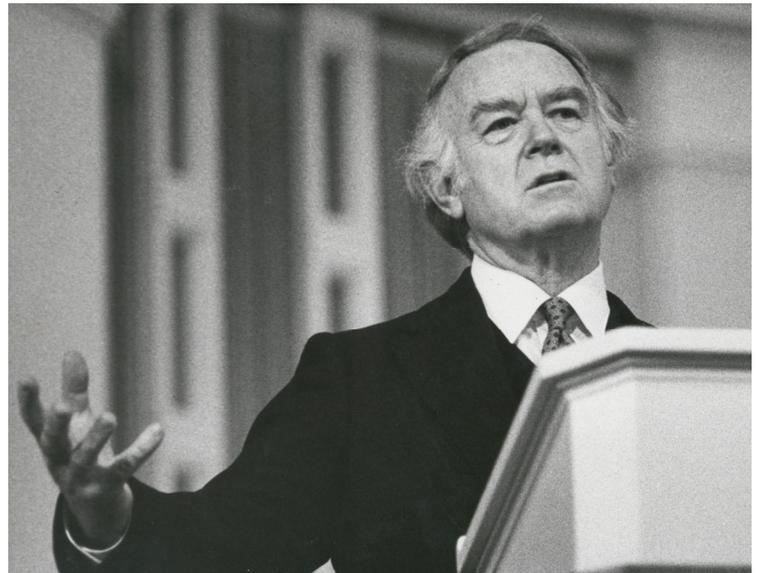
to the men and women I have known in my lifetime who, now gone, have been principal actors in the unfolding drama of the Church of God Reformation Movement.

For the most part the people I have written about have had one thing in common, a deep and passionate love for the church, and a vision that compelled them to speak and act, often amid vigorous opposition. The emerging leaders coming on in the Movement need to know that, expect that, and be brave enough to ask the hard questions about what it means to keep the Reformation fire and abandon the ashes, to venture out and address what it means to be the Church of God in today's world.

Nairobi, Kenya

April 21, 1989

(Photos courtesy AU&CHOG Archives)



Reardon at the pulpit of Park Place Church of God.

Military Chaplaincy in the Church of God: A Brief Sketch

By Obadiah Smith

D. S. Warner saw the church of God “as a fresh move of God to restore the true people of God in the ‘evening time’ of a long-compromised church” (Barry Callen, *Following Our Lord* p. 7). The restoration of the true church was a radical move to denounce tradition, established order, and complacency of modern culture. Therefore, the pioneers of the Church of God sought to establish a church movement to reflect the New Testament church.



(Photo courtesy Obadiah Smith.)

The formation of military chaplaincy for the Church of God (Anderson) occurred between the onset of WWII and the Korean War.

The Church of God struggled as a church to support war. This struggle brought the development and passing of resolutions to oppose war. But many congregational members served in armed forces who either were drafted or served as non-combatants in the military.

The Church of God was at a crossroads, wrestling with how Christians could support military actions and war. The Church of God understood the New Testament church, as a representative of Jesus Christ, to be an instrument of peace, ushering that peace into the world.

During the 1940s, the movement appears to have pursued the idea of peace during war through military chaplaincy. Military chaplains were non-combatants and operated as clergy in military settings; ministering as a noncombatant established military chaplaincy for the Church of God. Dick Hendricks appears to have been the first noncombatant endorsed, in 1941, by the Church of God (Anderson). Dick Hendricks writes:

There was much noncombatant work I could do in the army which would assist in no way in death or destruction. Rather,

it would help greatly if a Christian would choose this field. What better place is there to bring the gospel of Christ than to an army camp, where at times there is no other hope except Him? Yes, I decided, a Christian life lived there could be an influence for good while in an objector’s camp I would be among my own kind, for the most part. (David Hendricks, “An Objector Chose the Army,” *Gospel Trumpet*, October 25, 1941, 20.)

Chaplain Byrum L. Martin alludes to the duties and responsibilities as a hospital chaplain in United States Army during 1945 while serving in England. Chaplain Martin states:

The chaplain’s place has become well established in all branches of the armed forces. The office of the chaplain has come to be respected and will continue to be held in high esteem in proportion as the chaplain shows himself worthy-honorable and exemplary in ideals, attitudes, and conduct. It is only through divine assistance and guidance that the chaplain can render the high type of service expected by the Chief of chaplains as well as meet the responsibilities defined and authorized for him by the War Department. Grateful acknowledgement is also in order for the helpful suggestions, constructive criticisms, and friendly co-operation of the commanding officer and his staff, the American Red Cross personnel, and the enlisted men. (Byrum L. Martin, “The Chaplain and His Job,” *Gospel Trumpet*, June 9, 1945, 12.)

The introduction and explanation of military chaplaincy is only a small glimpse of what a military chaplain does in the military. I believe it is incumbent on the Church of God to continue to discover the importance, impact and ministry of Church of God clergy who have served in the military.

tional travel and restricting access to some parts of the globe. To consider just one example, let us look at the life and ministry of Bessie (Hittle) Byrum. In 1911 Bessie Hittle traveled as an unmarried woman to Beirut to teach at a private school. Though the school was conducted in English, Hittle taught herself Arabic, in which she read the Bible, and was able to speak publicly in the local language. Bessie Hittle had all the makings of an extraordinary lifetime missionary.



Bessie Byrum (photo courtesy AU&CHOG Archives)

As the war spread into the Near East, however, the Missionary Board recalled Hittle to Anderson in January 1915, where she took work in the Editorial Department of the Gospel Trumpet Company and met Russell Byrum, whom she married, responding to his pragmatic proposal by saying, “I suppose you will do” (“Bessie L. Byrum: Her Life and Work,” Russell Byrum, AU&CHOG Archives CHOG 242). Bessie Byrum, now, renewed her passport in 1916 with the intention of traveling to Egypt, but after traveling to the New York Missionary Home was advised by the Missionary Board not to go. She decided to go with or without support of the Board before being notified by the British Consul General’s office that all foreign travel to Egypt was suspended. As a result, the disappointed Byrums relocated to Boston briefly and then back to Anderson, where Bessie taught at Anderson College for fourteen years, was instrumental in developing the Christian education curriculum at Park Place Church of God and was active in ministry over the next forty years. This is just one instance of the broad ripple effect that the war had on the movement and its people.

Finally, it is interesting and instructive to look back over the week to week coverage the war and its conclusion received in the Gospel Trumpet. One might expect a large front-page splash announcing the end of the “war to end all wars,” but there is no such cover article. This fact

speaks to the self-perception of the Gospel Trumpet Company, which did not view the Trumpet primarily as a news outlet but as a vehicle for the gospel message. During 1918, the war was covered in a small section toward the middle or end of each issue called Current Events. For most of the year, the events are categorized as Foreign, Domestic, or World War. In the November 14, 1918 issue, this format continues, and no reference is made to the Armistice agreement of November 11. Either news was slow to reach Anderson or the paper had already gone to press.

In the following issue, Current Events has quietly dropped the World War section, and stories fall into either Foreign or Domestic. In the Domestic section we find two notes dated from the 11th. One reads: “The American army has reached a total strength of 3,764,677 men when hostilities ceased today,” and then provides brief details about where troops are stationed. The second reads, “By order of President Wilson, Provost Marshall-General Crowder today directed the cancelation of all outstanding draft calls, stopping the movement during the next five days of 252,000 men and setting aside all November calls for more than 300,000 men.”

The mundanity of the information conveyed is striking. These are the observations not of a journalist trying to move copy with dramatic statements about “The End of War,”

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but of someone making available information that may be directly relevant to the lives of readers. The focus on drafts in particular captures the same concerns that J.W. Phelps had expressed in his letters to missionaries.

Indeed, the Gospel Trumpet continued to take a pragmatic rather than apocalyptic view of the First World War. A piece ran in

the Trumpet in 1922 entitled, "Shall War Cease." It opens with the line, "Eight years ago the nations of Europe decided to try a war as a way to settle their disputes" (GT, 7 September, 1922, p. 2). It provides some details and then offers the view that, "Really the World War was the biggest folly of the kind ever committed on earth.... Every war will stop sooner or later, but no war will stop all war." And with sober assessment and a prediction chilling in hindsight, the article predicts that the next war will be even worse, as "means are being sought to kill not merely armed men, but whole unarmed populations."

The effects of the World War on the Church of God were both broad and acute, and among its results was the establishment of a

more mature, if also a more world-weary, church movement.



Faculty photo of Anderson Bible Training School ca. 1917. Pictured are Russell Byrum, J.W. Phelps, J.T. Wilson, Henry Clausen, and Bessie Byrum. (Photo courtesy AU&CHOG Archives.)

INTO THE ARCHIVES

We commonly hear the expression “from the archives” when historical documents, photographs, and recordings are on display, but archival retrieval is multi-prepositional: materials move *into* the archives, preservation is performed *within* the archives, researchers work *with* the archives, and knowledge is broadcast *from* the archives. In this regular feature, we will keep readers informed about the work of the Anderson University & Church of God Archives.

By Nic Don Stanton-Roark

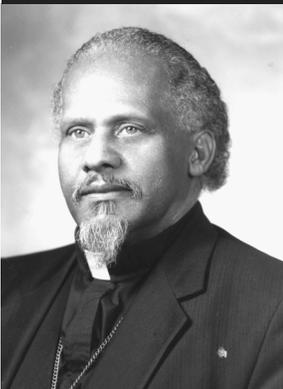
The Gil Stafford Papers

Dr. Gilbert Stafford joined the faculty of Anderson University School of Theology in 1976 where he served as professor of theology, and later as associate dean and dean of the chapel. He wrote several influential books, including *Theology for Disciples* in 1996 and *Church of God at the Crossroads* in 2000. After his passing in 2008, his papers were donated to the archives, where they have been preserved. Beginning in December 2018, those papers have been the focus of a more highly detailed level of arrangement that will be of benefit to historians going forward. Stafford maintained research notes and records from his many years of teaching, pastoring, and writing. The centerpiece of the collection, however, is the extensive collection of correspondence, much of it centered around the School of Theology, CBH, and the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in North America, to which Stafford was a representative from 1984-2008. Notable correspondents include James Earl Massey, Gustav Jeeninga, and John Howard Yoder.



Dr. Stafford lecturing (Photo courtesy AU&CHOG Archives)

(Courtesy AU&CHOG Archives)



The Samuel Hines Papers

I have been contacted by Milton Hines, the son of the Rev. Dr. Samuel G. Hines, regarding the disposition of his father's papers. According to Milton, Samuel was “a copious recorder of his own sermons and prayers.” We are now in the process of transitioning hundreds of Samuel Hines' papers and records to the archives for arrangement and preservation. Watch this section going forward for updates.

