

Newsletter

Of the Historical Society of the Church of God

Vol 1, No 3,

Spring, 2001



ANDERSON CAMP MEETING Continuity and Change

Editor Wilfred Jordan has asked me to reflect on some changes in the Anderson Campmeeting during my lifetime. My father, E.A. Reardon, moved us to Anderson in 1920 and with the exception of seven growing up years in Denver, seminary, and four years pastoring in Pennsylvania, Anderson has been my home. It has been a sort of ringside seat for the Movement's major yearly event. During this whole time, I have missed only one campmeeting, which was during World War II.

First, the enduring nature of this incredible gathering of the "saints" from all over the world. We were from foreign countries, multiracial, multinational, small towns and large cities. Cars with license plates from across the nation filled the parking lots, replacing the buggies and carriages of earlier days. It was Church of God family time. Boisterous singing filled the great tabernacle with great signs and banners proclaiming the "Truth once delivered to the saints." Present on the platform were our strongest and most influential leaders, who were there to challenge and stir us up in the holy faith. Their central message, the eternal Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was the central theme then as it is the central theme today. This has not changed and continues to be our great Treasure.

There are some obvious changes that have taken place across the years. The Warner Auditorium has replaced the old tabernacle and its sawdust floor, and the Student Center has taken the place of the old lunch stand. The old wood-en dorms have been replaced by the AU airconditioned residence halls, and there are now plenty of meeting places in the University and our national offices. There are still a few who prefer camping or bringing recreational vehicles, although an occasional tent may still be seen.

In the earlier days, the preferred direction of the campmeeting was to be led by the Holy Spirit. In what is today called Byrum Hall, the preachers met on the platform in a semicircle and after impromptu singing and praying, whoever felt endowed with the message walked to the pulpit. In the earlier days, the audience responded to strong preaching with shouts of enthusiastic approval. When one brother confessed that he was uncomfortable with shouting, he was encouraged to cross over into the cemetery and practice among the tombstones. We are more reserved today, but we now have the younger generation coming on strong with their informality, chorus singing, and the restoration of excitement to the services.

We do hear better. In the early part of the century, there were some very gifted leaders among us who had weak voices and did not preach because few could hear them. After much adjusting of our present equipment, we are now able to hear with clarity.

Perhaps the major change from our early days is the change in the nature and tone of our preaching. It is no longer harsh denunciation of our fellow Christians and what was often called "thrashing Babylon." Today we welcome the participation of leaders of other faith groups—which in other days would have been regarded as compromise.

There have been some among us who have thought that the International Convention was soon to become a relic of the past, that it had outlived its usefulness and would quietly pass away. This has been a serious miscalculation. The great gathering of the people of God to sing, pray, study, and conduct the affairs of the body is very much alive.

— Robert H. Reardon

NEWSLETTER
of the Historical Society of
the Church of God (Anderson)

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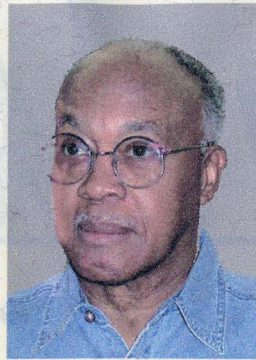
The Historical Society . . .

The Historical Society exists to encourage within the Church of God (Anderson) interest in Church of God history; to 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 that which the Historical 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 IN during the month of June.) Checks should be mailed to:

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As I Was Thinking...



FROM THE PAST: Empirical Evidences of Divine Healing

Few Christians doubt that through faith in God, divine healing is not only **possible**, but **actual**. In fact, it is accurate to report that most Christian physicians admit that although they might "make wounds," it is "God who heals them."

Beyond this fact, but not *exclusive of it*, the pioneers of the Church of God (Anderson) have bequeathed to the Church a legacy of examples of healings that have taken place as the result of much prayer and faith in the power of God through Jesus Christ. One does not have to go into antiquity to experience the same results.

It is refreshing to know that *God is and is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we know to ask or think according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). Being Super- He is able to do the supernatural!*

The idea of *empirical evidence of healing* is not a fanatical point of view. It suggests and allows for the kind of healing that is experienced even without due regard to science. It is not an "anti-medicine" or "anti-therapy" concept at all! It is, and has been, God's faithful response to the faith of those who really trust in Him to make possible through faith things thought to be impossible.

Now, since the purpose of this article is not to prove, but to report some of the many testimonies of divine healing experiences, consider a few recorded cases from some of the pioneers of the Church of God (Anderson):

Many Instantaneous Healings and Deliverances:

Cancerous growths, broken bones, muscular rheumatism, heart trouble and consumption, running sores, pneumonia, blindness, dropsy of both saved from death, ovarian trouble, appendicitis, blood poisoning, severe nervous attacks, scarlet fever, dog bites, rattlesnake bites, a roaring in the head, deafness, paralysis, given up to die, crushed arm, born crippled, tumors, crooked body made straight, raised from the dead, severe case of rupture, alcoholism, decay of the brain, etc., etc., etc.

Modern pioneers of the faith can testify and do to miraculous instances of divine physical/spiritual healing. As Dr. Harold Phillips once said, "*Pioneering is being adventuresome in one's own generation.*" So in our time, perhaps we must confess after all, that *all healing is divine*. The important thing is not how the healing comes, but rather that it comes accompanied by faith.

When the unnamed blind person in the Bible was asked how it was that he received his sight, he answered with joy: "*I don't know, but I know this: I once was blind and now I see . . . do you want to become his disciples too?*" (Jn 9:25)?

— Wilfred Jordan, Editor



Remember . . .

Unintended Consequences

Honest, careful students of history learn to avoid various pitfalls along the narrative road that historians

build from the past to the present. If we accept the idea that the study of history is more than antiquarian interest, that it is in fact the study of us, then one of the traps to be avoided is the tendency to moralize.

While I fully subscribe to the notion that we can learn from our past, historical understanding does not yield universal, timeless truths that can be distilled from that past. Gotthold Lessing taught us that events are limited to time and space even as they are connected through time and space. This is a fundamental reason why historians are loath to use the expression, "History proves" Historical events are unique to the time and space in which they occur. Different circumstances of time and space make it quite problematic to draw lessons from history that could be applied to all people in all places and ages.

A second aspect of the moralizing pitfall to be avoided is the habit of judging past decisions by the brighter light of hindsight. From the vantage point of the present, it is quite easy to see what the proper action or decision should have been half a century ago. On many issues of great importance those of an earlier age cannot be expected to see with the perspective afforded by a new context and later, presumably better, criteria of judgment. It is unreasonable to expect those of an earlier age to have made choices on the basis of knowledge we have and they did not.

The study of history is very much concerned with the choices people have made and the consequences of those choices. Choices, after all, have consequences and those consequences shape the present and future of later generations. Furthermore, while those who make decisions intend many of the consequences of their choices, it is also the case that because we are finite creatures our choices may very well have unintended consequences that nobody could have foreseen.

The history of the Church of God holds many examples of choices with consequences both intentional and unintentional. Some of those unintended consequences have influenced the movement's subsequent history to a more determin-

ative degree than whatever it was the decision maker hoped to achieve. At the moment, I have been thinking about some famous decisions made during the tempestuous years around 1930 and I cannot escape the conclusion that some of those decisions yielded very far-reaching unintended consequences of enormous significance.

In the wake of his heresy "trial" in the summer of 1929, Russell R. Byrum, a professor of theology at Anderson College, tendered his resignation. He had been acquitted on all counts by a "jury" or his peers, but Byrum resigned at least in part to deflect further suspicion from the college and forestall the trustees' attempt to impose a creed on the faculty as a condition of employment. There is some reason to believe that Byrum intended his resignation as a symbolic gesture. In any case, he later said that he was surprised when President John A. Morrison accepted it. The immediate intention directing both men's decisions was to strengthen the college. But the unintended consequences of their choices proved of greater significance than improved college-church relations.

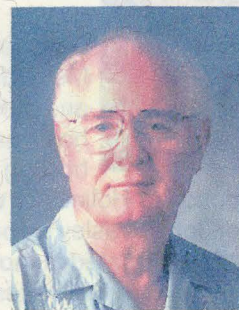
Immediately on the heels of Byrum's resignation, Morrison and Dean Russell Olt chose Otto F. Linn to fill the vacant faculty position. Linn had studied in the University of Chicago and was committed to the historical-critical method of biblical study—which put him at odds with the method followed by F.G. Smith. Dr. Linn's brilliance and winsomeness deeply influenced many students who later became leaders in the movement. The history of the movement could have been quite different had their theological training been formed differently than it was—and all of this because of decisions that were made in the simmering summer of 1929.

Neither Byrum nor Morrison could have imagined such outcomes and should, therefore, be judged with understanding and charity. They were not prescient—just as we are not. So let us be charitable both to them and to one another.

— Merle D. Strege, Historian

JOTTINGS

Church of God Archives



● Why, I wonder, was not more made of the passing of H.M. Riggle, one of our very early and prominent pioneers? All the *Gospel Trumpet* contained was a brief news note and a picture (the picture was on the cover). An inch or two of copy almost buried at the back of the *Trumpet* hardly seems fitting for someone of Brother Riggle's stature among us. Had a generation arisen that "knew not Brother Riggle?"

● What ever became of Jennie Carpenter Rutty, a prominent early figure in our collective life? She contributed numerous articles to the *Gospel Trumpet* between 1887 and 1910, besides some tract writing. In 1898 and 1899, her two major books, *Letters of Love and Counsel to Our Girls* and *Mothers' Counsel to Their Sons*, were published and were reprinted and sold for the next 25 years. In 1904, she moved to California and founded the Pomona congregation, serving as pastor until 1913 or 1914. Then she seems to vanish into a historical black hole. If she died in Pomona in 1942 (as we now think to be the case) why are all the "official" Church of God sources silent? Is it possible that the distance between Anderson and California is not measured in miles after all? Or is it simply that we are in the process of forgetting our past (very selectively, of course)? Or did she, in 1914 at age 58, "jump ship?"

That probably happened in our past a great deal more than we would like to believe. But why would anyone want to leave us?

— Douglas E. Welch, Archivist



A WOMAN LED THE WAY

Palmer, Warner, Sanctification,
and Christian Unity

Phoebe Worrall Palmer (1807-1874) was a Methodist lay revivalist, feminist, humanitarian, and influential Christian author in the early holiness tradition. By 1835, she was active in hosting in New York a "Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness," where she began promoting a modified version of John Wesley's doctrine of "entire sanctification."

[Palmer] participated in more than 300 revival meetings and camp meetings in the United States, Canada, and the British Isles and has been called "the titular head of the holiness revival" in the 19th century. The influential "National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness" was established in 1867. It virtually institutionalized Palmer's view of sanctification.

Palmer's vision of sanctification was understood by her as the dynamic that could (should) lead to true Christian unity—an early step toward the stance that Daniel S. Warner would affirm vigorously and around which a new Church of God movement would rally in the final two decades of the nineteenth century.

Palmer saw holiness as the essence of true Christianity, something to be experienced by all believers regardless of denominational affiliations or theological commitments. She saw her Tuesday Meeting as dramatic success stories in the Christian ecumenical enterprise, insisting that they demonstrated "how completely the Spirit of God annihilates the spirit of sectarianism (Palmer, *Promise of the Father*, 1859, reprint 1985, 226).

A painful conclusion drawn by Kevin T. Lowery is that the doctrine of sanctification, the doctrine with which Palmer intended to unite believers regardless of church tradition, ended up dividing people. Following Palmer's outstanding ministry came a period in which the Wesleyan movement dissolved into a growing number of relatively isolated churches. Sectarianism flourished.

In the midst of sectarianism, even among holiness people, Daniel S. Warner emerged to renew the vision that *holiness experienced should lead to unity realized*. The anticipated realization of Christian unity did not follow the work of Palmer as she had hoped. Has it followed the work of Warner? Where is the Church of God now on the subject of the relationship between heart holiness and unity among believers? Is this relationship as crucial to the movement's future as it was to Warner's originating vision when he wrote, "Beloved, how this perfect love, Unites us all in Jesus! One heart and soul and mind; we prove the union heaven gave us?"

—Barry L. Callen

BULLETIN BOARD

■ The Annual Meeting of the Historical Society this year will be held Saturday June 16, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in Fine Arts 102. We hope that many of our members will make a special effort to be there.

■ Anderson University Press has announced the arrival of *Ahead of His Times: A Life of George P. Tasker*, by Douglas E. Welch. To order, contact Warner Press. Information can be obtained online from: www.anderson.edu/aupress.

■ We still have not received dues for 2000-2001 from many of you. We have not sent out mailings to remind you, due to the cost of doing so. If you have not sent in your check for \$25 following the Annual Meeting in June, 2000 (our membership year runs from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting), please take a few minutes to do this. We sincerely value your participation in the Society's work.

FROM OUR READERS

Could you please send me the bibliographical information on the comments about fashion which you included in your editorial? I would like to send them to a friend who has just completed a dissertation on fashion in the Church of God in Christ. She would be interested in the similarities.

—Susie Stanley

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