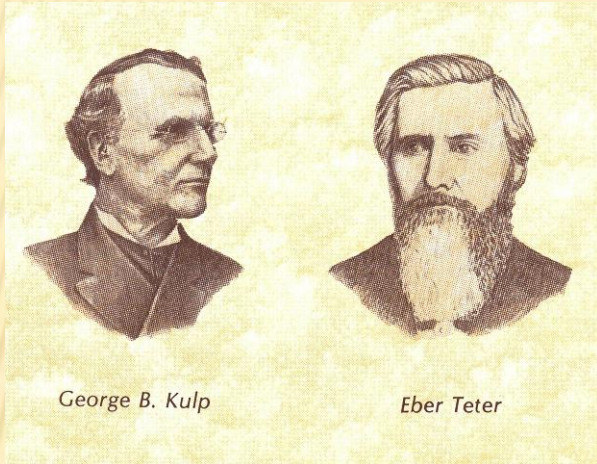


GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History



TEEN SOLDIERS, CHURCH LEADERS

By Lee Haines
Historian of The Wesleyan Church

George B. Kulp was born July 23, 1845, in Philadelphia to parents who were longtime Methodists. Kulp said that he never knew a time when they did not have a family altar.

Shortly after the beginning of the Civil War, while still sixteen years of age, Kulp ran away from home to enlist in the Union Army. He achieved the rank of corporal and spent from April to July, 1863, in a Confederate prison.

Kulp returned to civilian life the month he was twenty years old. He then attended Pennington Seminary, an institution comparable to a modern high school.

On March 6, 1869, Kulp married Miss Annie R. Rodenberger of Philadelphia. Two accounts of his conversion have survived. The first suggests that he and his bride attended services in a little Methodist church the night of their wedding and were converted. The other indicates that his conversion took place on January 6, 1871, at 4:45 in the afternoon. This may refer to a restoration from a temporary backsliding.

About a year after the second date, in 1872, he was licensed to preach and became supply pastor of the Epworth Church in western Philadelphia. He pastored for the Methodists for ten years in Pennsylvania and for sixteen in Michigan.

In 1898 the Kulp family moved to Holbrook, Nebraska, where during the following year,

GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History

their congregation built a new church and parsonage. In January 1889, Mrs. Kulp was entirely sanctified, and, apparently, while they were at Holbrook, Rev. Kulp also experienced the baptism of the Spirit.

In 1899 he returned to Battle Creek, Michigan. Here Rev. Kulp helped to organize the Immanuel Holiness Church on April 4 in his son-in-law's home. The following year on September 29, 1900, the church voted unanimously to become a society of the International Apostolic Holiness Union, an organization founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, by Marin Wells Knapp and Seth C. Rees.

With Rev. Kulp's entry into the International Apostolic Holiness Union, his ministry was greatly broadened. For many years he was a weekly contributor to *The Revivalist*, writing articles and poems – at least 100 of the latter were eventually in print. He also wrote several books, including *The Calloused Knees*, *A Voice From Eternity*, *Truths That Transfigure*, and *The Departed Lord*, and he became a nationally known evangelist, serving in many of the great holiness camps across the nation.

Rev. Kulp was known as a strong preacher. He was once asked, "When you preach, and people get angry, what do you do the next time?" His reply was, "I lay it on harder." Apparently the hearers felt the effect, for on one occasion some actually ran out of the building saying they could not stay and not go to the altar. One man declared, "If I had stayed there ten minutes longer, that preacher would have killed me."

George B. Kulp was a fiery preacher of the holiness message. He became the leader of an interdenominational holiness fellowship and guided it to a conscious and deliberate decision to become a holiness denominations.

In 1905, the International Apostolic Holiness Union elected Rev. Kulp to serve as its general superintendent. He retained the office until 1921, when at 75 years of age his declining strength forced him to resign.

GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History

When George B. Kulp became general superintendent, there was still strong resistance to the idea of the Union becoming a denomination. It had been started as an interdenominational fellowship, made up of local fellowships or unions. But since many of the members of these local unions had been saved through holiness evangelists and had no other church connections, the Union was gradually forced to assume some denominational characteristics. In 1913, Kulp led the Union in a conscious transition from a loosely structured fellowship to an actual church. So the International Apostolic Holiness Church was born, with the name later being shortened to International Holiness Church (and still later becoming the Pilgrim Holiness Church).

In 1905 the Union had only about seventy local unions and churches. When Rev. Kulp resigned in 1923, the Church had over 400 local churches with overseas missions in Africa, the West Indies, and South America.

For ten years after his resignation from the general superintendency, Kulp continued his evangelistic labors as long as strength would permit. Then he was forced to retire to his daughter's home, where he could often be heard in the night, singing and preaching as if busy in camp meetings.

George B. Kulp's long and useful life came to an end on July 21, 1939, three days before his ninety-fourth birthday. The last day he lived, he was heard to say: "All things are in Thy hands. Everything I have belongs to Thee." And he took his son by the hand and said, "God is good to us, isn't He?"

Eber Teter, Jr., was born near Boxley, Indiana, January 28, 1846. His father was a devout Methodist, and in his home the first Methodist worship in the township was held in 1837.

After the elder Teters were expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church because of their anti-slavery convictions, Eber Teter, Sr., led in the organization of a

GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History

a Wesleyan congregation in the schoolhouse in 1844. His home became a station on the Underground Railroad. In the year of his son's birth he donated a lot and a meetinghouse was erected. Eber, Jr., was converted as a child, joining the Wesleys when he was ten years of age.

When the Civil War began, teenage Eger, Jr., enlisted in the Union Army; he was only 19 when the war ended. Throughout his long life, his too-frequent periods of illness were usually blamed on conditions to which he had been exposed in the war.

Following the Civil War, the younger Eber Teter heeded a call to preach. He prepared for his life's work at Wheaton College in Illinois and Adrian College in Michigan. Both had originally been Wesleyan Methodist schools, although Wheaton had passed into other hands in 1860 and Adrian was lost to the Protestant Methodists in about 1866.

From 1870 to 1887, Eber Teter vacillated between his call to the ministry and his own desire for the security of a business career. From 1872 to 1874 he was in Tennessee, trying to help open up this southern state to Wesleyan reform, ministering to the recent freed slaves. But even counting these two years, during the entire seventeen-year period Teter spent only about eight years actually in the ministry.

During these years, under the ministry of Hiram Ackers and W.H. Kennedy, Eber Teter was entirely sanctified. During the 1886-87 conference year, he called for reorganization so the work of church extension and missions could be more aggressively carried out.

At the 1887 session the Indiana Conference voted to close its pulpits to any preacher who would not preach the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification and to turn its conference president from a largely session moderator into a full-time superintendent. It then elected Eber Teter as its first, full-time conference president.

GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History

Eber Teter at first vacillated about his call to preach, but in his early forties he entered wholeheartedly into the work of the Lord. As the Church gave him ever-enlarging responsibilities, he, in turn, led his Church into ever-enlarging fields of holiness evangelism at home and abroad.

Teter threw himself into his new assignment. The results were phenomenal. He served the Indiana Conference for fourteen years. The number of congregations increased 42 percent (from 67 to 95), the membership 31 percent, and the number of church buildings almost doubled (from 40 to 75).

By 1889, while still serving in Indiana, Eber Teter was elected president of the General Conference. He was to hold this office until his successor was chosen by the 1927 General Conference. His duties here were largely those of a moderator. But in 1901, Teter was elected by the denominational board to serve as General Missionary Secretary, with supervision of all general church extension and foreign missions.

Again the growth was remarkable. When Teter took over the missionary department, the only overseas work was in Sierra Leone, West Africa, and it was at low tide. By the time he retired in 1919 due to old age and ill health, mission fields had been added in India and Japan. Several new conferences had been organized, particularly in the South; work among the Negroes in the South was also being pressed; and he had virtually fathered Central Wesleyan College in South Carolina.

Eber Teter was a prolific writer, producing carefully written theological articles that helped make up for the educational deficiencies of many Wesleyan ministers and clarified doctrinal lines for the whole denomination. He was known as a superb parliamentarian, a preacher outstanding for clarity and practicality, and a sweet-spirited counselor of young people finding their way into Christian service.

In 1919, when Eber Teter retired from full-time service, he was hailed by the

GEORGE B. KULP & EBER TETER

Our Wesleyan History

General Conference as the “Grand Old Man of the Church.” And in 1927, when he could no longer preside over the General Conference, he was elected General Conference President Emeritus.

Rev. Teter died June 29, 1928. The evening before he had faithfully preached the gospel to his fellow-sufferers in the hospital. Some of his last words to loved ones who watched by his bedside included quotations of Psalm 12, John 14, and II Corinthians 5:17-21, and the hymn:

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in his excellent word.