

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson IN) Vol 2 No 1 Fall 2001

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION in Historical Perspective

In August, 1980, the National Association of the Church of God convened its sixty-third annual camp meeting. The camp meeting has been held annually at West Middlesex, Pennsylvania since 1917. The first meeting was held in a tent pitched on a farm. The farm land consisted of 127 acres purchased by the first members of the corporate group. The farmhouse and barn were used as dormitories for the guests. That early group of sharers had no idea that the camp site would one day assume the history and importance presently associated with the name "National Association of the Church of God."

Elisha W. Wimbish and James A. Christman, two early leaders in the Association, were part of a larger band of black believers living in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania who wanted to develop in Christian graces. The concern for a camp meeting grew out of a private prayer session during which Wimbish envisioned "crowds and crowds of real happy people having church out in the woods where there were beautiful buildings among the trees."¹

James Christman is credited with finding such a place. While out hunt-ing one day in a wooded area near West Middlesex, Christman noticed that the features of the area fitted the description Elisha Wimbish had shared earlier with the group. Christman took Wimbish to the site and upon seeing it, Wimbish exclaimed, "This is it! This is it!" Christman, Wimbish and a few other members of the worship group mortgaged their homes to secure money to purchase the land.

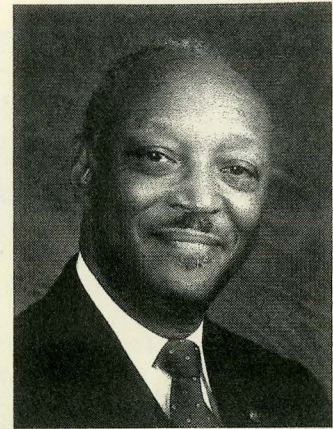
The worship group organized formally for legal ownership of the land and they were first incorporated as "The Western

Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio Camp Ground Association" in the State of Pennsylvania. The organizational name was later changed to "the Gospel Association of the Church of God of the Evening Light Reformation." The name reflected further thought and plans for the young organization. Those plans included, among other things, a religious school, a home for the aged, and a business enterprise. Today, under a third change of the corporation name, the organization conducts its business as "The National Association of the Church of God."

Benjamin F. Reid, Sr., a black church leader from the Los Angeles, California area once stated, "Men and women have given days, months, and years of sacrificial labor to this work because they believed this ministry and service to be the will of God. The waste spaces have become spiritually fruitful because of the faith, persistency, and vision of God's people."

The late Joseph Crosswhite, Sr., was one of those persons. Much of the present physical development of the convention grounds is really his story. Crosswhite, a licensed building contractor, served the Association as general manager and builder there for nearly 40 years.

The growth and development of the National Association have been linked, understandably, with the camp grounds. The Association office and the main physical assets are located there. Beginning in 1917 in a tent, the convention grounds today include a spacious tabernacle and several other functional buildings essential to the multiphased program of the Association. The present convention ground and its facilities are the largest investment owned by the black



Dr. James Earl Massey

community of the Church of God (Anderson IN), a group representative of nearly all of the states within the continental limits of the United States of America. In recent years, crowds of over thirty thousand people have been in attendance at the Association's annual camp meeting.

The history of the national camp meeting at West Middlesex, Pennsylvania is tied closely with the spread of the Church of God emphasis within the black community in America. The concentration upon racial resources has inevitably nurtured allegiance and given a sense of integrity, as well as group pride. But while the camp meeting and grounds are owned and con-trolled by blacks, the scope and planning and not completely race-oriented. The development patterns of the Association are and have been admittedly black in racial focus, but the spiritual and social concerns in the group charter and operation have pointed to an increasingly open fellowship with all. The beginning of the camp meeting at West Middlesex was rooted in religious, not racial concerns.

The National Association stands rooted in the spiritual tradition of the Church of God (Anderson IN), a reform group which had its beginnings in America in 1881. The earliest leaders of the reformation group stated their distinctive aim as: helping the general Church return to the apostolic truth, unity, and mission. The quest for such reform was not the vision of one man but rather a concern that several sensitive Christian leaders discovered that they shared in common. One of those leaders was Daniel Sidney Warner. As editor of *The Gospel Trumpet*, a semi-monthly independent religious journal, he emerged into prominence as chief writing spokesman of the vision.

A close reading of the early Church of God literature shows that concern for Church reform was so paramount that social and racial concerns did not merit much consideration, if any. In fact, the early leaders' emphasis upon apocalyptic

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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 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 what the 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, Indiana in the month of June). Checks should be mailed to:

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From the Editor

Someone once asked the question: "***If history could be wired for sound, what sound would you like to hear?*** How would you answer this question? Consider the following responses:

"If history could be wired for sound, I would love to hear the voice of ***Christopher Columbus*** as he shouted from the Santa Maria's deck: '**LAND HO!**'"

"If history could be wired for sound, I would love to hear the sound of ***Martin Luther's hammer*** as he nailed his controversial ***Ninety-Five Theses*** on the Wittenberg Castle door in Germany on October 31, 1957."

"If history could be wired for sound, I would love to hear the prayer of Jesus as He prayed to the Father, "***. . . that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us***" (Jn. 17:21b).

On June 16, 1981 during the Annual Camp Meeting Convention in Anderson IN, I wrote the personal devotional prayer that follows.*

Lord, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the ointment that flowed down from Aaron's beard even to the skirt of his garment. It is Thy *special formula*, recipe. Thy brand of

unity is an open fellowship of love between brethren who, in Thee, reach their hands in fellowship to every blood-washed one. How precious also, Lord, is it to "belong", not just to belong as a club, fraternity, sorority, or service group, but to **the family of God**—to be found among the brethren. How true it is, Lord, in knowing that Esau's punishment and curse was not only losing his birthright as eldest son, but being *separated from his brother*. How good it is for brethren to be identified with each other **as coals burning in the same fire**. Should one coal become isolated from the heap, it loses its warmth and glow, only to become cold. **How I need my brethren! How much more we can do together than we can do separately.** We can lift loads, pull and carry burdens more efficiently than one can do alone. As many candles light up a household, may we light up the world of darkness. As many grains of sand form the shores and many drops of water make up the seas, so also does a united church best witness for Thy glory and cause. Amen.

* From Personal Papers

— Dr. Wilfred Jordan

PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND GROWTH

The following article is adapted from my forthcoming book, *"I Saw the Church:" Theology and Church Practice in the Church of God Movement*. To be published by Warner Press in the Spring, 2002.

The problems and challenges of the present often conspire to make the past appear better than it actually was. This is the seedbed of nostalgia. However, the recognition that we may be so tempted should to be allowed to obscure the possibility that earlier periods in the church's history hold some very good decades. One such period was the post-war era of 1950 to 1965.

On the other hand, that the Church of God may have experienced an extended period of unprecedented growth and prosperity during those years is a phenomenon the reasons for which must still be stated. If the present-day church has a tendency toward nostalgia, the ministers of the church also have a tendency to read the past in theological categories. This tendency must also be balanced by historical explanation.

Wartime rationing and restrictions on strategic materials effectively halted church construction in the United States during the years 1940-1945. At the same time, wages were high, especially in the northern belt of industrial states from Western Pennsylvania to Illinois. Wartime production needs and the labor shortage created when millions of workers were drafted into the armed forces combined to drive wages up in this region that was also the heartland of the Church of God.

Families had money, but many goods—especially durable goods—were scarce. The same was true for congregations. As members incomes increased, so did giving to the local church. But the construction of new church buildings was next to impossible given the unavailability of construction materials that were need-

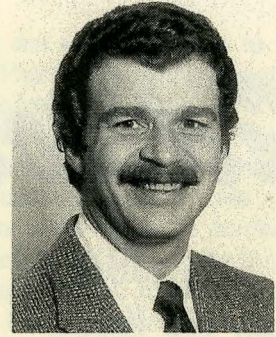
ed for the war effort. The return of peace dramatically altered this situation. The combination of an available money surplus and the lifting of wartime rationing of materials opened the floodgate behind which a demand for new church construction had been building up during the war years.

Local church property values increased by huge leaps and bounds in the Church of God movement after the conclusion of World War II. In 1940, the aggregate value of local church property was estimated at \$4.6 million.¹ Ten years later, that value was estimated to be \$21.6 million, an increase of approximately 450%.² Within the decade 1940-1950, the second half, coincident with the beginning of the peacetime era, witnessed an increase of more than \$14 million in local church property value, or 89% of the growth in value during the years from 1940 to 1950.

Growth continued during the following decades and proved even more remarkable. By 1960, the value of local church property had increased by a whopping \$50 million to a total of \$73 million, and by 1970 this aggregate total had reached \$125 million. These figures do not include the value of corporately held properties. Taken together the growth in value of these church and corporate properties strongly suggests that the Church of God movement came to enjoy a new level of material prosperity during the post war era.

Increased property values indicate only one kind of change with regard to the movement's entry into the religious mainstream of America. A second is illustrated by the architecture of the new buildings. Postwar church architecture reflected a self-image in many Church of God congregations that expressed an attitude that said they wanted a place—or believed themselves already to occupy it—nearer the social center of their community.

The architectural histories of congregations in places like New Albany, Indiana, or Saint Joseph and Lansing, Michigan make the point. In each case



the congregation constructed a building during the post war period and in each case the edifices constructed were a far cry from earlier buildings occupied by the congregations. They are as traditional and middle-class as any church building in America. They are beautiful buildings that say something important about the values and self-image of the congregations that contributed the money and time to build them.

These three churches and their architectural stories are not at all unique to this period in the history of the Church of God. Their picture could be duplicated all across the Church of God movement during the post-war decades. Churches of such an architectural style, typically constructed in prominent locations in their towns, combine with increased material prosperity to leave the impression that the social location of the Church of God movement was shifting toward the mainstream of American Protestantism.

During the years from 1940-1970, the movement's membership also increased dramatically. By 1970 the number of adherents had increased from 71,000 to nearly 148,000—more than double.³ It also needs to be said, however, that this rapid growth in membership was fueled in part by the phenomenon in the American post-war known as the "Baby Boom." Thus one of the factors that accounts for the continuing growth of Church of God in the 1960s and 1970s is the simple presence of a growing number of people in the population, including the population of church families.

Measured by membership growth or material prosperity, the period from 1945 to 1970 were salad years in the Church of God. It was an era marked by deep involvement in the life of the

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Editorial

He Said More Than He Knew

THEY are both good singers," wrote G. T. Clayton in a Gospel Trumpet field report published February 16, 1893, "and I believe they will be much used of the Lord. . . ." He was right; he said more than he knew. He was talking about none other than Herbert M. and Minnie (Shellhammer) Riggle, at that time just young newlyweds. Herbert was among thirty reported converts of this meeting in January of 1892, held by Freddy Jacobson and G. T. Clayton in western Pennsylvania.

In the years just prior to his conversion, beginning when he was sixteen years old, young Riggle had heard a succession of the pioneer evangelists in the Church of God movement—Daniel Sidney Warner, S. L. Speck, W. G. Schell, J. A. Dillon, and others. But it was in the Jacobson-Clayton meeting that he made his decision and cast his lot.

Between that day in January of 1892 and the day when death stilled his earthly career, October 7, 1952, lies a dramatic ministry of sixty years duration. Almost at once after his conversion he became a flaming evangelist, and in the span of his preaching ministry he doubtless preached to more people and won more converts than any other pioneer among us. In his prime, he was an orator of no mean ability. Wherever he preached, whether in schoolhouse, brush arbor, or later in great tabernacles, crowds pressed in to hear him. A throng of redeemed men and women preceded him into glory, a veritable army of folk who would name him as the man who led them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ or into the blessings of the sanctified life. Another throng, still living, can yet testify to the passion and power of his evangelistic and doctrinal preaching. They bow their heads and thank God for Brother Riggle.

It is said that more than fifty ministers came into the work of this movement through the labors and influence of this mighty man of God, and I would regard that figure as conservative. For example, less than two years after his own conversion, he put strong but tender arms of persuasion around a young

western Pennsylvania schoolteacher and with earnest but sensible pleadings led him to give his life to Christ and to the Christian ministry. That young schoolteacher was A. T. Rowe, thereafter a life-long friend of the Riggles. It was H. M.'s own request that A. T. conduct the funeral service.

The career of Herbert McClellan Riggle was rich in experience and varied in aspect—evangelist, missionary, pastor, author, missions secretary, Gospel Trumpet Company member and president. He and Minnie made a trip down the Ohio River on the old "Floating Bethel" (a river boat used for evangelistic purposes during the early 1890's) as part of the evangelistic party that planted the seed of future congregations on both banks of that river. In later years his ministry reached out to other continents—to England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, to Syria and Egypt. I doubt if Daniel Sidney Warner himself, who recommended Riggle for ordination at the Grand Junction, Michigan, camp meeting in 1894, had any idea of how far-reaching the ministry of this young evangelist would be.

What more can we say? A door that led through a passageway of sixty years back into the early days of this work has closed softly, cutting off from our vision one more pioneer vista. The earthly life that began in a log house on a farm in western Pennsylvania has ebbed away.

The circumstances of the last few years have not been altogether kind to Brother and Sister Riggle. For him they brought a progressive aging of both mind and body that rendered him helpless; for her they brought the severe struggle to care for him adequately after his condition had become indescribably difficult. But down to the end she lavished constant and loving care upon the enfeebled earthly tabernacle of the man with whom she lived and labored in gospel work for sixty years. Our hearts are pierced at this parting, yet we could not bid him stay longer in his declining condition. Time had taken its toll; the real labors of life were over. Nothing remained but the summons to the "crown of righteousness." Like Abraham of old, he "breathed his last and died in good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8, R.S.V.).

—Harold L. Phillips



Herbert McClellan Riggle
1872-1952



Herbert and Minnie Riggle

Editor's Note

This "Editorial" by Harold L. Phillips has been reproduced from the *Gospel Trumpet*. It was felt by Society members in the Annual session that it would be good to reprint it for the members who were not present and did not, therefore, hear it read by Dr. Phillips.

—Wilfred Jordan

THE GOSPEL TRUMPET

November 15, 1952

Jottings

From the Archives

Oops! In a previous issue of the Society's newsletter, I lamented what seemed to be a lack of attention paid to the passing of Br. Riggle from our midst. More was said than I knew of at that time. I simply accepted the findings of an outside researcher who came to the Archives to seek out information on Bro. Riggle. I did not think I needed to check those "facts," but it turned out they were incomplete. Along with the photo and newsnote was a fine editorial by then-editor Harold L. Phillips memorializing the Riggles. Our researcher had simply missed it. My apologies to our readers and to Bro. Phillips, who brought this to our attention.

Recently Church of God Archives acquired a book of handwritten Minutes of the Camp Meeting Committee, 1910-1916. What a treasure trove of Anderson Camp Meeting and Church of God history! The Committee was actually a committee of the Gospel Trumpet Company and seems to have been appointed by Bro. E.E. Byrum in some cases and by the Gospel Trumpet Company Directors in others. The names of those who served at various times on this committee read like a who's-who list of the Church of God: Byrum; Bolds; Teasley; Tallen; Campbell; Coplin; Howard; Martin; Byers; Heinly; Longbrake; Cole; Palmer; Hale; Wilson; Patterson; Berry; and Smith.

These seven years worth of Minutes make for fascinating reading. The Committee seem to have dealt with every conceivable kind of issue relating to the campmeeting from finding sufficient straw for ticks (the kind you sleep on, not the kind that bite you) to the conduct of public services. They appear to have been an autonomous group accountable only to themselves and their word was, to all intents and purposes, final.

Even the ministers were accountable to them while at campmeeting. In 1915, for example, Floyd Heinly made

a suggestion that "a person or committee be appointed before next year's meeting to see that ministers prepare themselves on subjects for Bible study." It seems to have bothered some, at least, that a lot of "off-the-cuff" preaching and teaching were going on—and not all of it too edifying. The secretary notes simply: "Some discussion, but no conclusion."

In 1911, the question of the wearing of neckties was raised. The secretary writes: "Discussion followed concerning whether the committee should take any stand concerning the necktie question. It was thought best to give our attention to other things and that this matter would adjust itself." The next day, "Brother Duncan" brought up the question again. "Various ideas were advanced, some of the committee approving and others disapproving." This question does not appear in the Minutes for those years after this brief flurry.

In 1912, the question of campmeeting preaching is discussed. Serious problems seem to have arisen with the practice of "whoever feels led." The Minutes state: "*Bro. A. L. Byers called attention to the fact that in previous Camp Meetings, at times, some ministers had occupied the pulpit, thus preventing preaching of someone more capable of edifying the people. He thought some measures should be taken to prevent a like recurrence. As a prevention, Bro. Teasley advised having a special prayer meeting each morning for those who felt that the Lord might be leading them to preach during the meeting. By the ministers' meeting in this way for prayer and consultation, in addition to forestalling anyone getting out of God's order, it would prevent confusion and beget confidence in the one who was to preach.*" (A bit run-on, but meaning, I think, is quite clear.)

One more gem—a very large one, I think. In the June 15, 1913 Minutes is this statement: "*Brother Byrum thought that it would be good to let the colored brethren have a meeting in the German tent after the German meeting this afternoon. The suggestion was approved. Bro. Byrum is to see Bro. Oden as to whether or not the colored brethren care to have the meeting.*"

It seems that the "colored brethren"

were not very receptive to this idea. Bro. Heinly raised the question again the following year on June 12, 1914. The Minute says: "*F.W. Heinly asked whether we should have meetings for the colored people. He and E.E. Byrum were asked to confer with the colored people about the matter.*"

The next day, June 13, Bros. Byrum and Heinly reported back to the Committee. The Minute states: "*The report on the question of having a separate service for the colored people was considered. It was found that the colored saints are a little afraid of the proposition, fearing that a separation once started will grow until there will be a feeling that the colored people are not wanted at this Camp Meeting. It was thought, however, that with the understanding that a separate meeting for the accommodation of the colored people in the city, the experiment might be tried this year with one separate meeting on Sunday afternoon.*"

From this point on, no further entries appear in the Minutes on this question. We can assume here, I think, that a separate meeting was tried on one Sunday afternoon during Camp Meeting in 1914, but not, however, repeated. German meetings are mentioned, as are minister's meetings, youth meetings, children's meetings, Sunday School meetings—and requests for "mothers meetings" and other special meetings repeatedly denied. But no further word of any kind about "meetings for colored people." It seems the matter was dropped—much to everyone's good. Apparently, "colored people" were very much wanted at "this Camp Meeting." And very much wanted to be there—to this day.

The life of the archival researcher is never easy. We do make mistakes. We sometimes fail to see what we should have seen. But every now and then we are richly rewarded with information and insights that move us beyond heritage to real history. This book of Minutes has been such a case for me. I feel like a fly on the wall in the Tower Room of the Gospel Trumpet Company. For a while, I am transported back to another era when the reality of "familiness" was deeply experienced.

—Douglas E. Welch

(Continued from Page 1)

teaching and reform concerns set a pattern of priorities that continued to place all other issues in lesser light long after the death of Warner and his colleagues. Strictly concerned to see the Church reformed, their energies were given to revival preaching, evangelistic campaigns, publication of vital Church doctrines, and establishing congregations to spread and maintain the acknowledged truths behind the movement. Social concerns were not a part of the fundamental mind of the Church of God during those years. Polarization of whites and blacks in American church life was not viewed as demanding reform, but seen merely as a social fact.

Like other religious bodies in America, the Church of God also polarized the races within its constituency. And, like the other bodies, the Church of God also sought to rationalize the separateness. All of this is especially interesting in view of the group's teaching on Christian unity.

In an earlier study, *An Introduction to the Negro Churches in the Church of God Reformation Movement*, published in 1957, I divided the history of Church of God relations with Black Americans into three major periods: The Provincial Period, 1886-1916; The Developmental Period, 1916-1946; and The Progressive Period, 1947-². Although there was some understood overlapping of characteristics peculiar to each period of time, the listed dates have continued to form logical dividing points for the treatment of social relations between the Church of God and the Black Americans who have been part of its life.

The Provincial Period began in 1886, when Jane Williams, the first known Black leader and her Charleston, South Carolina congregation became identified with the Church of God reformation movement history.

Interestingly, the work of the Church of God in South Carolina began among blacks, and the Charleston church was one of the two major city centers for the spread of the movement's teachings among blacks in the south for many years. It was from Charleston that the message spread to Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, and Alabama, with both black and white leaders working hand-in-hand as congregations of the Church were established in those areas. Although such sharing is true, the period must still be

classified as "Provincial" because both the black and white leaders who worked together did their work under the influence of dynamics operative within the separate groups from which they had come. Both were influenced by the fact that the slavery era had been legally terminated for but a short time; both knew that social differences stood between their life in Christ and their life in the wider community; both knew that they were caught in a situation where one culture—white culture—was in dominance.

Thus the rubric "Provincial Period." Carlyle Marney has rightly commented that "Situations of one culture dominance are particularly productive of provincialism."³ Both whites and blacks were pre-occupied with concerns dictated by the environment. The white and black members of the Church of God were faced by social generalizations that their new experience in Christ did not immediately



An early picture of ministers, West Middlesex PA

change. In time, however, faulty social circumstances in some of the movement churches generated dissatisfaction and overt criticism from both white and black leaders.

Many issues of the *Gospel Trumpet* contained important articles and comments on the subject of race relations during the Provincial Period. For example, in the February 25, 1909 issue, a report appeared by Lena L. Matthesen concerning the Oklahoma Assembly: "The meeting was somewhat hindered because of the color question. At the ministers' meeting it was decided that investigations be made in Guthrie to find out whether or not it would be better to have separate meet-

ings there. This must be mutually agreed upon by both colored and whites of the congregation." Actually, 1909 was a year when a great deal of attention was devoted to the subject of interracial fellowship. Many articles were published in the *Gospel Trumpet* in answer to questions from the field. Sadly, sentiment crystallized finally into an open breach between the white and black members of the Church of God.

During the Developmental Period (1916-1946), there was a concentration of efforts in separate evangelism which directly influenced the growth of all-white churches and all-black churches.

The direct growth of black churches was especially measurable in the North because of the general exodus in 1916 of southern blacks to many of the industrial cities located there. Given this shift, largely for economic reasons, many of the black members and church leaders previously rooted in the South moved and relocated in the North. This shift of leaders crippled the work in the South, but it helped strengthen the black churches in the larger northern cities.

1916 is important for still another reason: by that year social sensitivities had so increased even in the North that many of the interracial churches there divided over race concerns. Starting in New York in 1909, affecting Chicago in 1915, and Detroit in 1916, the social currents against interracial togetherness grew stronger and many interracial churches divided into separate congregations, white and black respectively. Separate state, regional, and

national organizations soon resulted also. The Church of God was growing, but its community life was substantially separate in terms of black and white. There was development, but it was mainly along divisive lines of color and race concerns.

The awareness of social failure in the midst of apparent church growth patterns became very obvious by the late 1940s. Some assault on racism in the nation was evident from some of the progressive policies of the New Deal government under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although accommodation and segregation were still the prevailing order in the national life, "Winds of change, however slight, were discernible," writes John Hope Franklin, "and nowhere was this in greater evidence than in the new labor unions."⁴

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Discriminating employment policies were put under attack. Second-class citizenship for blacks also came under attack when alert Americans saw how inconsistent it was to fight fascist racism in Europe and yet allow racism of another kind to exist at home. Blacks who had fought in World War II refused to accept discrimination and segregation any longer when they returned home.

Little by little, there was evidence of a breakthrough on the color front in America. America's new position in world leadership made the nation more vulnerable to world criticism. This in some measure forced the national government to move more decisively to correct the national position with reference to its black citizens. A pattern of progressive concern was under development.

Just as the Church had been affected by the previous social patterns in the nation, it was also affected by the new changes brought about by legislative decisions of national scope. The political and social influence of the 1954 Supreme Court order to desegregate the nation's schools cannot be overestimated. The winds of change stirred many civic and religious groups to act by the terms of a higher reason and ethic. Progressivism in the nation prompted progressive attitudes and actions on the church scene in America. Once again the Church was adjusting itself to national social currents still following in the wake of change rather than causing the change as a morally sensitive and spiritually responsible people under God.

The two worlds of race are still evident in the life of the Church of God, but due to the prodding of the National Association and the cooperation of many whites, some significant strides have been made within recent years.

Almost from the beginning a few black leaders were serving on Church of God boards and agencies, representing the interests of blacks, but concern increased in the 1960s to secure and hold leadership positions for other than "token" or "representative" reasons. In 1964, the General Assembly of the Church of God adopted a major statement on race, a partial result from the long-term work and recommendation of a Study Commission on Race Relations created by the Assembly in 1957. The General Assembly also acted in 1964 to create a Commission on Social Concerns.

By 1968, a 90 percent increase had occurred in the number of blacks serving on national boards and agencies of the Church of God. In 1962, Gabriel Dixon was the first black elected as vice-chairman of the General Assembly of the Church of God. He was successfully re-elected and served in that role until 1966.



Dr. Gabriel P. Dixon

In 1966, the first blacks were employed to fill staff positions in the Church's national agencies. Melvyn F. Hester was appointed to serve the Board of Church Extension and Home Missions as National Consultant on Urban Ministries and Robert O. Dulin, Jr., joined the staff of the Board of Christian Education.

In 1979, the Church of God in the continental United States listed 176,282 members; 26,586 were blacks. In 1979, black congregations of the Church of God comprised twenty percent of the total number of 2,310. In 1980, there were 472 black churches, with 27,628 members among the total Church of God membership of 179,137.

Since 1967, when the Foreign Missions Board of the National Association of the Church of God and the Missionary Board of the Church of God combined their efforts in handling overseas mission work, duplication no longer existed on a racial basis in the overseas missionary outreach of the Church of God. By late 1968, of the 184 elected members of the boards and agencies of the Church of God, 25 were black.

The National Association of the Church of God had played a major role in helping to effect many of these changes and developments at the level of Church of God witness and work. Aware that the Church of God, like other religious groups in America, has been improperly conditioned by faulty social customs and racial stereotypes, the National Association has worked steadily to help the Church deal with its deficiencies and failures on the point of race relations and develop a fellowship in keeping with the social implication in the Church of God message about Christian unity.

References:

- ¹ See Katie Davis, *Zion's Hill at West*

Middlesex (Corpus Christi: Christian Triumph Press, 1959), p.10.

² (New York: The Shining Light Survey Press, 1957.) This study, now extensively revised and updated, is scheduled for republication in 1982.

³ *Structures of Prejudice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), p.75. See also pp. 67-68 for further comments on the nature of provincialism.

⁴ "The Two Worlds of Race," in *The Negro American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), ed. by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark, p.61.

—James Earl Massey

EDITOR'S NOTE

This essay, by Dr. James Earl Massey, has been reproduced with his permission. It was originally published in a volume entitled *Commemorative Booklet in Observance of the Centennial Celebration of the Church of God 1880-1980* and published by the National Association of the Church of God, West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, August, 1981, edited by Reverend Jordan. The photos were not included in the original article. Dr. Gabriel P. Dixon (photo above) is now over 90 years of age.

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church and its activities. The Eisenhower era was one marked by broad public encouragement of religion in general. The Church of God movement may have grown as a result of great preaching and a movement of the Spirit. But it also benefitted from a unique set of social conditions.

- ¹ 1940 *Yearbook of the Church of God.*
- ² 1950 *Yearbook of the Church of God.*
- ³ 1970 *Yearbook of the Church of God.*

— Dr. Merle D. Strege
President
Historical Society



MOVING DAY?

The above photo, of which we have several copies in Church of God Archives, is designated simply as "Moving Day." Additional information from another source suggests that this is the day the Trumpet family moved into their new home (known much later as "Old Main").

This appears, however, to be a misidentification. The background of the photo itself suggests that the time of year is quite possibly late Summer or early Fall. But Harold L. Phillips in *Miracle of Survival* reports that "The workers moved into the new Trumpet Home and took their first meal there on December 12, 1906" (1979:206). This photo is not December, or 1906.

Further browsing in *Miracle of Survival* turns up the same photograph identified as follows: "G.T. workers with the Company's first truck (about mid-1910s)." All of which highlights a major problem in the Archives. A great many old photographs are either not dated and identified, or are misdated and misidentified. Both are equally frustrating problems.

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