



School of Theology

DONALD ADDISON COURTESY SERIES *in* CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Controversies in the History of Anderson University

A Review with Applications

For the Church of God and Its Colleges

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June, 2009

Contents

Contents

Contents	1
Introduction.....	2
A Brief Look at the Relationship of the Church and Higher Education in America	2
Why Not Education:	4
The Views of Early Church of God Leaders	4
The Turning Tide:	5
Events Leading to the Founding of Anderson Bible Training School.....	5
A School is Established	9
An Examination of Struggles at Anderson	10
Setting Boundaries	10
Controversy Over Progressive Theological Education.....	11
The Liberal Arts Controversy	12
Divergent Views Regarding Accreditation.....	18
Lessons From the Controversies.....	19
Lingering Concerns.....	20
Solutions for Reaching Young People	22
Moving Forward	24
Bibliography	25

Introduction

Since its beginning in 1917, Anderson University has been at the center of important controversies in the church. Its history is one in which progressive and traditional thinkers have struggled to find a happy medium regarding several doctrinal issues and questions concerning the role and function of higher education. Some of the divisions that contributed to the formation of controversies long ago still exist in the church today. While it is not possible to provide an in-depth discussion of the history of Anderson University or even the particular controversies selected for discussion in this paper, a review in digest form may serve to provide a central source of information about the importance of these controversies in the ongoing life of the church and the university. Some final commentary provides current perspectives on the issues that sparked the controversies. It is hoped that this paper will serve as a resource for constructive dialogue between members of the church who hold diverse opinions regarding doctrinal issues and the role and function of higher education.

A Brief Look at the Relationship of the Church and Higher Education in America

The relationship of the church and higher education in America is an intriguing one. James Walsh indicated that in the eighteenth century, students studied Latin and Greek grammar as part of grammar school rather than at the college level. At the college level, study of Latin and Greek works served to teach the skills of oratory and public discourse rather than linguistics. Walsh said, "Above all the colonists wanted learned ministers capable of expounding the Scriptures. They also wished to have as judges and other government officials men who were learned in the law, and capable of expressing themselves in such a way as to be leaders of the

people and teachers of good citizenship."¹ The seven liberal arts which made up the source of study for university students included grammar, logic, and rhetoric (the old trivium); and geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music (the quadrivium). Scholars also studied the three philosophies: natural philosophy (e.g. physics and other sciences), mental philosophy (e.g. metaphysics), and moral philosophy (e.g. ethics).²

Many of the founding fathers were college educated. Those who had not attended college read widely. They grew up in a society where men were expected to be able to speak Latin and read Greek. Many were able to read Hebrew. Education in the liberal arts gave them critical thinking ability which enabled them to reflect on the events of history and dialogue with each other in order to make decisions about how to govern a new nation and what recommendations to make to the people in order to prevent the unpleasant events of the past from repeating themselves.

During the nineteenth century, various colleges were founded to offer specialized training. These included professional schools and colleges affiliated with various denominations.³ The influence of the German model of higher education was particularly troublesome for the church. This model stressed postgraduate work and critical examination of texts, including the Bible. The church reacted to this new development by pulling away from higher education.⁴

¹ James J. Walsh, *Education of the Founding Fathers of the Republic: Scholasticism in the Colonial Colleges, A Neglected Chapter in the History of American Education* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1935), 9.

² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

³ Barry L. Callen, *Guide of Soul and Mind: The Story of Anderson University* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1992), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

Why Not Education:

The Views of Early Church of God Leaders

The Church of God Reformation Movement was founded in 1880, when holiness groups were pulling away from education and emphasizing experience and the work of the Holy Spirit. While early leaders in the Church of God were well-read and some were educated, they perceived that higher education had often been misused and thus posed certain dangers. Barry Callen indicated that catalysts for the negative attitude toward education included poverty (and thus inability to obtain education), association of higher education with secularism, and opposition to anything associated with denominations (e.g. denominationally-operated colleges).⁵ He explained that when leaders spoke against education in *The Gospel Trumpet*, "the specific issue under attack was either the substituting of human learning for the grace of God, using schools for sectarian ends, or implying that the primary credentials for effective Christian ministry could be issued by a school."⁶

Other articles took a more direct stand against education, presenting it as a waste of time. Callen explained that according to Lawrence Brooks, the attitude that was common in the early twentieth century was, "Why fool around in school when souls are going to hell?"⁷ Those who recognized the importance of training emphasized that it should follow a "New Testament method" which relied on apprenticeships. Callen quotes an article by D. O. Teasley identifying the need for ministers to be able to "convince the gainsayers, cast out devils, heal the sick, save souls, and perfect the saints." The same article speaks negatively of "all theological institutions and missionary training schools," which Teasley claims were on the theoretical plan, which is

⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷ Ibid., 19.

detrimental to spirituality and tends to fill the head and empty the heart.⁸ These attitudes of extreme caution and antagonism came into conflict with more progressive attitudes which developed as the movement grew and matured.

The Turning Tide:

Events Leading to the Founding of Anderson Bible Training School

Attitudes about education began to change among Church of God leaders due to a number of factors. One was concern about children. Sunday school became accepted because of desire to educate children.⁹ A home was established in Grand Junction, Michigan, to provide care for the children of traveling ministers. Several subjects were taught in this home.¹⁰

However, the children were not the only ones who needed education. Barry Callen explained:

There also was a growing band of enthusiastic gospel workers who were anxious to prepare for effectiveness in their Christian callings. They did not see a systematic program of training as necessarily either a compromise with sectarianism or a flaunting of human pride in the face of God's grace and gifts for ministry. As the need for increased preparation for service became more apparent, various kinds of educational experimentation emerged.¹¹

D. S. Warner outlined a detailed plan for educating ministers in the Gospel Trumpet Home in Grand Junction. However, his death prevented the implementation of the program; and E. E. Byrum did not continue with it. The "Trumpet family" concept became the model for a network of "missionary homes" which carried out various types of evangelistic activities and served as training grounds for new ministers.¹²

⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² John W.V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1980), 230.

In the early days of the Church of God movement, the focus of “flying ministers” was evangelism. The work was seen as urgent; and the Lord’s return was expected soon. John Morrison explained, “As I see it, these leaders were so absorbed in the task of evangelism as an end that they gave little thought to education as a means to that end. They stressed the Holy Spirit as the means.”¹³ He explained that the early leaders were self-educated as was evident by the fact that they wrote books and were effective speakers. He further explained that those who spoke against education cited ministers such as D. L. Moody as examples of God’s ability to use uneducated people “without understanding that God has used them in spite of rather than because of their lack of education”.¹⁴

As the movement matured, people began to realize that there was more to ministry than preaching evangelistic services. Pastors were needed to care for the growing groups of people which were gathering in towns and cities. Everett Phillips, who had lived in the Gospel Trumpet home as a young child, wrote of his family’s experience:

Father was away from home in meetings much of the time. It seems strange to me now that the ministers of that day were so often holding meetings somewhere else, and not so much effort and time was given to the home community. They believed so strongly in the imminent coming of Christ and the end of the world that they felt bound to reach as many as possible. Meetings were held in many places, then the minister, or the company moved on to another place. Too often the new converts were left to die. So with all the hard work, the self denial, and the efforts to reach as many as possible with the gospel, much of the good was lost for lack of loving care and proper teaching.¹⁵

These problems must have begun to trouble his family. After several years spent in the traveling ministry, T. A. Phillips began pastoring a church in Colorado. He still held some

¹³ John A. Morrison, *As the River Flows* (Anderson, IN: Anderson College Press, 1962), 122-123.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵ Everett Phillips, Personal memoir (N.D.).

meetings; and Everett mentions meetings in Gordon, Nebraska, in 1908 and 1909. In 1910 the Phillips family moved to Gordon, where he was pastor until his death in 1915.¹⁶

The Gospel Trumpet carried a number of articles between 1912 and 1917 in which leaders encouraged people to look positively on education. H. A. Brooks provided several examples of biblical figures who were well educated.¹⁷ He pointed out that ignorance prevents a person from understanding the advantages of education and explained its practical benefits.¹⁸

As readers began to consider what advantages education might offer them, they wrote letters requesting guidance in planning their courses of study. Other publications directed specifically toward ministers provided lengthy articles for this purpose. Russell Byrum's article in the April, 1917, issue of *Our Ministerial Letter* provided not only a listing of recommended books for study but also tips for note-taking, organization, time management, and how to find illustrations in the daily circumstances of life. Though he limited his book recommendations to Bible-oriented listings, he suggested reading from a wide variety of subjects, explaining:

Since his duties bring him in touch with people in a great variety of circumstances in life, his studies should include a wide range of subjects other than Bible knowledge. An acquaintance with various branches of knowledge is necessary for proper discussion of certain texts in the Bible or of certain subjects related to religious matters. The preacher should know something not only of subjects directly connected with the Bible but also of history, biography, science, philosophy, other religions, and literature.¹⁹

Byrum explained the need for a Bible training school in August, 1917. He cited several biblical examples of leaders who taught those who would later enter positions of spiritual leadership: Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus, and Paul.²⁰ He cited the lack of training for Church of God ministers and then provided several examples of the impact of this lack of training. The

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ H. A. Brooks, "Advantages and Value of Education." *The Gospel Trumpet* (June 20, 1912): 4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Russell R. Byrum, "The Preacher Among His Books," *Our Ministerial Letter* (April 1917): 9.

²⁰ Russell R. Byrum, "A Course of Study for Ministers." *Our Ministerial Letter*. (August 1917): 3.

Church of God had suffered from a lack of efficiency. People who were serving in ministry had expressed a wish for it; and some had sought such training outside the Church of God. Most had to educate themselves as well as they could and had succeeded in spite of a lack of education. Byrum credited much of their success to strong natural abilities.²¹

Eventually, attitudes regarding education in the Church of God were polarized. Robert Reardon explained:

One side held that education was primarily to train and indoctrinate. The other side saw it as learning and the broad cultivation of the mind. One side held that the Truth had once been delivered to the saints, revealed, packaged, printed, and has only to be proclaimed. Its object was to give answers. The other side held that questions were appropriate, that the nature of Truth was dynamic, and that its purpose was to examine, think, quest, discover, and to refine. One side argued that charismatic government gave authority through individuals to discern those who were being called to leadership and to recognize their call with ordination and placement. The other side held that God's call implies a call to preparation and that ordination naturally follows this process without being the exclusive right of any "bishop." One side held that education inevitably leads toward worldliness. Spirituality would be replaced by sophistry, and reformation principles would accommodate to the evils of Babylon. The other side argued that education opens up a broad, cultural stream and makes the treasure of the arts, letters, and science available to the young.²²

John Morrison attempted to bring to the table a view that addressed the legitimate points from both perspectives. Though not formally educated, he was widely read. From his post as pastor of a church in Colorado, he addressed other ministers and spoke regarding the advantages of education. He pointed out that while it was true that God used people in spite of a lack of education, a pastor who reads good books is "blessed." He also implied that the study of human nature would aid in the knowledge of one's flock.²³ His well-written articles and forward

²¹ Ibid.

²² Robert H. Reardon, *The Early Morning Light: A Friendly Reflection on Some of the Main Events in the Church of God Reformation Movement During the First Fifty Years* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1979), 47-48.

²³ John A. Morrison, "The Preacher as Student," *The Gospel Trumpet* (January 23, 1919): 22.

thinking earned him a call to serve as “principal” (president) of Anderson Bible Training School in 1917.²⁴

The polarity of views regarding the role and function of education would lead to controversies later as the school and the church struggled to define boundaries in their relationship and in the school’s function.

A School is Established

Val Clear explained that the events surrounding the establishment of Anderson Bible Training School were similar in some ways to the events that occurred in 1895 before Byrum’s death. The difference was that the man holding the ideas, J. T. Wilson, remained healthy and was able to carry them out. The school was not suddenly established but grew out of work that was already being done. Clear explained:

It [what later became Anderson Bible Training School] was a department (indeed, little more than a desk) of the Gospel Trumpet Company. A few students, mostly Gospel Trumpet workers, gathered in study groups with teachers—also workers—to search the Scriptures and a few related resources. In the beginning records were not kept because of the fear that if credit were given, seeds of pride would germinate into spiritual weeds.²⁵

The Anderson Bible Training School was officially established in October, 1917. John W.V. Smith said:

Courses of study included Bible, English, history, music, practical theology, public speaking, and missions. Although no student who wished simply to enrich his or her knowledge of these subjects was refused admission because he or she had not been definitely called to Christian service, the school declared its express purpose to be the providing of instruction for those who had been divinely called to be ministers, missionaries, Sunday school superintendents or teachers, and song leaders.²⁶

²⁴ Callen, 46.

²⁵ Val Clear, "A Tail and Its Kite," in *Educating for Service: Essays Presented to Robert Reardon*, ed. James Massey (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1984), 16.

²⁶ Smith, 245.

The school's mission also included an element of outreach in an effort to respond to the needs of individuals who desired a place to go and learn about the teachings of the Church of God and Christianity.²⁷

An Examination of Struggles at Anderson

The school (referred to in this paper at times as “Anderson” for the sake of brevity) has experienced strain in its relationship with the General Assembly at several points in its history. The General Assembly represents the interests of churches affiliated with the Church of God Movement and thus has sought to establish some important boundaries in the relationship between the school and the church. While the struggles seem to have been resolved, attitudes often remain and influence behavior. Lingering concerns which mirror those of the past should not be dismissed simply because it is assumed that they were settled long ago. An examination of the history of the struggles at Anderson provides a useful window into some of the current attitudes held by various members of the church at large concerning Church of God colleges. This examination also suggests lessons from our history which can serve as useful points of guidance in our future interactions with individuals who may not hold the same theological viewpoints that we do.

Setting Boundaries

In 1918, the General Assembly began to define the parameters of its relationship with the school. John W. V. Smith explained the events of this period:

Even after a full year of operation the issue of acceptance was not fully solved. In the 1918 General Ministerial Assembly there was still some question about the

²⁷ Ibid.

appropriateness of sponsoring such a school. A three-person committee, consisting of H. M. Riggle, J. C. Blaney and F. G. Smith, was appointed to define the function and scope of the new venture. The committee reported their belief that the school should be kept within certain bounds, that attending it should not be made a requirement for recognition of young ministers, that the school should not be meant to replace other training schools of the church, that students should have the freedom to choose their own course of study, that no diplomas or degrees should be given, and that training should include more than intellectual development, namely personal enrichment in spirituality, gifts of the Spirit, and faith. The committee's report was voted upon and accepted.²⁸

Anti-education sentiment was so strong that the first few graduating classes from Anderson Bible Training School were not given diplomas for fear that the impression would be created that a diploma was required in order for a person to teach. The matter was rectified in 1923 after a resolution was passed which included a clause granting diplomas retroactively to the previous classes.²⁹

Controversy Over Progressive Theological Education

In 1929, controversy erupted regarding the teachings of Russell Byrum. Byrum was a notable theologian and in 1925 had published a textbook of Christian theology for use by students. He, like other young leaders in the movement, questioned some of the teachings of the movement's founders. John Morrison explained:

He used Dr. Smith's book, *The Revelation Explained*, in his classes, but he did not feel obliged to defend the book's thesis. Nor did he oppose it. He merely presented different views of a given aspect of the subject and then encouraged the students to make up their own minds as to the truth . . . Some of the students were distressed but most of them were delighted. For comfort, the distressed ones resorted to Dr. Smith. The delighted ones thanked God for Dr. Byrum.³⁰

The controversy regarding Byrum's teaching is an important point in the history of Anderson's curriculum and relationship with the church for two reasons. First, it embroiled

²⁸ Ibid., 246.

²⁹ Morrison, *As the River Flows*, 148-150.

³⁰ Ibid., 168.

Anderson in important theological controversies in the church. Second, it is important because of the tensions it left behind and the impact of those tensions on events which followed.

Criticisms of Byrum's teachings concerned prophecy, unity, and salvation.³¹ Opinions were divided regarding the appropriateness of his teaching; and the matter was evaluated in a setting resembling a court trial. While he was exonerated, he felt that the most appropriate course of action was for him to resign. Tensions following this experience led to the election of C. E. Brown as editor of the *Gospel Trumpet*, leaving F. G. Smith in a wounded state when he later became the pastor of a church in Akron, Ohio. The state of Ohio was at the center of the controversy over Anderson's liberal arts curriculum in 1933 and 1934.³²

The Liberal Arts Controversy

In 1928, the school began offering liberal arts degrees and became known as Anderson College and Theological Seminary. These changes came in response to students who wanted to pursue college teaching careers, ministers who felt that the Church of God needed a liberal arts college, and parents who wanted to send their children to a Christian college. It also met opposition.³³

A gradual implementation of the liberal arts program eased its impact on the school's budget. The first liberal arts class would graduate in 1932; and each year courses would be added which were needed for this group until finally the program was complete. The long-term plan was to pursue accreditation through proper agencies.³⁴ The General Ministerial Assembly approved the changes cautiously, noting that "the reformation has lost and is losing many of its

³¹ Smith, 249.

³² Ibid., 249-251.

³³ Ibid., 154-155.

³⁴ Callen, 85.

most promising young people who imbibe unchristian and unscriptural philosophies of life while attending some of the institutions of higher learning of our country."³⁵

Some members of the Assembly were cautious; and the final portion of the resolution addressed their concerns. "Be it further resolved," it read, "that the permanent policy shall be to keep the institution a servant of the church by always giving a large place to Bible and religious work and to preparation for the ministry, and especially shall it be the aim to keep the school preeminently spiritual and moral as it is at present."³⁶

John Morrison continued to address lingering concerns about the appropriateness of the church's offering of a "secular" education over the next few years.³⁷ However, several questions fed the concerns. Callen explained:

Should the relatively few dollars available for higher education in the church be diverted from ministerial education? Might the school increasingly influence church life in ways that could threaten traditional thinking and acting? Would the school become a force for change that could not be controlled by respected and divinely gifted leaders? Would not "worldly" concerns finally manage to prevail in the school?³⁸

As has been explained previously, the school was also becoming a place where progressive theological ideas were explored. It was becoming an agent of change within the church; and the church fought back. The disputes that occurred concerning doctrine during that time created a climate in which a great controversy could form concerning the liberal arts curriculum. F. G. Smith and John Morrison did not resolve their personal feelings for many years; and they held significant doctrinal differences. As John Morrison explained:

As for the Church of God, Ohio is the most powerful state in the Union. She has more churches and larger churches than any other state. This was true in 1934 when Ohio went into action against Anderson College and came close to wiping her out of existence as a liberal arts college.

³⁵ Ibid., 86.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 94.

To expect that Dr. Smith, on leaving Anderson and going into Ohio, would carry with him hurt feelings toward Anderson College and toward me personally is only to expect what is human. He honestly felt that he had been wronged and that I, as much as anyone else, had wronged him. He also felt that the cause for which he had given so much was in grave danger and that I was a prime cause of that danger.

Feeling like that and being a man of action, he could be expected to do something about it. And he did.

It would be unfair to say here that Dr. Smith was wholly responsible for what the Ohio ministers did in 1934. But it would be fair to say that he as the state's most influential preacher shared heavily in responsibility for the attack on the College.³⁹

Lest this writing create too great an impression that Morrison blamed Smith's personal feelings for the problems that developed, it is important to understand the relationship that Smith had with the church. Robert Reardon explained:

The "charismatic" process—the endowment of gifts—was the prerogative of the Holy Spirit alone, who appointed and placed the servants of the church. Brother Smith felt that his position of leadership was ordained by God, that his writings were at the direction of and carried insights given by the Holy Spirit. He felt that whatever authority he exercised came from the same source. A great portion of the reformation movement looked to Smith as their leader, champion, and guide. Consequently, what he said and wrote was to them the law and the gospel.⁴⁰

Reardon indicated that Smith's actions against the college were part of a four-fold strategy to confront a pattern of perceived threats to the Church of God Reformation Movement as he knew it. His work on this strategy began in the early 1920s and continued after he began pastoring in Ohio.⁴¹

It may be challenging for readers who are far removed from this situation to understand the reason for the actions that followed. Reardon explained:

The last reformation, its message, claims, experiences—this was their life. They were certain that this message of truth was divinely sanctioned, validated in scriptural

³⁹ Ibid., 172.

⁴⁰ Reardon, 44-45.

⁴¹ Ibid., 53-54.

prophecy, and was live and pulsating in their midst. They saw their mission to teach it, proclaim it, defend it, sacrifice for it, and if necessary die for it. They held that the reformation was a sacred trust and that it must not be permitted to be drawn away from its ordained path in any way.

Therefore, the college must be silenced as a mortal enemy standing in the way of divine fulfillment of the last reformation dream. In addition, a practical problem loomed on the horizon. Without doubt, the college would soon send out pastors with educational credentials in place of Holy Ghost ordination. Pastors could see themselves crowded out by John Morrison's boys. This was taken as a serious threat and greatly aggravated the situation.⁴²

The Ohio State Ministerial Association passed a resolution in August, 1933, issuing an ultimatum to the school: The school could only "hope to receive our moral and financial support" if the liberal arts curriculum were dropped and the school returned to teaching traditional Church of God doctrines "including such truths as the present-day call of God to his people to come out of all sectarianism, Papal and Protestant, the modern Babylon." The resolution also demanded that the school be placed in the hands of leaders who would hold to this kind of teaching. Finally, the resolution stated that ministers would not encourage their young people to attend Anderson until these changes were made.⁴³ In December, 1933, another resolution was passed. This later resolution had essentially the same aims as the first but was written in language designed specifically to effect change at Anderson. It proposed that the name of the school be changed back to Anderson Bible Training School and that the curriculum be limited to religious training. The resolution also proposed a new mission for the school. Finally, the resolution included a clause that indicated the Ohio Assembly's intent to place it before the General Assembly in 1934.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 64.

⁴³ Morrison, *As the River Flows*, 173-174.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 174-175.

Several issues of *The Broadcaster*, the college paper for ministers and alumni, were dedicated to discussion of the controversy, including a combined March-April issue.⁴⁵ Both the Ohio ministers and Anderson carried out letter-writing campaigns, gathering support for their side of the controversy. Reardon wrote, “Little record is maintained in the minutes of the meeting regarding discussion or even the outcome; but it seems that matters finally came to a head at the General Assembly meeting in June, 1934. Smith was not alone in his influence. C. E. Byers led the campaign against the school.”⁴⁶

The minutes included the notation, “After much deliberation upon the subject of the difference [between Anderson College and certain ministers], and after we had gone to God in prayer, we believe that a base for continued operation and fellowship in the whole work of the Church of God was reached.”⁴⁷ The minutes indicate that R. C. Caudill presented a report on June 22 and that a vote was called for. Members of the committee who were present when the report was formed are identified; and it appears that committee members represented both sides of the controversy. The report is not included in the minutes.⁴⁸ On June 18, the Assembly voted on whether to remove Morrison as president of the school. Morrison was ratified by only 12 votes. Reardon indicated that this vote was not only in favor of Morrison but also in favor of continuing the school.⁴⁹

The linkage of this event with the Byrum controversy is not obvious; however, Reardon includes a correspondence between Otto Linn and F. G. Smith. When Linn questioned Smith regarding the reasons why his teaching was not attacked in the same way as Byrum’s, Smith

⁴⁵ Ibid., 173, 178, 181.

⁴⁶ Reardon, 70.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the General Assembly (Anderson, IN: June 20, 1934).

⁴⁸ Ibid., June 22, 1934.

⁴⁹ Reardon, 74.

responded indicating that he would be spared such consequences, assuming that he continued to be loyal to “the cause we all love so well.” He further explained:

I know that the eyes of some well-known ministers, not only in Ohio but outside of Ohio, are upon you. The suggestion has been made (and from outside of Ohio) that you should be the head of that institution. It seems certain that changes there must be; for no church institution can succeed without general confidence and support, any more than can a local pastor succeed (notwithstanding many partisan supporters) so long as a large section of his congregation have lost confidence in his leadership and insist on maintaining a noncooperative attitude.⁵⁰

Smith’s letter did not move Linn to act in any way; but he later resigned from his work at Anderson due to differences in philosophy regarding whether emphasis should be placed on ministerial preparation or whether work toward regional accreditation should be the primary goal.⁵¹ Callen indicated that Dean Russell Olt’s choice to pursue regional accreditation reflected a desire for quality in all areas of study.⁵²

Morrison pays great attention to the importance of attending to the need for reconciliation following the vote in 1934. He explained that the leaders of the opposing parties met after the General Assembly in order to try to reach some middle ground. About these meetings, he said:

In these meetings we explained, and debated, and conceded, and prayed. Some of them lasted the whole night through. There was at least a partial meeting of minds. Better still there was a blending of spirits and there were attitudes of forgiveness. In religion nothing is ever rightly settled until it is settled in the hearts of men.

So in that eventful June of 1934 when the brethren started the wheels of their cars rolling toward home, most of them were pretty well reconciled to the outcome. Not all of them could see their way clear to support the educational program of the church, but those who could not support it decided that they could at least tolerate it. They were like the farmer who said he did not love his wife well enough to support her, but he would at least permit her to live.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 70.

⁵¹ Callen, 113-114.

⁵² Ibid., 114.

⁵³ Ibid.

Divergent Views Regarding Accreditation

The step toward a liberal arts education afforded new opportunities for students at Anderson College. However, it, too, brought about new challenges. John Morrison explained:

In 1934 Anderson College had attained to no academic recognition on the part of either the Indiana Department of Instruction or any regional accrediting agency. Naturally this lack of recognition by other institutions of credits earned here stood as a great handicap in the development of the institution. There is an element of unfairness in influencing young people to spend the money and the time to complete a course in a given institution when there is no assurance that credits earned will be recognized in the educational community. So it was very evident that something must be done.⁵⁴

After much work toward improving various aspects of the program, the college was accredited with the state of Indiana in 1937. In 1946, the college was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.⁵⁵

The seminary, known now as Anderson School of Theology, was founded in 1950.⁵⁶ It was accredited with the Association of Theological Schools in 1965.⁵⁷ This was a positive step for the seminary, as it would allow schools to recognize each other's standards. However, the seminary was not included in regional accreditation along with the undergraduate school. This created new problems. Callen explained, "There was prejudice in some graduate school circles against students from 'theological' schools with only professional accreditation, particularly in relation to a graduate program with a discipline specialization."⁵⁸ The seminary was regionally accredited in 1974-1975; and the next visit included a team of both regional and ATS

⁵⁴ Morrison, *As the River Flows*, 184-185.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

⁵⁶ Callen, 114.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

representatives. The result of this evaluation was a regional accreditation of both the undergraduate school and the seminary.⁵⁹

Callen explained that the concerns that arose during the initial work toward state and regional accreditation were two-fold. He said, "In the press for accreditation, feared some, serious church relatedness might be compromised and a primary focus on ministerial education likely would be sacrificed."⁶⁰ Ken DeMaere indicated that these concerns were still prominent in the 1970s when he was a student at Anderson. Additionally, he explained, concerns were expressed regarding the hiring of non-believing professors to teach certain subjects in the liberal arts curriculum.⁶¹

Lessons From the Controversies

These controversies illustrate the impact of the strain between the last vestiges of the individualistic, charismatic leadership that was characteristic of the earliest days of the Church of God Reformation Movement and the new democratic style of leadership which was developing in the 1920s. F. G. Smith's devotion to his sense of calling and place of leadership caused him to act in ways that created deep fractures in the body of Christ. Sadly, this problem could not be solved by taking a step back and looking at things from the other side. Smith's particular views prevented him from doing this because the views of the other side represented an end to the Church of God Reformation as he knew it and would result in the need for him to reevaluate the doctrinal position which he had built over many years. In a sense, the success of the school and its progressive teaching represented to him a destruction of his life's work.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁶¹ Ken DeMaere, interview by author, 23 May 2009, e-mail.

The Byrum and liberal arts controversies illustrate both the negative and positive roles that democracy can play. It can be used in ways that create deep wounds; or it can be used to heal wounds. In his fear, and feeling his own leadership role slipping out of his grasp, Smith used the new democratic procedures which were part of the workings of the General Assembly to implement a strategy designed to return the church and the school to Last Reformation teaching. The effect of these actions was devastating to Russell Byrum and to the school. Later, the democratic process resulted in the saving of the school.

Morrison's actions following the 1934 General Assembly demonstrate the important role that that must be played by the successful party in a dispute when it comes to creating truly conciliatory relationships. Without such follow-up action, it may be difficult to achieve harmonious working relationships following the controversy. Morrison's discussion also illustrates that such efforts are not always as successful as we would like them to be. Sometimes only time and the work of the Holy Spirit can truly heal the wounds created by controversy.

Lingering Concerns

Much of the controversy in the history of Anderson University has concerned the struggle to define "truth" and to define the place of doctrine in the movement. At what point does the Church of God begin to function like a denomination? At what point does it need some doctrinal basis to hold it together? These questions must still be addressed. Gilbert Stafford expressed the sense that churches are no longer united by doctrine, "The evidence decreases year after year that we are truly such an identifiable church fellowship united by common doctrine, practice,

mission, ministries, and worship. Instead, increasing evidence points to each congregation doing its own thing and going its own disconnected way in all the areas just mentioned.”⁶²

These doctrinal concerns will not be easily solved. The School of Theology’s annual doctrinal dialogue provides one avenue for moderated discussion of selected topics. Additional opportunities would allow for growth within the church as a whole and may prevent problems from festering in segments of the church.

Other concerns also linger. Callen explained that division developed early between people who favored evangelism and those who favored education.⁶³ Val Clear indicated that this division has never gone away and that it presents significant danger to the church.⁶⁴

The reasons for the division are complex; and it is important that discussions regarding differences of opinion remain civil. Larry Lautaret, a pastor from Montana, indicated in an e-mail correspondence that his concern was with a perceived decline in the number of people who were prepared for ministry upon graduation. He also feels that the concept of “Christian higher education” is “diminished.”⁶⁵

Lautaret’s concerns are not new. During the years when Anderson was first beginning to offer its liberal arts curriculum, concern was raised about the possibility that focus would be drawn away from evangelistic work. Callen quotes Morrison regarding these concerns: “‘if true religion and Christian morality are to be kept alive in America, the church . . . must promulgate her principles also by more indirect means.’ The state schools he saw as neutral or negative to religion, thus ‘our American civilization is headed in the direction of paganism.’”⁶⁶

⁶² Gilbert Stafford, *Church of God at the Crossroads* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2000), 15.

⁶³ Callen, 21.

⁶⁴ Clear, 16.

⁶⁵ Larry Lautaret, interview by author, 23 May 2009, e-mail.

⁶⁶ Callen, 86.

Solutions for Reaching Young People

Morrison's words may hold more truth now than they did when he spoke them. Eddie Gibbs explained that today's church faces significant challenges regarding outreach to young people:

We are reminded that any church is potentially just one generation away from extinction. Now we are faced with a generation of under-thirty-five-year-olds who are turning away from institutional expressions of Christianity, opting to define their own spiritual journey. Therefore, churches in the West must recognize that they face a missionary challenge that is more urgent and radical than it has been for many generations. Whereas just a decade ago younger people were saying no to church but yes to Jesus, increasing numbers are now in search of a transcendent spirituality in which Jesus no longer occupies a central place.⁶⁷

Gibbs later discussed the impact of postmodern thinking on the Church and the importance of developing effective missional strategies to reach postmoderns, emphasizing that the churchgoing population also tends to be older than the average population.⁶⁸

George Chatham addressed this issue in an e-mail, saying:

In this day and age and with the very complex culture we live in, you have to have a much broader education than just a Bible degree which was more than sufficient for my parent's rural/agrarian culture. I don't blame our current shortage of pastors on our colleges or Bible school not doing their job. I think it has a lot more to do with our younger generation's (18-24 yr old) disillusionment with the "institutional" church and our failure to be the real church (the Body of Christ). Because of their disillusionment, many of our kids are by-passing the traditional "religious/preacher training" tract and they are following educational tracts that will equip them to be "change agents for Christ" by becoming the doctors, computer programmers, social workers, bakers and candle-stick makers. This speaks to the need for a "Christian liberal arts" education.⁶⁹

Michael Blackmer stressed the need for pastors, parents, and others in the church to present healthy images of ministry and encouraging young people to seek and respond to the calling of God. Blackmer said, "Everyone is an admissions counselor when it comes to moving

⁶⁷ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁹ George Chatham, interview by author, 25 May 2009, e-mail.

people into the pastoral/missionary training tracks.”⁷⁰ Further discussion stressed the importance of partnerships between college and church in creating alternative models of ministry training.

This partnership between college and church also extends to the area of spiritual formation. It is one of the reasons for the offering of liberal arts education at Anderson. Parents desired to send their children to a school where they could get this broad education while also nurturing their spirituality. The college has also been a place where students have heard and responded to the gospel since early in its history.⁷¹ The fact that students come to campus at varying stages of spiritual formation underscores an important challenge for the university: to keep pace with the spiritual climate among young people without sacrificing its own spiritual grounding. Accomplishing this task requires not only devotion to sound doctrines but patience and ability to talk openly and honestly with students who entertain questions and experience periods of great soul-searching. Some students develop tremendous depth of faith after critical examination of various aspects of what they have previously been taught and other matters of personal importance in their spiritual lives. The liberal arts college is in an important position to aid in this process of examination, with professors available to assist in the research process.

In her presentation as part of the 2008 Doctrinal Dialogue, Kimberly Lyle-Ippolito provided a powerful example of what can happen in a liberal arts college to enable students to face such crises in their faith journey. Ms. Lyle-Ippolito is a biology professor at Anderson University. In her presentation, she discussed the manner in which three students responded when confronted with scientific teaching which conflicted with their religious views. One student approached the professor for assistance and spent significant time examining both sides of the issue and formulating her own position. A second student dropped the course, unable to

⁷⁰ Michael Blackmer, interview by author, 23 May 2009, e-mail.

⁷¹ Ibid., 121.

cope with the dichotomy. A third student refused to examine the issue, even to develop support for the position she already held. She simply stated that the opposing author was “wrong.”⁷²

The first student, regardless of her major, would be in a better position to guide others into maturity. Whether we prepare pastors or Christian lay leaders, the church needs leaders who are able to guide others faithfully and without resorting to hostility. This can only come about when a person has endured the pain and struggle associated with spiritual formation which often includes a deep examination of viewpoints in opposition to one’s own.

Moving Forward

The Church of God and its colleges will continue to face new challenges in the coming years that demand creative thinking and sometimes entail risk-taking. The unifying feature in our controversies is concern for the development of mature and capable leadership for tomorrow’s churches. Understanding that this concern is shared can allow each party in a discussion to risk learning about the perspective of other parties. Taking these risks can lead to healthy discussion that promotes growth and creative solutions. Let us learn from our history and move forward toward a bright future, where our churches are served by capable pastors and lay leaders who are mature in faith and able to relate well to those who are seeking Christ.

⁷² Kimberly G. Lyle-Ippolito, "Response to James Christoph: A Distinctively Christian Response to Creation," Paper presented at the Anderson University School of Theology Doctrinal Dialogue (June 23, 2008), 5.

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