

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God Vol 9 No 3 Spring 2009

MISSIONARY *EXTRAORDINAIRE*

Recently, long-time missionary, Dr. Nasser Farag, sent us a group of old photos relating to the Church of God in Egypt. One of them is of Nellie S. Laughlin and a group of Egyptian pastors. I had always related Sister Laughlin with Syria (Lebanon), so wondered what she was doing in Egypt.

Nellie S. Laughlin is listed in Thaddeus Neff's 1950's book, *Our Missionaries*, under Syria, but not under Egypt. Yet, she served in Egypt from 1937 to 1942, dying in the American Mission Hospital in Assiut on her seventieth birthday. (Neff does say in the Syria article that Sr. Laughlin served in Egypt and describes her work there. If I had ever read it very carefully, I suppose I had forgotten it.)

Women have always been prominent in the missionary movement of the Church of God. A number of pages in Neff's book are devoted to photos of missionaries—167 by actual count. A total of 114 of them are women. (But, 43 index entries are minus photographs. Of those 43, 29 are women.) Thus, from 1892, when North American Church of God missionaries began to fan out (loosely speaking) to 1956, when Neff compiled his book,

210 missionaries had served the Church of God 'overseas.' Of that number, 143 were women. That's a whopping 68%!

What surprises me somewhat (and, I suppose, disappoints me a little as well) is that missions history in the Church of God pays a great amount of attention to the involvement and accomplishments of men who have served overseas. Much of that, of course, is justified. Men had more freedom, more opportunities, and, in many cases, much more time. They had the cultural and political advantage of being males in a predominantly male world.

To honor their sacrifice and work is therefore appropriate (in most cases, at least). What is not appropriate, however, is to pass over the sacrificial lives and accomplishments of the majority (even the two-thirds' majority) of the women who have served the Church of God overseas as if they were not quite as important as those of their male counterparts. But, you may say, surely you're overstating the case. Perhaps—but perhaps not and that's exactly what I'm prepared to argue. It's a matter of telling the truth in historical writing, shaping the story around the data, not *vice versa*.

'Case-in-point'—Nellie Laughlin. Given my years of academic work and professional life in Church of God missions, why should I have been surprised to see Nellie S. Laughlin with a group of Egyptian pastors in Egypt? Was it a case of looking in the wrong direction?

Nellie S. Laughlin began her career as a school teacher in New England well before the turn of the 20th century. She later joined the students and staff of the noted New York Missionary Home, where the missionary spirit ran high. In 1913, she was on her way to join the F.G. Smiths in Schweifat, Syria (later Lebanon), where she served until 1928, enduring World War I, Turkish rule, and numerous hardships and deprivations. But, she won "many fine young people in Syria to Christ" (Neff, p. 148).

Dr. Labib Mikhail writes of her: "she started a course of ministerial study for pastoral candidates. Her objective was to lead young people to sacrificial living and service of the Lord. Her own life became their model for consecration and modest servanthood." (We must not forget how difficult it was for women missionaries to work in Middle East societies which were patriarchal to the core.)

— D.E. Welch



Church of God Historian

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

Vol 9 No 3 Spring 2009

This newsletter is published three times a year: Fall; Winter; and Spring. It is published by the Society on behalf of its members. Printed in Anderson Indiana.

All correspondence should be addressed to: Historical Society of the Church of God, P.O. Box 702, Anderson, Indiana 46015. Email should be sent to *Merle D. Strege*, Society President, at: mdstrege@anderson.edu.

Church of God Historian is managed by the Executive Committee of the Society. Merle D. Strege, President, Dale E. Stultz, Vice-President, and Sadie B. Evans, Secretary-Treasurer. Others serve on the Committee as requested by the President. D. Welch serves as Managing Editor.

The Historical Society

The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) exists to encourage the collection and preservation of artifacts and documents relating to the history of the Church of God; to encourage historical research and the writing of Church of God history; and to provide a forum for like-minded people interested in participating in and furthering the study of Church of God history.

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.) Checks should be made out to *Historical Society of the Church of God* and sent to Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.

A LOVING AND HOPEFUL REMINDER FROM YOUR SECRETARY-TREASURER

Dear Friends and Fellow Members of the Historical Society:

DUES

It's time once again to remind you to send in your annual dues. The new Society year will begin in one month and we know you do not want to miss out on any of the forthcoming issues of the *Church of God Historian*.

We remind you that with all other costs in the financial realm skyrocketing, our annual dues have NOT been raised. They are still \$15 per year. (If you choose to send more than that, we shall be very grateful for your contribution to the work of the Society.)

Please make your checks payable to *Church of God Historical Society* and mail them to P.O. Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.

ALSO

With postage rates having been raised once again, we ask that you keep us informed of your CURRENT address (including ZIP Code). It is quite disheartening to send out an issue of the *Historian* at considerable cost, only to have it returned marked "addressee unknown." To save time tracking down current members who have moved (to say nothing about the saving of extra postage to resend an issue) and to make better use of our dollars, dollars which can be put toward heritage projects, please make certain that if you have



moved or are planning to move during the next membership year that you send us your new address, or any such addresses for friends and family for whom you subscribe.

Many new, wonderful things have happened in the life of our Historical Society in the past year. We know you don't want to miss hearing about them!

I wish also to take this opportunity to thank everyone who sent in extra financial gifts or material items such as pictures, pamphlets, or other items during this past year. All of these together are what keep our Church of God heritage alive for others.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Annual Meeting of the Society at the North American Convention of the Church of God, which will convene here in Anderson from June 26-July 1 this year. Safe travel to each of you. God bless you richly!

Sadie B. Evans,
Secretary-Treasurer

9TH ANNUAL MEETING

Date: Saturday, Jun 27, '09

Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Place: Decker Hall #133

Presenter: Merle D. Strege

**"What the Open Letter
Opened."**

HISTORY AS MORAL AND POLITICAL ART

Recently I've been reading Thomas Albert Howard's impressive *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*. That title may sound dry as dust [or a lot drier], but for the person who has been at home in the academic world for more than two-thirds of his life, Howard's book is a real page-turner.

Critical to the new research universities was the ideal of *Wissenschaft*, an almost untranslatable German word that is roughly equivalent to objective, critical knowledge. Over the course of the nineteenth century all fields of inquiry had to conform to this ideal and if they could not, the new model university questioned their right to participate in its life. During this period, the study of history emerged from the old traditional faculty labeled 'philosophy'. The great German scholar, Leopold von Ranke, gave the modern academic discipline of history much of its character, conforming it to the canon of objective, critical, "science-like" knowledge.

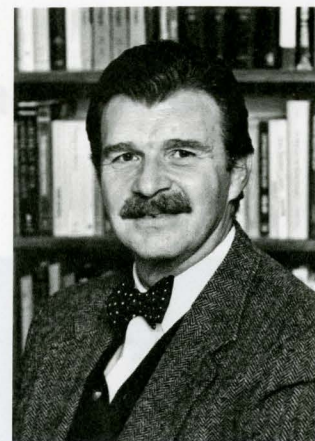
Earlier in my career, I largely agreed with von Ranke's model of history, but as I read after Jaroslav Pelikan, Stanley Hauerwas, John Howard Yoder, and Alisdair MacIntyre my ideas about history and its uses departed from von Ranke's nineteenth-century Enlightenment based ideal. I think that ideal is correct, but not without qualification. I quite heartily consent to the importance and practice of modern, critical history, the home of which quite properly is the university; in-

deed, part of my work as a historian tries to measure up to that ideal. But I also part company with that ideal in two respects.

In the first place, I think it is important to ask where and when ideas about anything, certainly a powerful notion like *Wissenschaft*, originate and become popular. The idea of 'reason,' for example was variously defined in Athens during the fourth century B.C., Paris in the thirteenth century, or Berlin in the nineteenth.

By the same token, *where* knowledge is pursued shapes definitions of knowledge. Universities give knowledge a theoretical cast because theoretical, critical thinking is the heart of the university enterprise. Recently, universities have come under sharp criticism whether they are as capable of *Wissenschaft* as they have claimed, but that is another matter. Here I wish simply to state that I do not think university knowledge is the only kind worth pursuing. Neither do I find very attractive the correlative notion of a disinterested search for knowledge, as if the search was its own reward.

Older than the idea of objective critical knowledge is the notion of knowledge as wisdom. In subordinating *Wissenschaft* to wisdom is my second point of departure from modern ideas about history. Medieval and early modern universities agreed in placing wisdom above all else, but nineteenth-century reformers ruled it out of universities and replaced it with *Wissenschaft*. But if wisdom is no longer comfortable in the mod-



ern university (there are schools where it continues to hold a pre-eminent position), certainly it should still be at home in the church.

And this brings me to the study of history. In the church, history can quite properly be conceived as a moral and political art. It is not so much in method as in end that history in the church differs from the university. The end or aim of history in the church is moral. That is, it contributes to the formation of the church's character. And since the church is a body composed of many members, history is also political. That is, it is a crucial aspect of being together. The church lives by remembering.

If one thinks of history as a moral and political art, the Church of God Historical Society should be understood as more significant than merely a group gathered about a shared antiquarian interest, or the church's 'history club.' The work of the Society, from the Archives to publications to the interest and commitment of each member, contributes to the character and the way of being together of the Church of God in the present and into the future.

— Merle D. Strege
President HS

FROM BELFAST TO BIRKENHEAD

The Story of John and Maisie Larmour and the Church of God

By Joan Larmour Kardatzke



John and Maisie Larmour were both born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Both came from large families. Dad's family chose the Presbyterian Church. I'm not sure how involved they were, but I recall that when Dad was baptized, his father objected that he had already been baptized in the Presbyterian Church. Both of their mothers had died while they were very young. Both left school to earn money for their families. He worked at the shipyards as a boilermaker; she worked at the linen mills.

With much conflict on the Belfast streets involving religion, a new way was needed. Bible-believing groups started to hold open air meetings with preaching and singing. Dad attended a Bible study in the Boiler Shop and was saved there when he was seventeen years old. "My Spirit will not always strive with man" was the scripture which convicted him.

Later, he was sanctified un-

der the preaching of H.M. Riggle, who came from the U.S.A. for a two-week campaign. Thereafter, Dad began to preach in an open-air meeting. He said at first he held back, but no one else stepped forward. One of the brothers, Turtle Boyde, asked, "Doesn't anyone have a word for the Lord?" Dad said once he got started he never stopped. People heard his big voice from the middle of the circle of saints who had been singing and had to get nearer to see this 'wee man.' That was 1920 and he never stopped preaching for over sixty years.

Mum was attracted to the message of the Gospel at an open-air meeting. I am unsure whether Dad was preaching, but they ended up at the Belfast Church of God, which became home to them. They married and spent the rest of their lives in ministry with the Church of God.

When Bro. Wm. Hopwood died, the Birkenhead Church

met to decide what to do. One sister suggested they should ask Emmanuel Bible College to take over the church, but Bro. Ewing said, "Let us ask if Bro. Larmour can come here from Belfast so we remain a Church of God congregation. John Larmour had a couple of able men he could leave to oversee the Belfast church. It was hard on Mother, as they had just moved into a house she liked, but God's work came first. They moved to Birkenhead with their three children: John, 7; Jim, 4; and Joan, two years old.

I have some early childhood memories of walking to church on Sunday mornings with my Dad. The fun part was that we rang the church bell for people to come. Then one day Dad said we couldn't ring the bell any-



more. Why not? We were at war and the church bells could not ring because 'when' the Germans invaded, then ALL the church bells in the country would ring to let the people know. History tells us that was never necessary.

Dad put his name on a list to visit German soldiers who were taken prisoner and requested a pastor to visit. He knew we had churches in Germany. He also put our church and home address at the American base for any service men who wanted to visit a Church of God home. So our home at 24 Haldane was a lively place. The church was enriched with great hymn singing and other musical talent and good times with our many guests. The boys would sing and speak at the church and really cheered us up during rough times.

In thinking back, 24 Haldane Avenue represented the ministry of John and Maisie Larmour. You see, it was an 'open door' for all people. Members of the church who were nurses and lived at the hospital were always welcome at '24.' Sunday dinner always included guests. Many American service men responded to Dad's invitation and we spent many happy hours together.

After the War, folks from the Belfast church would come, several families at a time. I recall sleeping on a 'bed' made from two chairs pushed together. My memories include one 'Guy Fawkes Day' when several of the men started dragging Mom's chairs out for a bonfire, much to my mother's horror. "Whatever will the neighbors think?" she would ask.



"This is a picture of the door at '24' which, for me, represents the mission of the family and the church group they were part of. Whoever knocks can know the response will be immediate and positive."

There was a 'Family of God' sense I can't explain. I think in the great big picture we are all one people, no matter our nationality, race, religion, or gender. My parents desire to witness to and serve all people just seemed a natural part of who Christians were expected to be. The mission of the church was to serve ALL people in whatever way they needed to be served.



Joan and Merl Kardatzke

The location of the Birkenhead church was in a working-class neighborhood and when the old building was torn down and a new one built in 1992, it was on the same plot of land. As a kid, I recall eating dinner [the noon meal] quickly on a Sunday so I could run to the 'dock cottages' and collect little kids to take to Sunday School.



"In 1920, God was very much at work in Belfast, Ireland. We were having both riots in the city and revivals in the churches. . . . Because of the revival there developed a Bible class in the shop during the meal hour. I was invited and there learned the truth about baptism. . . . I was directed to one of their services at the bottom of the Shankill Road. Brother Adam Allen met me at the door. They were on their knees in prayer. I was warmly welcomed at this, my first introduction to the Church of God. The following Sunday morning I was baptized in the Irish Sea by Brother Allen" (John Larmour's testimony).

SALIB FARAG AND THE EGYPTIAN GOSPEL TRUMPET

Salib Farag (1906-1972) was one of the pioneers of the Church of God in Egypt. He and his wife, Raymonda Marcos, were baptized by Rev. John Crose (a Church of God missionary in the Middle East from 1923-1949), after having been led to Christ by Sister Nellie S. Laughlin, who served in Egypt from 1937-1942 (she served in Syria as well from 1913-1928).

Brother Salib joined Rev. Thaddeus Neff, who, along with his wife Katrina, was a missionary in Egypt from 1923-1951, to start the Church of God in Alexandria. Brother Salib was the first Egyptian publisher/printer of the Arabic Gospel Trumpet (*Buk-el-Ingeel*) in 1924 for Egypt and the Middle East. He also printed other Christian literature, including a COG Arabic hymnal which was used in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria.

Brother Salib combined his spirit of unity with that of evangelism. When he was 21 years old, he attended a meeting that included some Coptic Orthodox and Evangelical young people. There he met an 18-year old Copt, Labib Mikhael, who believed in church tradition, the semi-divine nature of the Virgin Mary, and etc. Brother Salib noticed the analytic apologetic intelligence of the young man and invited him to come and hear Sr. Nellie Laughlin preach. Both of them responded to the salvation message and were 'discipled' by Miss Laughlin.

Brother Salib, a layman, was a main translator from English to Arabic for the missionaries. He was ordained a *Sheikh* (elder) in the Church of God and went on to become the COGs representative in the highest Ecumenical Evangelical Board for Egypt and Sudan. He held this position for 22 years, up until the time of his death.

For several years, he served as Vice-Chairman of the General Assembly of the Church of God. He was also appointed as one of the Judges in the Egyptian Evangelical Judicial Council that served as the court to settle cases of marital conflict and divorce among Evangelical Christians.



Later, Bro. Salib's printing press served the Christian community and churches non-denominationally. It was common to find Coptic Orthodox and Catholic priests along with Evangelical ministers having their printing done at Salib's press, where they were always given reduced rates. When his sons, Fayez and Nasser Farag later took over the

printing press, this practice was continued.

In 1949, Salib had to undergo surgery for a ruptured stomach ulcer. Immediately after the operation, Salib developed uncontrolled hiccoughs which tore open the internal stitches. The doctor said there was nothing more he could do. Salib's wife, Raymonda, gathered the children to pray for the healing of their father. A few days later, his hospital room was filled with over thirty interdenominational priests, pastors, laymen and women who agreed to come together to pray for the Lord's healing touch. Bro. Salib soon completely recovered. His testimony of healing was a great encouragement to the family and to the entire Christian community in Alexandria.

Brother Salib and his wife, Sister Raymonda Marcos (who was called 'The Short Alexandrian Female General for Christ') brought many nominal Christians and a few Moslems to Christ. Sister Raymonda was known for her love for and outreach to the poor. She distributed food, clothing, and money for education and medical needs to the needy and saved many a destitute young Christian lady from marrying a follower of Islam just out of the family's temptation to agree to a large



Adam Miller

Nasser Farag

payment of money from the proposed groom. At the same time, she managed a large house-hold (she was the mother of 16 children, eight of whom lived beyond childhood) and was known for her hospitality to visiting missionaries and Egyptian pastors.

Salib & Raymonda (on left) Farag on pilgrimage to holy sites in Jersusalem (early 1960s)



— Written by Dr. Nasser Farag, retired Church of God missionary and missions professor and son of Salib and Raymonda Farag.

BUK-EL-INGEEL

Dr. Labib Mikhail, who was the second Editor of Buk-el-Ingeel, has supplied the following brief note about the Egyptian Gospel Trumpet.

“According to Dr. Lester Crose, the first issues of the Arabic Gospel Trumpet, which was translated as *Buk-el-Ingeel*, were printed in 1921. The responsibility for publishing this magazine was taken over in

1924 by Brother Salib Farag, one of the brethren from Alexandria who continued this responsibility for many years.

The magazine circulated throughout the Arabic-speaking churches in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon and served to unite and inspire the believers as well as to inform them of important happenings in the life of the church. At one time, its circulation reached 5,000 copies.”

REV. DR. LABIB MIKHAIL

In the material on the Farag family and the Church of God in Egypt sent to us by Nasser Farag for inclusion in Church of God Archives is an essay on Dr. Labib Mikhail, who was appointed in 1950 by the General Assembly of the Church of God in Egypt to become the Editor of Buk-el-Ingeel. The essay is too long for us to reproduce in its entirety here, so we include only selected excerpts from it.

Brother Labib is one of the fruits of the labor of Bro. Salib Farag, who heard Brother Labib speaking intelligently and eloquently in a conference on a Christian theological issue, but without the spiritual touch of salvation and maturity. Bro. Farag invited this young man to attend Church of God missionary Nellie Laughlin's meetings in the Church of God congregation in Alexandria. Bro. Labib accepted Christ after hearing Sister Laughlin's message on Daniel 5:27: “You have been weighed by the scale and found wanting.”

Labib continued attending Sister Laughlin's studies on

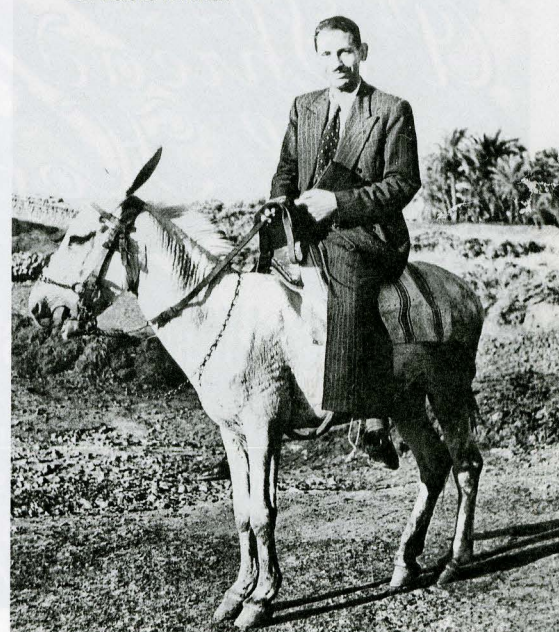
Church history, psychology, and Christian Education for all ages. Missionary Thaddeus Neff taught him pastoral studies and after finishing his studies in 1939, he was sent by the COG missionaries to re-open the church in Malawi, Upper Egypt which had been closed for five years. The former members of the congregation had either fallen away or joined other denominations.

After two years, the Malawi church gained 20 new members and grew in strength from year to year. From its Sunday school where he and his wife taught diligently came lifelong lay COG ministers and active lawyers, teachers, and engineers in the community. The Malawi church stands up until now as the exemplary, vital Church of God congregation among all others in Egypt.

While in Malawi, Rev. Labib started a church-planting outreach in the nearby villages. His donkey was his means of transportation. In this way he started and built up two congregations.

— Nasser Farag

Dr. Labib Mikhail



INTO ALL THE WORLD

A Century of Church of God Missions



LESTER A. CROSE
CHERYL JOHNSON BARTON
DONALD D. JOHNSON

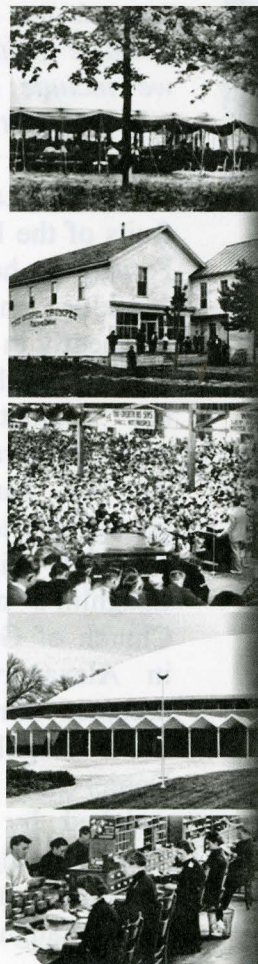
NEW BOOKS FROM SOCIETY MEMBERS

We have reproduced here the front covers (which are in full color) of three new books with which Historical Society members have been involved for the past year and longer. At this writing, only one, *A Thread of Hope*, is currently available (published by Anderson University Press). The other two, *Into All the World* and *The Quest for Holiness and Unity*, (both published by Warner Press) will be available at the North American Convention of the Church of God this year. *A Thread of Hope* is available from Anderson University Press and Warner Press. Or you may contact Dr. Mary Ann Hawkins at Anderson University School of Theology. We are pleased to recommend these books to you.

A Thread of Hope

Church of God Women in Mission

edited by
Mary Ann Hawkins and
Juanita Evans Leonard



A comprehensive history of the
Church of God Reformation Movement

THE QUEST

for Holiness & Unity
Second Edition

By John W. V. Smith
Revised & Expanded by
Merle D. Strege