

## REVIEWS

### *The Gospel Trumpet Years*

1881-1961, a Historical Look at what Became the Church of God (Anderson)

By Dale E. Stultz and Douglas E. Welch

(Anderson, Ind.: Historical Society of the Church of God, 2011. Pp. viii, 256. Illustrations, appendices, index. \$35.00.)

In *The Gospel Trumpet Years: 1881-1961*, church historians Dale Stultz and Douglas Welch weave together photos and narrative to recount how The Gospel Trumpet Publishing Company birthed a denomination—the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). Their purpose is to tell “a truthful story” of the denomination’s development, avoiding the ancestor worship of prior Church of God history books. Central to the story is Anderson, Indiana.

The story begins in 1881, with holiness evangelist Daniel S. Warner publishing the first issue of *The Gospel Trumpet* in Rome City, Indiana. Warner decried denominationalism and called true believers to join a reformation movement heralding the imminent second coming of Christ. He saw the fledgling journal as helping to expedite Christ’s return. Over time, subsequent editors shed the journal’s apocalyptic orientation.

The publishing company, staffed by a volunteer labor force, expanded to produce hymnals, books, and tracts. As the company institutionalized, so did the emerging denomination.

It was the lure of favorable economic conditions that yielded the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) instead of the Church of God (Grand Junction, Michigan) or the Church of God (Moundsville, West Virginia). The Gospel Trumpet Publishing Company spent two decades in the latter locations before settling in Anderson. Courted by the city’s mayor and business leaders, Gospel Trumpet and its “family” of approximately two hundred voluntary workers moved to Anderson in 1906. Anderson became the hub of publishing, missionary work, and theological training for the Church of God.

A primary conclusion from the book is that the Church of God reformation movement, as contemporary

adherents continue to call it, had no Golden Age. Early church leaders, who occupied the editor's seat of *The Gospel Trumpet*, were fallible humans. Stultz and Welch highlight the contentious personalities, doctrinal disputes, marital difficulties, and financial strain that are part of Church of God history.

Stultz and Welch are steeped in that history—Stultz as vice president of the Historical Society of the Church of God, and Welch as Professor Emeritus of Christian Mission at Anderson University School of Theology and a former director of the Church of God Archives. They are Church of God insiders, and their knowledge is unmistakable in their account.

*The Gospel Trumpet Years* is less a history book than an annotated family photo album. While guided by historical data, Stultz and Welch state up front, “we have struggled to keep academic apparatus to a minimum” (p. 2). There are no footnotes or bibliography. The book is repetitive in places, but the writing is easy to read. Hundreds of photos punctuate the text. Seventeen appendices representing primary and secondary documents conclude the book.

The book will appeal most to Church of God adherents, especially those in the Midwest. Names and organizations will be familiar, and the abundance of archival photos will be a treasure to those like me with Church of God heritage. Persons interested in American religious history or the holiness movement may also benefit from the book.

*The Gospel Trumpet* is gone. In 1961, the Church of God changed the name of the publication to *Vital Christianity* and the name of the publishing company to Warner Press. Faced with persistent financial challenges, the final issue of the publication went out in September 1996. Nevertheless, the legacy of *The Gospel Trumpet* lives on in Warner Press, four colleges, 7500 congregations, and one million global participants. Still, at the center of it all is Anderson, Indiana.

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