

DECADES OF DESTINY (A Review)

This book was edited by Lindy Adams and Scott LaMascus, both of whom serve on the editorial board of the Christian Chronicle. It is published by ACU Press. The book is subtitled, "A History of Churches of Christ from 1900 to 2000." It grew out of a series of articles featured in the Chronicle that sought to put the history of the last century into capsule form and to include brief discussion of some of the issues that had troubled our people in that period of time. The book is nicely printed and filled with pictures of prominent people in the past and current history of the church. Those who read it should be aware that it looks at our history from the distinct perspective of those who wish to change the church into something different from what she was in the century past. This is evident from the list of those who contributed chapters to the book: Dr. Douglas Foster (ACU), Dr. Robert Hooper, (DLU) Dr. Michael Casey (Pepperdine U), Dr. Thomas Olbricht (PU), Dr. Steven Lemley (PU), Dr. John Mark Hicks (DLU), all notable spokesmen in the change movement.

These writers describe churches of Christ as a splinter of the Stone-Campbell Movement, rather than Christians who are dedicated to restoring new Testament Christianity. In discussing the division that occurred at the end of the 19th century, they paint the Disciples of Christ as a conservative body of people, like us. To them the real causative factor in the division was the Civil War (p. 28-31).

The editors, in typical "change" style, feature Bro. T. B. Larimore as the Person of the Decade of 1910-1920, setting him in contrast to the hundreds of other preachers who blazed trails, planted churches and defended the faith against its enemies. They prefer Bro Larimore because he was willing to fellowship the digressives with their instruments and missionary societies. They hope to persuade the unknowing to do the same today.

The premillennial movement, led by Robert H. Boll, they exaggerate far beyond its actual dimensions and impact. They present early Christian leaders such as Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, Walter Scott, David Lipscomb and J. A. Harding as pre or postmillennialists. Thankfully the authors did concede "they spoke little about it." In fact our contemporary champions of change have said more about the issue of millennialism than anyone of them. In the 19th century it was not an issue. It was little studied or discussed. When R. H. Boll sought to make it a front burner issue, it was thoroughly studied, rejected and refuted. One gets the distinct impression that change agents feel Bro. Boll was wrongly treated and the real trouble makers were those who opposed him. They also leave an exaggerated impression about the size and influence of the premillennialist among our brethren. Never more than a handful of preachers and congregations, they have never flourished in our midst.

In discussing the relationship of Whites and Blacks in the church, they recognize little or no good in the efforts by White Christians to help evangelize their Black neighbors. Like political liberals, they can only blame Whites for not integrating their congregations at an earlier date. What they fail to discuss is the fact that Whites lived in a society that was rigidly segregated from top to bottom. Opposition to integration was often violent. All other religious bodies faced the same dilemma and dealt with it in virtually the same way. The writers dismiss the efforts to evangelize Blacks and to assist their churches and preachers, preferring to condemn brethren for not doing more. Living in 2004 one can easily preach against such failures. Had these authors lived in that earlier period we suspect that they would have acted much as did their fathers. While we do not justify or excuse the sins of a segregated society and church, we must judge our fathers by the day in which they lived.

Of all the notable servants of the kingdom in the 1950s, Steven Lemley selects such notables as Margaret O'Dowd, little known wife of a rough-shod, radical preacher who abandoned her faith in the church and New Testament Christianity. He favorably features the work of W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett,

fringe radicals, who laid the doctrinal foundation of our contemporary change movement.

Scott Lamascus looks at the decade of the 1980 and sees Tom Olbricht, Rubel Shelly, Harold Hazelip, Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson and Ruel Lemmons as the men who made a difference in the church. It is notable that all of these men stood left of center on the issues of that generation, with most of them active leaders in the change movement.

This book is of value only to those who wish to see how leaders of the change movement view the history of our brotherhood and what they hope to implant in the minds of our brethren. Those who read and know only this view of the twentieth century church will have a warped, distorted view of who we were, what we believed, what we did and who the true leaders were. It is a good example of revisionist history. You may order this book from **Star Bible Pub. P. O. Box 821220, Ft. Worth, TX 76182.**