



Otto F. Linn: Scholarship in Service to the Church

A free lecture with Dr. Merle Strege

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE LINN LIBRARY



WARNER PACIFIC COLLEGE

FLOURISH

Dr. Merle Strege's lecture notes are provided with his permission and blessing so all will know the Dr. Linn's achievements.

“Otto F. Linn: Scholarship in Service to the Church”
Warner Pacific College
September 18, 2014

Merle D. Strege
Anderson University

We are gathered here on the campus of Warner Pacific College to remember the man whose achievements are honored by the name of the building that hosts this occasion – Linn Library. Otto F. Linn served as Dean of Pacific Bible College – now Warner Pacific – and professor of New Testament from 1942 to 1955, when Parkinson’s Disease forced him into retirement. An academic’s version of the American dream, Linn’s schooling began in a sod school-house and culminated in one of America’s elite universities. In the course of his career he taught in Bible institutes and studied in denominational colleges. He preached in Kansas hamlets and New York City. He taught in settings from Sweden to Oregon. He contributed to a landmark translation of the English Bible and wrote commentaries for the Gospel Trumpet Company, the publishing house of a small holiness group called the Church of God.

Buildings on a college or university campus often carry the names of people. Customarily, this practice intends to honor men and women for their substantial contributions to the institution’s life. Unfortunately the practice of naming campus buildings is subject to either or both of two corruptions. There are those who cynically observe that a large monetary contribution can get a person’s name etched on a building. It would do well for those observers to remember that without substantial donations, tuition would be higher and paychecks smaller. As a historian, I find the second corruption more troubling. I refer to a corruption that takes the form of contraction or, in other instances, of failing memory. On my campus “Decker Commons,” a gathering place for students in the administration building, is shortened to “the BOD” [Bottom of Decker]; by the same token the breezeway of the Fine Arts complex is

shortened to “FARTS.” Perhaps it is only shortness of breath or word economy that prompts my students to tell me they are going to “the library” rather than “Nicholson Library.” Surely, common speech here at Warner Pacific has not reduced Linn Library merely to “the library.” I hope not, for memory is one of those aspects of human experience that defines our place and time. It is the memory of such people as Otto Linn that gives Warner Pacific College its rich intellectual and spiritual texture. Who was this man? And what did he achieve that we should perpetuate his memory?

I

Otto Linn’s story is typical of the early generations of teachers in the Church of God, most of whom were professionally formed first as church ministers. He was born in 1887, the seventh of eight children born to Frederick and Anna Linn, on a farm near the Swedish-American hamlet of Falun, Kansas. At the age of seven his father took out a claim on land in Oklahoma’s Cherokee Strip. Linn’s first home there was a house built of sod, as was the school he attended. Summer tent-meetings formed his early religious outlook. A lay Church of God preacher named Charles Bright came down from Anthony, Kansas to hold a series of revival meetings on land adjacent to the Linn farm. Converts started a Sunday school in the frame schoolhouse that replaced the “soddie,” Linn’s mother among them. After completing the 8th grade Linn went to live with relatives in Marquette, Kansas so he could attend high school. He worked in his uncle’s dairy to pay for his room and board.

During his last year in Marquette Linn experienced conversion in a small Swedish Covenant church. The Swedish Covenant church bore some similarity to the Church of God in that both groups are expressions of pietist Christianity. Pietist Christianity began in Germany in the early 17th century as a reform movement that stressed the experiential knowledge of God, captured in the German word *herzenreligion* – “heart religion.” Pietists argued that it was insufficient to be a

Christian in name only, hence the term “nominal Christian.” They emphasized a practical approach to the study of the Bible; it was a book to be lived, not merely believed. Especially through John and Charles Wesley pietism found entry into American Christianity. Methodism and its offshoots – the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Church, and the Church of God among others, carry these pietist markers, as did the Swedish Covenant church. As we will see, Linn’s religious formation in pietist Christianity played an important role in his scholarly work and his personal religious life. In a very real sense, Linn’s pietism made his scholarly achievement possible.

In a brief unpublished memoir Linn recalled that as a boy he had preached to the only available congregation, a herd of cows on his father’s farm. The cattle were unimpressed by Linn’s homiletical skills, but he later observed that more than once he found cows to be more appreciative listeners than some humans. His early inclination toward preaching blossomed in Oklahoma after graduation from high school in 1904. He taught grade school for a few years at Dacoma, Oklahoma and joined in the work of the local Church of God congregation. Sometime between 1904 and 1906 he attended a Church of God ministers meeting in Guthrie. There he joined an evangelistic team led by a veteran preacher named W. H. Shoot and served with them for approximately one year. Like many aspiring young gospel workers, in 1907 Linn moved to Anderson, Indiana, where he worked at the Gospel Trumpet Company. Company managers must have recognized an ability in him to write; rather than assign him to feeding chickens or caring for the livestock, they put young Otto to work editing prayer requests for the paper, the *Gospel Trumpet*.¹ Many of the Trumpet workers also learned the skills of ministry through a method best described as on-the-job training. Linn began preaching regularly at the nascent

¹ I am indebted to Valdar Linn’s unpublished manuscript, “A History of Frederick Linn and his Family,” for these details.

Church of God meeting in North Anderson. At the Gospel Trumpet Company he became acquainted with D. Otis Teasley, one of the bright, progressive minds in the Church of God in that era. Teasley invited Linn to join him at the Church of God Missionary Home in New York City. He served there for three years, 1909 to 1912; in that latter year he was ordained to the ministry. The years in Anderson and New York provided Linn with practical ministerial experience. They also put him in contact with some of the brightest and most progressive minds in the Church of God – George Tasker, D. O. Teasley, and Russell Byrum.

In 1912 Linn returned to Kansas, where he engaged in evangelistic work centered in the south-central town of Anthony. There he remained until 1921/1923?, when he took charge of a small congregation in Caldwell. During this period Church of God leaders independently founded Bible institutes in New York, Spokane ~~(Boise)~~, and Anderson. Under the leadership of J. C. Peterman, the Church of God Missionary Home in Kansas City also operated a Bible institute. Linn became the head of the institute's "Bible School" program in 1918.² Linn remained in Kansas until 1923, when he accepted a call from the Church of God Missionary Board to serve in the Scandinavian countries. Back in the United States, in 1926 a call from the church in Enid, Oklahoma placed Linn near Phillips University, where he earned two undergraduate degrees and a master's degree in education by 1930. While at Enid, Linn mastered the biblical languages, conjugating Greek verbs while driving across the prairie to make pastoral calls. That summer Linn and his wife of two years, the former Julia Lindell, moved to Anderson, where he had accepted an appointment to the Anderson College faculty as professor of New Testament language and interpretation.

² I have some unanswered questions about Peterman's claim, which is followed by Doug Welch. Anthony, Kansas is several hundred miles from Kansas City, which raises the question whether Linn commuted by rail, or whether the "Bible School" program was in fact the Kansas City institute's correspondence course.

II

Shortly after beginning his teaching career, Linn took a leave of absence to study at the University of Chicago. Given the college financial straits during the Depression, an unpaid leave, even for a talented and accomplished professor, made a certain degree of sense. Several Anderson professors took leaves to pursue graduate degrees during the first half of the Thirties. Until 1930, few teachers there held even a B. A., let alone graduate degrees. Advanced study was crucial if the college were to gain academic credibility. Dean Russell Olt coveted newly minted Ph. D.'s returning to the faculty after absences he hoped would be brief, even if that meant constantly juggling teaching assignments and the instructional budget.

Professional and personal difficulties nipped at Linn's heels during his graduate years. At Chicago he studied with Shailer Matthews and Shirley Jackson Case, each a prominent exponent of liberal Protestant theology. The liberalism of many Chicago faculty members particularly challenged the conservative Linn. To John Morrison he offered the wry comment, "One day the man [one of Linn's professors] seemed to forget himself and actually said something nice about Jesus, and I was so astonished that it seemed I was suddenly transported to some other institution."³ Linn ^{lived} with constant tension between deeply held religious convictions and an equally strong enthusiasm for the critical methods of biblical study, a methodology which underwrote the Chicago faculty's liberalism.⁴ Furthermore, he feared that his theological conservatism would undermine his application for doctoral study. All of this wore on Linn, whose health was frequently interrupted by bouts of physical illness and emotional struggle.

³ Linn to Morrison, March 24, 1932, AU Archives, Box AC 8, File 2

⁴ As Walter Wink observed, "Historical biblical research, as long as it was situated in an antithetical position to orthodoxy, was the *Wehrmacht* of the liberal church." Cf. "The Bankruptcy of the Biblical Critical Paradigm," re-printed from *The Bible in Human Transformation* in William Yarchin, ed., *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, (Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, Mass.: 2004), p. 358

Financial hardship compounded Linn's challenges. To support himself and his family he pastored a small congregation that struggled to pay him during the hard times of the Thirties. The church's frequent inability to meet even his \$15 weekly salary eventually forced him to liquidate all his personal assets. At one point Otto, Julia and their children had to move into the home of a family from the church in order to reduce expenses.⁵ Adding to his financial worries, he underestimated by more than a year the length of time needed to complete his studies.

Chicago's saving grace for Linn was the formidable presence of Edgar J. Goodspeed, a widely recognized critical exegete of the Bible and the translator of *The Bible, An American Translation* (1931). Goodspeed recognized Linn's talent and proved to be a considerable personal encouragement. Linn had entered the university in hopes of being admitted to doctoral study on the basis of his work toward the Bachelor of Divinity degree. It was Goodspeed who endorsed Linn's application to Chicago's doctoral program and ultimately directed his dissertation. Goodspeed was nearing the end of his career at Chicago, but more than once he and his wife hosted Otto and Julia Linn in their home, perhaps because the forty-five year old Linn was nearer his professor's age than many graduate students. Linn held Goodspeed in the highest regard, and this made the professor's encouragement all the more important. Despite this, Linn still worried about his future on two important scores. First, he knew that his dissertation topic would have to pass muster with the liberal Chicago faculty, but he refused to consider topics that would compromise his religious convictions. His eventual return to the Church of God raised a second concern. As he put the matter, "One thought that

⁵ In a letter to John Morrison Linn poured out his heart concerning the sacrifices he had made to pursue a doctorate. "My education has cost me everything I have made in the past and will leave me in debt when I am through here. When I started my college work I had a nice home free from indebtedness, government bonds and a new car. Since then I have had to dispose of everything, and this winter I have even had to drop nearly all of my insurance." Linn to Morrison, January 30, 1933, *Loc. cit.*

does not cheer a person in his effort is that after all the years of work and expense that are necessary to get such a degree a person's effort will not be appreciated by the church and if a person is to work where his training is appreciated he will likely have to go outside of our own work."⁶ Linn resumed teaching in Anderson in 1933, but he persevered in his doctoral study and in 1935 the doctor of philosophy degree was conferred on him.

Following his return Linn taught only four years at Anderson, but the methods of study he introduced make him a pivotal figure in the history of the Church of God.⁷ At Chicago Linn embraced the historical-critical method of Bible study. As its name suggests, this method examines the Bible as a historical and cultural artifact. Scholars developed the method during the German Enlightenment, and many employed it to free the study of the Bible from what they considered the dogmatic authority of the church. This new found freedom encouraged questions concerning the development of the biblical text and the historical accuracy of biblical events. The method's implicit naturalism also underwrote questions concerning the believability of divine intervention in history and therefore the possibility of miracles. The historical-critical method was taught aggressively by some of Linn's professors whose theological conclusions meant for him that "it is wearing on a person to sit day after day and hear someone ridicule and belittle the name and cause that we have learned to sacrifice for."⁸ Linn's intellectual and spiritual struggle at Chicago led him to develop a method of teaching the historical-critical method without undermining the faith of his students.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Linn was interested in teaching and research in biblical studies in the context of seminary education. As he was negotiating the terms of his return to the Anderson faculty he made it clear to Morrison that he wished to teach in the college program only on a limited basis and even that only for a few years before devoting himself fully to theological education. However, in the early 1930s Morrison and Olt had embarked on the expansion of the undergraduate college curriculum. He resigned when it became apparent that Linn would not be able to realize his ambition. Cf. Linn to Morrison, January 30, 1933, Anderson University Archives, AC Box 8, File 2

⁸ *Loc cit.*, n. 1

Linn employed the academic study of the Bible but remained a theological conservative. His personal understanding of Christianity as an experiential religion allowed Linn to use his professors' scholarly method while he simultaneously rejected their theology. Twenty years of church ministry had already formed Linn's spirituality; he was not likely to throw off this formation even in the heady Chicago atmosphere. But Linn also discovered the work of scholars who combined critical biblical scholarship with conservative theological views. By their example, historical criticism could provide the foundation for Linn's scholarly work without eroding his faith. Thus he introduced his students to the method, confident that it need not undermine religious convictions but that it could actually strengthen them.⁹ In this conviction he could be unrelenting, even in seemingly minor details. One of his students earned a stern rebuke: the King James Version was not to be cited in a critical study of the Bible.¹⁰ Linn's courses required the more critically accepted *American Standard Version*.

Linn's students read some of the same critical works he had encountered while in graduate study. Student proposals for research papers in Linn's course on Paul universally refer to the work of the conservative German historical critic Theodore Zahn and the critical scholarship of the Scottish professor and churchman James Moffatt.¹¹ While at Chicago Linn had sought to avoid the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates, and he believed his doctoral thesis had achieved

⁹ The historical-critical method underlies all of Linn's published work. He was not the only minister-professor in the Church of God to successfully hold in creative tension critical scholarship and warm personal piety, but he was the earliest to do so. Others at Anderson College in that era who followed his example include Adam Miller and Earl Martin. See Merle D. Strege, *I Saw the Church*, (Anderson: Warner Press, 2002), chapters 11 and 12.

¹⁰ The comment, in Linn's handwriting, appears on a student paper collected with Linn's research notes and papers. Warner Pacific College Archives, Box 36

¹¹ Among Linn's papers is a collection of outline/bibliographies for student projects for Linn's course. Names of some of the students include Elmer E. Kardatzke, Vernie M. Hendricks, Elmer Bennett, Edgar Williams, and Cecil L. Brown. Among others, Zahn's *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, Moffatt's *Introduction to the New Testament* and James Stalker's *Life of St. Paul* are cited for each paper. The strong inference is that Linn introduced this scholarship to his students. WPC Archives, Box 36.

that goal.¹²After returning to Anderson he continued on that path, employing critical Bible study in the service of the church and Christian discipleship. Among his students at Anderson was Adam W. Miller, who adopted the critical study of the Bible after Linn's example and became the principal channel through which critical biblical scholarship was employed at Anderson much earlier, in some cases decades earlier than in comparable colleges and universities.

Linn's departure in 1937 dealt a blow to Olt's plans for faculty development and, temporarily at least, slowed progress toward the goal of accreditation. For Linn combined all those qualities sought in an Anderson College Bible professor: an ordained Church of God minister of many years, possessed of a warm piety; an exponent of methods of biblical study well suited to the Morrison-Olt progressive agenda for the church and college; and a scholar with an earned doctorate from one of America's elite academic institutions. Morrison and Olt prized their star professor. Both president and dean made the unusual gesture of journeying to Chicago in December 1935 to personally witness the conferral of Linn's degree. The previous spring Morrison had invited Linn to deliver the commencement address, the only faculty member to have received this distinction in Anderson's century-long history. Morrison and Olt were unwilling to let so valued a teacher leave without a fight. The two men visited Linn in his home in Dundalk, Maryland, where he had taken a pastorate after leaving Anderson. A conversation of an hour proved to no avail.¹³

III

¹² Linn to Morrison, January 30, 1933, *Loc cit.*

¹³ The visit is remembered by the Linn family. Julia Linn described the meeting as occurring behind closed doors in the family parlor. After an hour Morrison and Olt emerged "tight-lipped" and left immediately. Linn never discussed the subject of the conversation. Valdar Linn interview, June 23, 2010

In Portland, Oregon A. F. Gray watched the development of Otto Linn's career with more than casual interest. Gray of course presided over Pacific Bible College, but he simultaneously chaired the board of trustees of Anderson College. Untroubled by an apparent conflict of interest, Gray turned Anderson's loss into PBC's gain. In 1942 he invited Linn to join PBC as professor of New Testament and Dean, and Linn accepted. Now at home in Portland, Linn's scholarly work continued. Edgar Goodspeed recommended Linn for membership on a committee advising preparations for the monumental translation of the New Testament that produced the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1952.¹⁴ Subsequently Linn was invited to join a committee of scholars who were preparing a new edition of the manuscript evidence for the text of the Greek New Testament. These assignments engaged Linn in scholarly work well beyond the orbit of the Church of God. However, he also wrote commentaries on the New Testament for the church, published by the Gospel Trumpet Company. In 1942 he published a commentary on the Gospel According to John, and two years later a commentary on Mark. ¶ However I would like to focus on the third of a three volume commentary Linn wrote on the entire New Testament.

While Linn was pastoring the church in Dundalk, Maryland, Charles E. Brown, Editor in Chief at the *Gospel Trumpet*, asked him to write a serialized commentary for the paper. Linn agreed, and in 1939 articles grounded in the historical-critical method began appearing under the title, "Studies in the New Testament." Brown saw an opportunity to run more than one mill off the same stream, so in 1941 and 1942 Linn's work was published in book form in the first two volumes under the same title. The volumes sold well, but trouble was brewing. Late in 1940

¹⁴ The RSV New Testament was first published independently of the Old Testament in 1946.

Linn's serial in the *Gospel Trumpet* abruptly halted with his final comment on the letter of Jude. No material on the Book of Revelation was ever published in the magazine.

Linn's comment on the Book of Revelation was held up by F. G. Smith. From 1916 to 1930 Smith had served as Editor in Chief at the *Gospel Trumpet*. He was widely known and respected, although by 1940 his popularity had diminished to a degree; nevertheless, Smith was still a powerful and influential man in the church. His books remained very influential throughout much of the Church of God, especially his interpretation of the Book of Revelation, *The Revelation Explained*, published in 1908. Smith employed a method of interpretation called "church-historical," which reads Revelation as a prophetic guide to the history of the church, from the New Testament era to the present. Smith believed he held the interpretive key to unlock the mysteries of the Book of Revelation in such a way as to point prophetically to the emergence of the Church of God in 1880.

Within the space of one week Smith wrote twice to C. E. Brown to oppose all further publication of Linn's work. In his capacity as a member of the publication committee, A. F. Gray had sent Smith, also a committee member, advance copies of three of Linn's articles on Revelation. Smith did not like what he saw. He rejected Linn's distinction between apocalyptic and prophetic literature, suggesting that it fitted better "with those who deny outright all prophecy and divine revelation."¹⁵ Five days later Smith specified his objections: "This 'new' teaching on Revelation is not new at all: it is nothing but a re-hash of the view held by some modernists and some older Protestants before this reformation began."¹⁶

¹⁵ Smith to Brown, December 12, 1940, Archives of the Church of God.

¹⁶ Smith to Brown, December 17, 1940, Archives of the Church of God.

Linn's use of the historical critical method had direct implications for the traditional theology of the Church of God as articulated by F. G. Smith. Historical critics frequently take a preterist approach to the interpretation of the Bible's apocalyptic books. Preterists read the Book of Revelation as a message of encouragement primarily addressed to the late first century church as it began undergoing Roman persecution. But, they also ~~take~~^{take} the view that this message may be appropriated by the church undergoing travail in any time or place.

Linn followed this tendency and thus was committed to an interpretation of the Book of Revelation opposed to F. G. Smith's church-historical interpretation. Linn's differences with Smith did not come to light until 1940¹⁷, but Linn clearly understood the implications of his historical criticism almost a decade earlier. The historical critical method practiced first by Linn and then by his student Adam Miller and their students undermined Smith's hermeneutic, which Smith equated with an attack on the entire theology of the Church of God. In Smith's eyes, Linn's scholarly methods made him a liberal.

The debate continued into 1941, when Gospel Trumpet Company officials were soon confronted by a problem. The first volume of Linn's *Studies in the New Testament* appeared in 1941, and the second soon followed. Readers were anticipating the third and final volume, but its publication would require the approval ^{of} the five member publishing committee; recall that one of its members was none other than F. G. Smith.¹⁸ By a margin of 3-2 the committee voted in favor of publication, but company rules required all split decisions to be passed on to the board of directors. The seven directors also voted in favor of publication but by a margin of only one vote. Once again, company rules required the decision to be kicked upstairs, this time to the full

¹⁸ The other members were Editor Brown, Book Editor Harold Phillips, A. F. Gray, and Anderson College professor Earl Martin.

Publication Board of the Church of God. Linn's supporters were certain they would lose a vote there, but an alternate strategy emerged. A. T. Rowe, the company's General Manager, proposed the publication of Linn's manuscript by the Commercial Services Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Gospel Trumpet Company that used company presses for contract print jobs. In effect, Rowe's proposal meant that Linn would self-publish volume 3. Of course, that arrangement required Linn ^{to} pay Commercial Services in advance for the entire print run. Linn did not have the personal funds to make payment, but once again Rowe stepped forward. He asked Linn to sign a promissory note guaranteeing payment for 1,000 copies of volume 3. The ink was still wet when Rowe, acting for the Gospel Trumpet Company, purchased Linn's note. A stroke of the pen took Linn off the hook for payment, and gave the Gospel Trumpet Company possession of the entire run of a book it had not published. In every respect but one, the third volume of *Studies in the New Testament* was published in the same format as volumes 1 and 2. The only difference is that the imprint for volume 3 reads, "Published for the Author by the Commercial Services Corporation." *Studies in the New Testament*, Volume 3 never appeared in the Gospel Trumpet Company trade catalog, but the book was sold in the company's retail store. Copies were not shelved; one had to ask for Volume 3 by name. One has the feeling that store clerks slipped the book into a plain paper bag before handing it to the purchaser.

In the third volume of his seminal work Linn challenged both Smith's hermeneutic and a pervasive mindset in the church. Linn confronted Smith's interpretation of Revelation in the boldest of terms. One paragraph will suffice to illustrate Linn's intellectual courage:

A position held by some who explain the 1,260 days as 1,260 years is that the beast of chapter thirteen is the papacy which was the successor to paganism, the dragon . . . [Smith's interpretation]. According to this position, the beginning of the 1,260 years would be the

triumph of Christianity over paganism. Galerius placed Christianity on a plane of equality with paganism in AD 311, and in AD 313 Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire¹⁹. . . . What date could be more significant than this for the driving of our peg? By following this method we would add 1,260 to 313, which would give us the year 1573 as the end of the era in question. But this is not a significant date, *or at least does not contribute to the theology of those who would so use the number*. . . . If we, as some, were to use the very important date of 1,530²⁰ we would count backward to 270, which certainly was not an important date in early history. We might find some significant events during that year as we could during many subsequent years, *but that proves nothing*. Such a literal reckoning is what led Adventists to announce a date for the Second Coming, as it has in other instances. *It is a confusing and erroneous method which ignores the symbolic force of the number.*²¹

The PBC dean and professor also challenged a prevailing mentality that he believed was harmful to the church. Linn realized that the passage of more than thirty years tended to make Smith's interpretation sacred in the eyes of many readers. But Linn labeled this tendency an "intellectual indifference [that] contributes to the tyranny of an opinion."²² Furthermore, "Dangerous as independent thinking may be, it is less dangerous than the crushing of individual initiative, which inevitably leads to stagnation."²³ Even ministers, perhaps especially ministers, declared Linn, must think for themselves.

IV

Otto Linn's scholarly work was the vanguard of change in the way the Church of God studied the Bible. In three respects he departed from the movement's traditional reading of Scripture. In the first place, he used a different translation of the Bible. Smith, and to be sure, the majority of Church of God folk read the King James Version; Linn used the American Standard Version, the predecessor of today's New American Standard Bible. He preferred this translation because it took advantage of developments in manuscript study in the centuries since the publication of

¹⁹ Constantine tolerated Christianity and acted in other ways that gave it de facto status as the legal religion of the Empire. But formal legalization did not occur until the reign of Emperor Theodosius.

²⁰ The year of the signing of the Augsburg Confession, the formal beginning of Lutheranism.

²¹ Otto F. Linn, *Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. 3, (Anderson: Commercial Services, 1942), pp. 109-110 *my emphasis*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10

²³ *Ibid.*

the KJV; the ASV also hewed as closely as possible to the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, even to the point of wooden English. Linn was ^{also} among those who championed the use of the new Revised Standard Version in Church of God publications. Secondly, Linn introduced a new note of scholarship into the church's publications on the Bible. Previous works often appealed to the reader on the basis of a claim to illumination [not inspiration] by the Holy Spirit. Linn appealed to scholarship, asking only that his readers examine his exposition carefully and then decide for themselves. Thirdly, previous to Linn, Church of God Bible teachers were great students of the Scriptures; several possessed a remarkable mastery of the Bible's contents. Linn also knew the text, but new to the church was his ability to set Scripture in a larger historical context. In this Linn firmly believed that the church had room for the critical study of the Bible. His scholarly work tacitly but clearly insisted that no gap need separate academy and church.

Albert F. Gray shared Otto Linn's methods and his conclusions. Gray consistently defended his dean and prize professor against traditionalist charges. In fact, Gray so identified with Linn that his views worried C. E. Brown as Gray worked on his own two volume study, *Christian Theology*.²⁴ There were rumors of a doctrinal blow-up, Smith on one side, Linn and Gray on the other. Gray had no doubt that his prospective book would be acceptable to Brown and the entire church.²⁵ But he also wondered if Brown had warned F. G. Smith to be careful in his revisions of *The Revelation Explained*; then Gray pointedly asked, "Is he [Smith] the only one who has a right to revise the interpretation of Revelation? Will his revised view by the 'accepted literature' or must we abide by the original interpretation?"²⁶ Brown had worried that different

²⁴ Two volumes, (Anderson: Warner Press, 1944, 1946)

²⁵ Gray to Brown, January 2, 1943, Warner Pacific College Archives

²⁶ *Ibid.*

hermeneutical conclusions were fostering individualism among the church's ministers. Gray addressed this concern in language that deserves extended quotation.

You refer to the growing individualism among us and I quite agree that it weakens the force of our message. But I am thinking of the cause and the cure. The cause is simply that our ministers are simply doing a little thinking of their own. Having tasted a new freedom, they have not always known what to do with it. If we had been brought up from the beginning to think under proper guidance there would be less loose thinking now. You know that years ago we were not encouraged to think but were expected to swallow whole what we were taught, especially what the Trumpet [sic] might say. Our troubles have come when leaders in the church have disagreed. When the rest of us found out the leaders are not infallible, we figured out [that] may be [sic] we are. So we started thinking too. You can't stop it, and who wants to? Not I.

The cure is not to try to crowd the rooster back into his shell. Never again will the leading, most influential ministers of the church be bound by the views of a few men. The ministers of the church are not going to respect the official standards of the Gospel Trumpet [sic] unless they are kept up to date. I think the only way we can have a united witness is to face frankly the questions and idea[s] that come up, discuss them in a brotherly way, and reach an agreement growing out of conviction and not from authority.²⁷

Otto Linn had opened the door to an extended conversation in the church about the critical matter of biblical interpretation, and A. F. Gray walked with him.

In two further aspects Otto Linn shaped the future of the church's biblical and theological scholarship. During his tenure as Dean of PBC he built the finest theological faculty to be found anywhere in the Church of God. Linn had left Anderson in a curricular dispute with Dean Russell Olt. Linn wanted to teach in a theological program of study; Olt and Anderson's president, John Morrison, were already ambitiously looking ahead to Anderson's accreditation. For that reason they wanted Linn to teach in the liberal arts division as well as theology, but he refused and left the institution. Pacific Bible College presented Linn with the opportunity to focus on biblical studies in the context of ministerial preparation. By the early Fifties he assembled a wonderful faculty toward that end. Gray taught theology and Linn

²⁷ *Ibid.* Gray's emphasis.

specialized in New Testament. Newly minted Ph. D. Irene Caldwell taught Christian Education while her husband, Dr. Mack Caldwell taught sociology of religion. Another new Ph. D., John W. V. Smith taught Church History and formed a lasting friendship with the final member of this formidable team, Dr. Milo L. Chapman, professor of Old Testament and destined to become the heart of Warner Pacific College. The Anderson College faculty had its own stars, but their academic preparation didn't shine as brightly as the PBC faculty of the early Fifties.

Finally, at the head of a list of Bible scholars and professors that extends to this very evening, Otto Linn is the patriarch of scholarly service to the church. Early in his career, still at Anderson, Linn taught Adam W. Miller and also, ^{perhaps}~~perhaps~~ Milo L. Chapman. At Pacific Bible College Linn taught Frederick v. Shoot. Miller taught Marie Strong; along with Miller, Shoot and Strong had long tenures at Anderson, the latter two in the undergraduate college and Miller in the School of Theology. Miller also taught George Ramsey and Gustav Jeeninga, each of whom enjoyed a long Anderson career. I'm guessing that Dr. Cole Dawson took one or more courses with Ramsey, Jeeninga, or Strong. Personally, I took courses with each of them as well as Frederick Shoot, my Greek professor. One of my colleagues, Fred Burnett, and two recently retired colleagues – Fred Shively and Spencer Spaulding – also took courses with the same quartet. Finally, to bring this academic genealogy up to date, WPC's Professor Cassie Hillman Trentaz represents the most recent generation of a family tree whose root stock is Otto F. Linn.

The moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre contends that humans are story-telling creatures. Through our history, claims MacIntyre, we become tellers of stories that aspire to truth. Deprive us of stories and we become “. . . anxious stutterers in action as well as word. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except

through the stock of stories which constitute its original dramatic resources.”²⁸ For the academic community called Warner Pacific College and the larger community called the Church of God, the life-story of Otto F. Linn can help us speak with a clearer, stronger voice. May I ^{respectfully} suggest that the knowledge of his story begins by refusing to refer to this building merely as “the library?”

²⁸ *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, second edition, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 216, *passim*.